

Judges 08-05-21a

This is, unusually, Wednesday night, the 21st of May, 2008. We continue our usual Friday night study in the Book of Judges, in anticipation of the long weekend coming up. And there's actually other people in church just like us.

It's kind of a weird coincidence that that would be the case. But we are in the Book of Judges. We're going to be beginning Chapter 11, having sort of taken a long jump over Chapter 11 and looked at a few things beyond the Jephthah story in the last week or so.

But we'll begin, as we always do, by taking a moment to exercise the privilege of our priesthood. It is something not to be taken for granted that we don't have to talk to people to get to God. We go directly to Him.

We don't have to speak out loud, although I suggest to you that there's a lot more Scripture that talks about spoken prayer than there is about thinking prayer. And it's one of the reasons we pray verbally together when we meet. But I always think about Psalm 55, 17, that says, Evening and morning and at noon will I pray and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice.

It doesn't say evening and morning and at noon will I pray and think about things and he will hear my innermost cogitations. So I just suggest that to you. I've actually sat in a car by myself and prayed out loud, and at first it seems a little strange, but after a while I realized that it helped me organize my thoughts a little better because my mind left unto itself has so many dark alleys and trap doors and hidden twists that after about two and a half minutes of mental prayer, my mind is elsewhere.

And I'm sure that's not the case for you, but it is one of the advantages of spoken prayer. So let's take a moment here for silent prayer, then I'll pray and we'll begin. Father, we are grateful that we are not alone in this world.

You've given us the gift of Your Spirit in anticipation of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the seal that ensures that we are kept by Your power unto the day of redemption until the return of the Lord Jesus. We thank You that He impresses Your truth upon our hearts and that He unites us as believers in fellowship and in edification and in mutually beneficial interaction.

Each of us is gifted. Each of us has the ability to be a means of blessing as well as to receive blessing through association with believers who share an enthusiasm for Your Word and a desire to live a life that is pleasing in Your sight. We pray that our study this evening will contribute directly to those goals, that we will be stronger in the faith and more perceptive in the carrying out of our daily responsibilities, that we can see clearly and rightly divide Your Word of truth.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, we have come to an interesting milestone or marker, if you will, in the book of Judges.

We are essentially at the 300-year mark since the time of Joshua and the division of the land, the taking possession of the land by the people under Joshua and that first set of judges where everyone lived faithfully during the time that those judges... I'm sorry, not the judges, the elders who served along with Joshua. But after the death of Joshua, very soon, something on the order of eight years later, there is the beginning of an eight-year period of oppression. That's the best way to put it.

So we're not real sure about the length of time between the seven-year conquest of the land, how long did it take to divide up the land to get all the tribes going in and getting possession and so on. It would estimate 15 or 20 years. But the first marker that we have in the book of Judges is the oppression of Cushon Rashathayim.

And you remember that back in Judges chapter 3. Verse 8, the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. He sold them into the hands of Cushon Rashathayim, king of Mesopotamia, and the sons of Israel served Cushon Rashathayim eight years. This begins a series of chronological references in the book of Judges.

And I find this personally fascinating, and that's why you're going to have to endure it, whether you find it fascinating or not, because I find it fascinating. And I also find it to be an illustration of a problem that occurs in ancient chronology. I've made reference to this many times before.

Some of you have seen the Pharaohs and Kings presentation, whether the book or the video or both, talking about chronological issues in ancient history, especially as they relate to the Bible. When did Moses lead the children of Israel out of Egypt? Who was the Pharaoh? Is there a problem? And the answer is yes, with the Egyptian chronology, which forms the spine and backbone to which everything else in the study of ancient history connects. Everything is connected to Egypt, and Egyptians' history and chronology is based on the ancient king lists.

And the problem is that all of that information has been, the reigns of the various Pharaohs and their dynasties and so on, have all been stacked sequentially, when it is demonstrably true that some of those were actually side by side. And by compressing that history, you wind up with entirely different personages on the scene during Biblical episodes. The alleged Pharaoh of the Exodus is not Ramses.

You don't have Hatshepsut on the scene and so on. It's all been messed up because of this false assumption. In the book of Judges, we have these annotations.

Eight-year oppression by Kushan Reshathaim. You have 40 years of rest after the deliverance achieved by Othniel. Remember Othniel, the son of Kenaz.

Kenaz is Caleb's brother, although there is great confusion about that. Half the scholars want to say that Othniel is Caleb's brother. There are many reasons why that's not true, but even as notable and reputable a source as Kyle and Dalich gets this wrong, in my opinion.

I'm sure if they were alive, they'd be deeply distressed that Sam Hull in Plano, Texas, thinks

they're wrong. But I do. Who's Caleb's father? Just read the text.

Caleb, the son of Jephunneh. I see no similarity between Jephunneh and Kenaz. Othniel is the son of Kenaz.

Caleb is the son of Jephunneh. But because of the passage where it says Othniel, the son of Kenaz, Caleb's brother, wanted to marry this gal, wanted to marry his daughter, that whole thing with the springs and the land, we remember that episode in Joshua and in the beginning of Judges. But it says Othniel, the son of Kenaz, Caleb's brother.

Well, if you put a comma after Kenaz, Othniel, the son of Kenaz, Caleb's brother. In other words, Caleb's brother referring back. We've been through that.

He's a nephew. He's the nephew. And he needs to be because he lives a long time.

There's 40 years. Remember how old Caleb was. Oldest man in Israel.

Any brother of Caleb, unless he's got Abraham and Sarah-like parents who are still having children in their 90s, any brother to Caleb would be highly unlikely to live another 40 years after the eight years of oppression of Cushon Reshathaim and not be an octogenarian when he had to throw off that oppression. So he's a nephew. He's a whole generation younger.

Well, eight years for the oppression, 40 years of rest afterward. That gives us the first 48 years into this progress through the period of the Judges, right? Then we had oppression by the Moabites, given to us in Judges 3.14. The sons of Israel served Eglon, the king of Moab. 18 years.

So we've got 48 plus 18. We're up to 66 years now, right? Then Ehud comes in, and he does the left-handed hidden sword trick. Calls Israel.

There's a great victory. And then the land in Judges 3.30, we're told the land had rest 80 years. Undisturbed for 80 years.

So 66 plus 80. Now we're up to 146 years. Then it tells us in the first part of chapter 4 that Jabin, with all of his 900 chariots, oppressed the sons of Israel severely for 20 years.

146 plus 20 is 166. Then Deborah and Barak do their thing, and the land has rest for 40 years. We find this at the end of chapter 5. So 166 plus 40.

We're at 206. Then we have the oppression by the Midianites. This is what we just covered with Gideon.

At the beginning of chapter 6, the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. The Lord gave them in the hands of Midian 7 years. 206 plus 7 is 213 now.

Gideon delivers them, and in chapter 8, verse 28, Midian was subdued before the sons of Israel.

They did not lift up their heads anymore. The land was undisturbed for 40 years in the days of Gideon.

So where were we? 213 plus 40. We're at 253. Am I right? Okay.

Then Abimelech, he goes for 3 years. That would be 256. We find that out in chapter 9. Then Tola, 23 years.

And Jair, 22 years. That was a total of 55 years. So where are we now? About 301 years.

My math is correct. 256 plus 55. If you add all that up, I think you get 301 years.

So, we're at the 300 year mark right now, if all of these things are sequential. And so far, I think we pretty much have been. But the reason I bring this up is, look at the beginning of chapter 11.

Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, but he was the son of a harlot, and Gilead begot Jephthah. Gilead's wife bore sons, and when his wife's sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out and said to him, You shall have no inheritance in our father's house, for you are the son of another woman. Who does this sound like? It's a similar situation.

The circumstances are slightly different, but this was a big problem where you had Abimelech. He was the son of another woman. You've got 70 sons by legitimate wives, and then you've got this gal over in Shechem being a concubine, and here comes Abimelech.

My father's the king. You know, that whole thing. Well, here's another case where somebody's got a bunch of sons, and then there's this sort of half-brother, black sheep reject by the family.

They said to him, You shall have no inheritance in our father's house, for you are the son of another woman. Jephthah fled from his brothers and dwelt in the land of Tov. Dwelt in the land of... What does Tov mean? In Israel today, wake up in the morning, go outside to get the milk off the stoop or pick up your paper or whatever, you say, Boker Tov.

Or broke your toe. Either way, Boker Tov. Boker Tov means good morning.

Lilah Tov Good evening. So, Tov means good. So he goes and dwells in the land of good.

And worthless men banded together with Jephthah and went out raiding with him. And it came to pass after a time that the people of Ammon made war against Israel. And so it was, when the people of Ammon made war against Israel, that the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tov.

Now this is going to launch us into the Jephthah story. The reason I bring this up is we had a preceding note about the oppression of the Ammonites. If you remember, back in chapter 10, where we saw Jair, Tola the son of Pua, and then Jair, it says in verse 6 of chapter 10, Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals and the

Ashtoreths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines.

And they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him. So the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon. From that year, they harassed and oppressed the children of Israel for 18 years, all the children of Israel who were on the other side of the Jordan in the land of the Amorites in Gilead.

Jephthah is a man of Gilead. The Amorites are oppressing Israel on the eastern side of the Jordan in Gilead. This is Bashan and that whole region over there.

We know that story very well. What are the two and a half tribes that dwell over there? Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. Or half the tribe of Manasseh.

It kind of works both ways. They are a half-tribe, and half of them are on one side and half of them are on the other side of the Jordan. So Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh originally claimed that land.

Moses said you can stay here if you want to as long as you go over and fight to claim the land. You can have your possession over here. It's a dismal prospect, but if that's what you really want because you like the green grass, why go ahead.

So that's what they did. The people of Ammon crossed the Jordan to fight against Judah also, against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim so that Israel was severely distressed. Having already raised all sorts of cane on the eastern side, they crossed over.

Where is Judah and Benjamin and Ephraim located? What's the dividing line? You know where Judah and Benjamin are. That's Jerusalem and the region south toward Bethlehem and the hill country of Judea. Ephraim comes right down and meets that.

So they've come across essentially the same place the Israelites did. They've come right across the river there at Jericho. They can go north into Ephraim.

They can go south into Judah and Benjamin. So they've come across. Think about this.

It's the strategic equivalent of having been completely flanked, of being attacked in the rear. They came into the land. They took possession of the land.

And now somebody has come essentially the same path that they did these 300 years later. And they are in the position of the Canaanites. They are now the Canaanites with a force coming across the Jordan at the very same spot.

It's as though positions have swapped. And the goyim, the bad guys, are now in the position that the Israelites were in. And the Israelites are in the position of the Canaanites.

Why? Because they're acting the very same way. What was the introduction to this? The children

of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. The children of Israel are serving the Baals.

Children of Israel are serving Ashtoreth. Children of Israel are serving the gods of Syria, Sidon, Moab, Ammon, and the Philistines. All of the gods and all of the pagan idolatrous worship that they were sent in to eliminate, they are promoting.

They are the bad guys. And so here comes Ammon, the distant cousins, descended from Lot and his daughter, to do to them what they did to the Canaanites, what God sent them to do to the Canaanites. Now, if I were of a particular persuasion, I would just stop here and spend the whole rest of our evening talking about the application, the interpretation and application that our salvation and our status as people of God, children of God, called by the name of God and so on, does not insulate us or inoculate us against failure of this nature.

We can turn into the bad guy. We can become the very thing that we are sent to be a contrast. We're supposed to be a light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

Believers can be the crooked and perverse generation. And God will discipline them just as He does the rankest unbelievers. And for them, you can substitute us.

If we compromise with the world, if we become a part of the world, if we buy into the cosmic system, if we abandon our spiritual heritage and our spiritual responsibilities, if we lose sight of the God of our deliverance, and these people didn't wake up one morning and say, you know what? I'm going to throw off the God of Israel. I'm going to become a great pagan. This has been a process of slow compromise, of gradual erosion, of slowly losing sight of something.

I was thinking about the lyrics of a fairly recent song that someone was talking about when a dream died. It didn't go down in flames. There was no final scene.

There was no frozen frame. It just slowly faded away. This is what happens.

We don't typically have some sort of light bulb moment in reverse, you know, dark bulb moment, or somebody breaks our light bulb or something and we suddenly go into the realms of evil. It's a slow, gradual process. It's like cooking the frog.

You heat it up gradually and it won't jump out. This is what has happened to Israel. Cyclically, they return and they slide, they return and they slide, but it's been downward, downward.

Now after 300 years, look at them. Never before have we had an enemy crossing the Jordan at the exact same place that Israel did and treating them just like Israel treated the Canaanites under Joshua. It's completely reversed.

What a horrible thing. This is supposed to happen to the bad guys. This is what's comical, if there's anything comical about the Tribulation, is Satan, who was the trusted guardian of the throne room of God and was given great authority and great responsibility by God, turned around and betrayed God and rebelled against Him.

Well, Satan's going to do the same thing with his wonderful little Antichrist. He's going to invest him and empower him and enable him and give him a prophet and a beast and everything and get him all set up running the world. And the Antichrist himself is going to do the very same thing that Satan did to God and turn about his fair play.

And you think, well, that's probably the irony of the universe is that you build all your hopes on this Antichrist to get your agenda accomplished and he turns out sticking it to you the same way you did in your similar position. Well, this is what's happening to Israel. They're now being attacked.

But notice, it's not just the Ammonites. The anger of the Lord, it tells us in verse 7 of chapter 10, was hot against Israel. And you know what the actual phrase is here in Hebrew.

Do you remember what Hebrew phrase is translated by His anger was hot? His nose was on fire. His nose burned. To me, that's just so graphic.

You just think about your nose being on fire. What would your attitude be? That's how the Lord felt. So He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon.

Now this is important because if you think about it, we can go forward as we did at the beginning of this lesson looking at the years and adding them up. And we will end up with a total amount of time. If we keep going, the oppression by the Ammonites is 18 years. We just read.

Then after Jephthah finishes his work, there's going to be 6 years of rest. Then you have Ibzon, Elon, and Addon, which are 10, 8, and 40 years respectively. And by the time you get down to Samson, which is the last great judge story in this book, you're going to have Samson judging Israel for 20 years.

And when you add all this up, you're going to get 390 years. Now to that, that takes us from Cushon, stay with me now, Cushon Rashathaim, adding up all the years, we get down to where we are right now, 301. If we continue to add, what's coming up in the rest of the book.

This is why I say we're kind of at a threshold of a new section here. Because we're going to get some stories that are not sequential. This is my point.

Jephthah, Samson, down into the days of Eli, and Hophni, and Phineas, and Samuel. We tend to think of these as sequential. They're not.

And how unsequential they are will almost shock you. The more familiar you are with those stories, the more it's going to shock you who was alive at the time who else was involved in their portion of God's word. It's quite striking.

Most of these guys were contemporaries of each other. So it is wrong to think that these are

just one at a time, in the same way that it's wrong to think that about the Egyptian king lists. But if you just go superficially through and keep adding these notations up, 18-year oppression by the Ammonites, 6 years for Jephthah, 7 years for Ebzon, 10 years for Elon, 40 years for Addon, and then Samson judging Israel for 20 years.

We get this clear up in chapter 15 and chapter 16 of Judges. It says Samson judged Israel 20 years in the days of the Philistines. It tells us that twice.

Add all that up, you get 390 years. Well, you may recall, you may not recall, if you don't recall, then I'm about to tell you so that you'll know, that in Kings, when it talks about Solomon building the temple, it says that the foundations of the temple were laid in the 480th year after the children of Israel came out of Egypt. You can go look at 1 Kings 6. So to the 390 years that we have now covered in the book of Judges up through Samson, what do we have to add for that 480 in Kings to be right? All the way up through Samson, we're at 390.

Now, the time of Joshua is before Kushan Rishat Haim, the seven year conquest, and the time of the elders after him, and so on. That's not specifically given, but we can estimate it to be around 20 years. That's fair.

Eli was a judge, it tells us in 1 Samuel, for 40 years. It tells us that the time he fell off the wall and broke his neck, that he judged Israel for 40 years. The time of Samuel and Saul combined is another 40 years.

The reign of David is another 40 years. The reign of Solomon until he builds the temple, which is in 1 Kings 6, is three years. He'd been king three years when he finally got the temple underway.

If you add all that up, you get 533 years. And that doesn't count the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, which gets you up to 573 years. So you see the problem? Did I lose you there? If you start figuring from when Moses and the children of Israel walked out of Egypt until Solomon's third year, you get 573 years if you take everything in Judges and just add it sequentially.

And that's almost 100 years too much. So where is the adjustment? Were the children of Israel not in the wilderness 40 years? No. The place where the extra years have been accrued is in Judges.

Not everything in Judges is sequential. So where is the overlap? Well, we are on the threshold of the overlap. And the clue is the verse we just read.

The Lord's nose was on fire against Israel. And He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon. The book of Judges is going to cover the Ammonite side of this two-pronged oppression first.

Then it's going to go back and pick up the Philistine side. And so when you correct the

sequence here to allow for that, you find that the first part is the same from Kushan Rashataim to Jair is 301 years. Then the duration of the Philistine oppression is 40 years.

During which also everything we are about to see with Jephthah takes place. Then you have Samuel and Saul. That's another 40 years.

Solomon at the temple. And that gets you to 423 years plus the 40 years wandering and the 7 years conquest and 10 years from the time the land was divided until Kushan Rashataim and guess what? It's 480 years. Exactly what it says in Kings.

So by understanding that what we are about to look at and even if you got lost in the numbers just remember this much. Jephthah and Samson and Samuel all overlap. Samuel is already functioning as priest in Israel when Samson is doing his thing.

Eli is already around when Jephthah is doing his thing. That's what we will note as we go through. And the reason is if you back this up well let's go the other way.

Let's start with Solomon founding the temple at the 480th year. Go back 3 years to the beginning of his reign and you're at 477. Take out the 40 years of David's reign and you're at 437.

And so to get from the 301 where we are right now everything else has to take place in that next well now I lost track of what I was saying. Just remember the Philistine oppression is 40 years the judgeship of Samuel and the reign of Saul. Now think about this.

It says that God has sent the Philistines against Israel and the Philistines oppressed Israel 40 years. What is this Philistine situation? Most of you are familiar with the story of Samuel and the story of Saul. What is the situation with the Philistines in the days of Eli? Is the Philistine oppression over in the days of Eli? This 40 years that we are talking about where Eli and Hophni and Phinehas the little thing, the Ark of the Covenant going away the temple of Dagon and so on that's in this 40 year oppression.

It's all a part of it. The beginning of the Philistine oppression that includes Samson's 20 years and includes Eli, Hophni and Phinehas and the early days of Samuel all the way down to Saul who is still fighting Philistines to David as a boy with a sling who is still fighting Philistines it's all in this section. So we have artificially extended this period beyond what it should be.

That's the point. And I just want to keep that in mind as we go forward now because we're going to look at the eastern side of this first which is Jephthah and the Ammonites then we're going to come back and look at the Philistine side later on. But the oppression of the Philistines that lasts for 40 years that includes Samson bringing down the house and so on into the days of Eli, Hophni, Phinehas and Samuel there is a continuous time of oppression by the Philistines that begins here and isn't going to end until the closing days of the reign of Saul.

David is the one that's going to finally put the Philistines out of business. Remember his dowry

for Michael the daughter of Saul. There's still plenty of Philistines around for that.

Okay, so that's the broad context and if you got lost in the years I'll review it a little more later especially when we get down to Samson and we'll see. I have a chart I'm finishing up. I have to construct it because it doesn't exist anywhere but I'm going to give you a correspondence a little timeline of who's around doing what when and where that'll help this.

That should give you at least a rough idea. Delivered into the hand of the Philistines into the hand of the people of Ammon once again we have this hand thing going on it's power. Who is in power? We wrestle in this life.

Do we not? We wrestle against principalities against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this age. Life is all about who wins the struggle. Are you in control or are you being controlled? Are you prevailing? Are you overcoming? Or are you being prevailed upon and are you overcome? That's why we are left here after salvation is to learn how to prevail to learn to be an overcomer.

Jesus makes those seven different categories of promise in his letters to the churches in Revelation chapter 2 and 3 to him that overcomes. It's all about overcoming. Every time you see the hand of somebody being heavier the hand being delivered into the hand that's failure.

That is loss. That is being overcome. And every time you see deliverance through God's grace that is an opportunity to be and remain an overcomer.

So, it tells us specifically and this is why I've emphasized it so much in verse 8 of chapter 10 of Judges from that year they, the Philistines and the Ammonites harassed and oppressed the children of Israel for 18 years. All the children of Israel who were on the other side of the Jordan in the land of the Amorites in Gilead. Now, this transitions to or focuses in, kind of zooms in on the Ammonite oppression.

The Ammonite oppression is going to last 18 years. Philistine oppression is going to last 40 years of which this 18 years runs concurrent or two which runs concurrent. All the children of Israel on the other side of the Jordan.

The Ammonites have not yet crossed over and if they did, they wouldn't come clear across and oppress all the other tribes. This is in the eastern portion in Bashan and Gilead over there. People of Ammon eventually cross over the Jordan to fight against Judah, against Benjamin, against the house of Ephraim so that Israel was severely distressed.

And in verse 10 of chapter 10 the children of Israel cried out to the Lord saying we have sinned against you because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baal's. Served the Lord's. Baal means Lord.

I don't know why they kind of switch off. Sometimes the New King James translates it Lord and sometimes it translates it Baal. But we have forsaken our God and served the Lord's.

You know, the psalmist doesn't say serve the Lord's with gladness. Come before their presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord He is God.

The Lord, singular. He is God. And creation is inevitably tied up with the identity of God.

If you remember Psalm 100, this whole evolution creation thing, the Lord He is God. It is He that hath made us and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

He made us, not we ourselves. I mean, how much clearer does it get? We didn't self-generate. We didn't come together out of pieces of happy coincidence.

The Lord made us, not we ourselves. So, we have both forsaken our God. You can do one without doing the other.

You can forsake God without necessarily serving something else, right? But not only have they withdrawn their worship and their commitment to God, but they have actually positively put it in another direction. You could be listless and apathetic in a relationship towards someone. You could withdraw and be, whatever they say, emotionally distant and uncommitted and incommunicative.

You can pull away and become like a stranger to someone and you haven't necessarily had an affair or broken your vows or whatever in the active sense of the word. That's a passive sort of withdrawal. You are no longer active in your proper relationship.

They have done that and they have become active in an illicit relationship with the Baals. So, it's a two-fold thing. And you can plot on a graph the progress out of committed dedication to God and committed dedication to that which is not even of God.

And it begins with this withdrawal and transitions into active commitment in another direction. Now, what is supposed to happen when we are saved? What is supposed to happen when we are entered into a relationship with God? Exactly the opposite. Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed.

Offer yourself a living sacrifice to God. This is your reasonable service. It is not enough to say, well, I've gotten saved, so now I don't drink, smoke or do all those bad things anymore.

And it's true in any given area of failure that we have in our life. You can't just stop the failure. Oh, look here, I'm actively messing up.

I have a commitment to the world or to sin or to evil or to some bad thing over here. I've got to cut that out. Oh God, please help me stop.

That's only half the process. Anything you look at in the Word of God is moving away from one thing and actively pursuing something else. And in the positive sense, we withdraw and touch not the unclean thing, hate the garment spotted by the flesh, and we instead actively ask and seek and knock and walk the narrow road and pursue righteousness and sanctification and all

of the things that transform us into Christ-like existence.

It's two things. Repentance away from dead works and faith toward God. Remember that in Hebrews? It's the foundation of everything in the Christian life.

Not laying again the foundation of change of mind away from dead works and faith toward God. Well, Israel has done the exact opposite. They have eliminated faith in God and they have committed themselves to dead works by serving the Baals.

So they acknowledge this. They do the Psalm 51 against thee and the only have I sinned. They homo logeo in the Greek sense.

They are sin. So the Lord said to the children of Israel in verse 11, Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians and from the Amorites and from the people of Ammon and from the Philistines? Didn't I already deliver you from these people once? Why do you think you're back under their power? Why do you think you're back in their hand? Also, the Sidonians and Amalekites and Mountinites oppressed you and you cried out to me and I delivered you from their hand. Yet you have forsaken me and served other gods.

Therefore, I will deliver you no more. Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen. Let them deliver you in your time of distress.

What does this sound like? Does this have any connection to our study in the Gospel of John? What is the Isaiah passage that John quotes in connection with Jesus? They knew Him as God. They did not glorify Him as God. They weren't thankful.

John describes that as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah. Lord, who has believed our report and to whom has the arm of the Lord revealed? Nevertheless, as the prophet spoke, seeing they see and do not perceive, hearing they hear and do not understand, they're blinded. He hath blinded their eyes, lest they see in turn.

There is a time if you persist, if we persist in this kind of behavior over a period of time, as Israel has done now for how many years? Three hundred years they've been departing from God. Brief little revivals when God would send them some deliverance. But is that what God wants? God wants you to love and serve Him because He's the genie that will bring problem-solving out when you need it? That's how He's presented today in a lot of venues, by a lot of ministries, a lot of churches, a lot of denominations.

God is the God of the Band-Aid and the aspirin pill and the morphine shot. If you're hurting, come to God. He'll fix you.

He'll anesthetize you. And He won't. After a certain amount of time passes, after a certain level of habitual rejection has taken place, God will no longer deliver.

What's our memory verse in this regard? The Lord's hand is not shortened that He cannot save,

neither is His ear heavy that He cannot hear, but your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hidden His face from you. Now, is this just the first sin you commit? You're going along, you're learning the Word of God, and applying and praying and engaging in fellowship and everything, and then you suddenly have some big failure and does God say, oh, well, I can't hear you, I'm not talking to you. We're talking about habitual sin, aren't we? We're talking about a long established pattern of apathy or worse.

That's what's going on here. Go and cry to the gods which you have chosen. See if they'll save you, deliver you in your time of distress.

So the children of Israel repeat their confession. The children of Israel said to the Lord, We have sinned. Do to us whatever seems best to You.

Only deliver us this day, we pray. And they do more than just cry out. Now they take some action.

They put away the foreign gods from among them and they serve the Lord. And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel. Even though He said, just like how an angry parent will say you're grounded for life, you're never having TV again as long as you live, etc.

You know, you can get real forceful in the fulfillment of a judgment. But if you see progress, which is what the judgment is supposed to produce, change of mind, genuine feeling of commitment to doing something different, what happens? We relent. And that's what God does.

When God sees an effort, when God sees a genuine putting away of these things and a pursuit of worship, He relents. He is a God that reserves mercy for thousands. So His soul, God's soul, isn't that a great statement about God? The eternal glory of God, the Creator of the universe, massive untold legions of angels, infinite amounts of human beings, power to do anything He wants.

But He puts this discipline on His people Israel. And when He sees that they're actually trying to make an effort to get out from under this idolatry and stupidity that they've involved themselves in, His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel. It pains God to discipline us.

And He couldn't endure it anymore. Now, He would have endured it had they not turned. But the smallest glimmer of repentance, and He just can't endure that discipline anymore.

So, that's where we are as we come to the point where we stop for a break. And it's a wonderful thing to reflect on, the great fact of the mercy and compassion of God. He could be different.

He's all-powerful. He can be any way He wants to be. We couldn't say anything about it.

We couldn't answer back to God. And isn't it a wonderful thing, it's something to be thankful

for, that He is the kind of God that He is. That He loves the world.

It is not the will of God that any should perish, that all should come to repentance. But He is wise enough to know that He has to scourge the sons that He receives. And that it is through suffering that we learn obedience and that we come to the place where we can receive inheritance and be qualified to do something productive with it.

That's what He's trying to do with His people Israel. Well, we'll come back and pick up our study at verse 17 after the break.