

Judges 08-08-01a

This is Friday, the first day of August 2008. I hardly believe we've already finished seven full months in this year. Every time I just can't, it blows my mind to even think about how far we are on the calendar.

But it is the first of August and we are studying the Book of Judges. We have come to the threshold of Chapter 16, which we will tread across into and begin to study that chapter tonight. We'll take a moment as we begin, as we always do, to just take a second to remember why we are doing what we are doing.

It is great to have a social occasion. It is great to have fellowship. It is great to receive and hopefully to give a blessing by virtue of the presence of the Holy Spirit that each believer has in his or her soul.

But the focus of our assembly is the study of the Word of God. This is the food for our souls. If our souls don't get fed, they do the same thing that a physical body does when it's not fed.

It gets weak and anemic and shaky and unreliable. And we don't want that happening to our hearts and minds. So we ensure that we nourish ourselves on the spiritual manna that comes from God's Word.

And that's the occasion for which we have assembled this evening. And so we'll open with a word of prayer. Father, we recognize that it is not by might or by power.

It is not by any human strength or human strategy or human plan. It is only through the strength that comes from your Spirit that we are able to accomplish anything meaningful in this life. We thank you for the gift of your Spirit.

We know that he is with us because of the Lord Jesus Christ, who made it possible for us to receive the indwelling and the filling of the Spirit as he accomplished the work of salvation on the cross on our behalf. We know that he himself is seated at your right hand, interceding for us, representing us, establishing the acceptability of human beings who have been saved by your grace. And we know that he will one day return for us so that we can be ever with him.

We know that the time that is given to us in the meanwhile is to enable us to learn and grow and prepare ourselves for the day when we will be spending our eternal future with you and with him. We ask your blessing on us as we study this passage of Scripture this evening, that we will be corrected and instructed and rebuked and gain an insight through your word to be thoroughly equipped for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, we are looking at this great cycle of ups and downs that is presented in the book of Judges. Israel is strong at the beginning.

They've come in under Joshua, and they've been whipping Canaanites right and left, and then

they kind of get apathetic and indifferent, and they cry out to God after they get oppressed, and there is deliverance. And we've seen these cycles, up and down, up and down, seven times now. And we've come to the story of Samson.

And Samson is reflective of the nation itself. We've seen in many other studies that the king or the leader of the nation of Israel is often an embodiment or a reflection of the nation as a whole. And this is often true even of other nations in the Bible.

Pharaoh of Egypt in the days of the Exodus reflects the attitude of the entire nation of Egypt, and God raised him up as the embodiment and the symbol of the attitude in Egypt. And when it talks about Pharaoh's heart being hardened and God hardening his heart and all of this, this is true not just of Pharaoh but of all of the Egyptians. And when he finally breaks their pride and breaks their spirit, and they can't wait for the Israelites to leave, and they heap on them treasures and gold and silver and say, look, take this stuff and go, just go away, this is the attitude of Pharaoh.

But a few days go by, and pretty soon he's fickle and he's changed his mind and decided that, well, we've lost our entire labor force, I didn't really think, I just wanted relief from the burden of all these plagues and the devastation they have caused, and now I look around and all of our lackeys and all of our brickmakers and all of our helpers and house servants, they're all gone, and we've got all this mess to clean up after the frogs and the lice and the hail and everything, and all the help is all gone. And so he changed his mind and he wanted to go out there and chase them. But he's representative of Egypt as a whole in the New Testament, in the days of John the Baptist.

You have Herod, who isn't even completely Jewish, he's sort of Jewish by proxy, and he claims kind of a mother-in-law relationship to Judaism, but his attitude reflects the attitude of Israel. He wants to hear what John the Baptist has to say, but he won't accept it, but he won't deny it either. So he locks John up and he brings him in for entertainment and listens to his sermons, but he will not commit, he won't reject the message, he won't accept the message.

And this is exactly what the nation of Israel does, both with John and with Jesus. And it's an embodiment in a single individual at the head of the nation, it reflects those people as a whole. Well, the same thing in the book of Judges, and you see that the quality of each new judge kind of is diminished as we've gone forward.

By the time you get to Gideon, he needs a lot of reassurance, and even after he wins a victory, he winds up creating an abomination in the middle of the land, and his sons are an abomination, a scourge in the land. And now we've come down to Samson, and Samson, his origins are holy. A messenger of God comes down and announces his birth and says that he's going to be a Nazirite, and he needs to be pure and undefiled.

And it reminds us of the origins of the nation of Israel. They are to come out from that which is pagan, out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of idols and Horus and all of these other Isis and

the other Egyptian gods and goddesses. Come out from them, be separate, be dedicated to the service of God and the worship of God.

Now, you and I start out life as unbelievers, and we're in the world, and it worships fame and fortune and accomplishment and stimulation and entertainment and pleasure and a lot of these things, and we are called out. We are called out ones. That is what it means to be a saint, what it means to be sanctified.

Come out from among them and be separate. You think immediately, well, there goes the fun. I'm a Christian now, no more fun.

Got to cut out all the things that people really enjoy, those really great movies, those really great Grand Theft Auto video games and the spinning bloody jawbones after you shoot someone. All of that's over with now. I've got to be holy and sing hymns and quote psalms and kind of live like a Mennonite or those people with the black hats and the triangle on their coaches, the Amish.

We kind of get the idea, well, if you're really going to be holy, you're going to pretty much be Amish. And it's not true. There is a false sense of what is stimulating and entertaining and valuable and oh, I must have this because look how much fun it is that's out there in the world.

These things perish in the using. And it's true no matter who you are. You can be an unbeliever or a believer.

Experiential happiness, happiness based on an experience, pretty much lasts as long as the experience and you may be able to drag that memory back up and say, oh boy, wasn't that fun. But your actual satisfaction with life can't be based on what you did. It has to be based on who you are.

Did you hear me? Your happiness cannot be based on what you did. It has to be based on who you are, who you become, what you carry around with you all during the day. A lot of us have had some really terrific experiences, mountaintop emotional peak experiences, great travels, great vacations, great get-togethers, great this, great that, great the other, gone places, seen things, travel, Grand Canyon, Rome, whatever it may be.

And that's great. And those are fun to revisit. This is why digital cameras are so much fun.

People want to preserve things. Why do you think cameras and videos are so much fun and so popular today? Why do people want to take a picture of everything? Because so many people are depending on that to bring back the way they felt when they were at the beach or bring back the way they felt when they were on vacation. Because in the present, if they stop and there is no stimulation and there is no real entertainment going on, you're stuck with who you are.

And a lot of people, who they are is not that great. And they've got to, I don't want to be

thinking about that. Stimulate me, distract me, send me somewhere, get my attention onto something else.

I can't just sit and keep my own company for hours on end because I'm not a happy person. Make me happy. A lot of experience today is vicarious.

You think about it. I'm not just on a soapbox. You think about the nature of programs that are on television now, like American Idol or a lot of these reality programs.

We're going to come in and fix somebody's house. We're going to come in and give them a makeover. We're going to do plastic surgery on them.

We're going to fulfill a person's dreams. Now, why would millions of other Americans want to sit and watch those programs? If Marge Flanagan in Walla Walla, Washington gets a facelift, why would I care? Marge may really need a facelift. Maybe she had a congenital birth defect, you know, a cleft palate or something and need that surgery.

That's wonderful. That's great. But do I want to watch? Do I want to see the before and after and the reveal when she goes and gets presented to her family and friends and there's this obligatory applause at the end and everyone oohs and aahs? Why is that popular? Ask yourself.

Why is that so popular? Why is American Idol when somebody sings their lungs out and the three people say, okay, great? Paula and the English guy and I don't even remember who the third one is. But they vote and they judge and there's tears for the people to get. Well, this is vicarious experience.

It's emotional voyeurism. People don't have a life that they enjoy of their own sufficiently, so they've got to borrow the experiences of someone else. Take me to Marge's place and let me rejoice with Marge when people are clapping and so happy for her.

Take me to the American Idol thing where, you know, the hard luck story makes good and this emotional buoyancy takes place. It's vicarious experience, vicarious emotion. It's voyeurism.

It's not a lot different than peeping through windows at people and seeing what they're doing and how they live and who they're married to and what those people look like. And you ask yourself, what is the matter with us that the experiences that really, you know, there's people that will not miss those programs. I will rearrange my work schedule and everything else so that I do not miss whatever this program is because that's my emotional fix.

Well, what's going on there? Stop and think about it. Is it just harmless fun? Well, it kind of depends on the person. I think for a lot of people they tune it in once every so often and it's harmless fun.

But people who really get devoted and become dedicated to making sure they don't miss those programs, what's the matter with you? I think for a lot of us it's kind of like, well, I've kind of got

my own TV show going on here. I don't need to watch somebody else having a good time. I'm having a great time.

I have a great time with my family. I have a great time watching my kids accomplish things or watching my wife beautify the backyard or whatever it might be. It's gratifying.

I have satisfaction from my own experiences. I don't need to borrow someone else's. I don't need to live vicariously through other people.

Well, what kind of person are we? Are we shallow? Are we deep? Are we satisfied or are we in need of constant stimulation? There are people who are showing up in the book of Judges here as deliverers and they reflect the nature of the people in the land. And as they become less and less men of integrity, as they become less and less people of character and of faith, those who call out to God, they reflect the ambient temperature in Israel. This is what most of the population is like.

So by the time you get to Samson, his origins are just like the origins of the nation of Israel. An announcement from a holy messenger. A call and a command to sanctification.

Be a Nazarite. Touch not the unclean thing. Nothing dead.

Nothing from the vine. You've got to be separate. You've got to be unique and distinct.

And you ought to look and be distinct even to your neighbors in the land. And Manoah and his wife, when they're raising this child, what do you think the neighbors and the other people in the tribe of Dan would think? Well, that little Samson they've got running around, they never cut his hair. He doesn't get to drink any grape juice or eat any raisins.

Boy, look how careful they are whenever there's something dead around. He's special. And people say, there's something unusual.

There's something going on. And this is of God. There is no such thing as being a Nazarite apart from God.

As soon as you say someone's a Nazarite, it invokes Yahweh in Israel. How can you be a Nazarite and not think? It's like talking about a nun and not thinking of the Catholic Church. I mean, you can't separate the two.

There's no such thing as a nun that's not a Catholic. That they're just inseparable, right? At least I don't know of any. So, the same thing in Israel.

You say, this little boy's a Nazarite, this young man's a Nazarite. Well, that's God. And people have ceased to think about God for generation after generation after generation.

And here's somebody that forces that issue back into their attention. He is a walking billboard for the Lord God. At least that's what he's supposed to be.

But as he grows up, he himself shows no commitment whatsoever to that ideal, to that goal. Just like the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel was supposed to be a national billboard for the God who created the universe and the God who created the earth.

They are supposed to be God's chosen people. They are supposed to be a light to the Gentiles. They are supposed to reflect and communicate God to the world.

And they've lost sight of that. And Samson is just the embodiment of it. Within Israel, he is a man who has lost sight of his calling, lost sight of his origins, and his life is all about himself.

So you think about the episodes that we've seen now with Samson. He first starts out with this gal that he wants to marry in Timnah. And it's all about himself.

And when the lion comes, he tears it up. But he doesn't build an altar to Yahweh. He doesn't praise God.

He doesn't give glory to God. He doesn't tell his parents, well, here came the lion and the bear, but God gave me the victory. Later on, David is going to slay a lion and a bear with his own two hands.

And when he gets asked about it, he's going to say, the God of Israel gave me victory over those animals, and he will therefore give me victory over this uncircumcised Philistine that's out there defying the armies of the living God. David associates everything with God. Samson associates everything with himself.

We're going to see it tonight. Take a look at where we left off in chapter 15 last time. He slays all these people with the jawbone of a donkey.

Remember, this was at Lehi. And Lehi, the word Lehi, I think the Mormons in their book, somebody in there is named Lehi, or there's a tribe of Lehi or something. And it's also a soft drink.

Well, next time you see a bottle of Lehi, just remember, Lehi means jawbone. That's what the word means. Or maybe it's Nehi.

Yeah, well, it's close enough. But I know Lehi is in the Book of Mormon somewhere. Or maybe it's Nephi.

Whatever. They all rhyme. They're all stored near each other in my mind.

Lehi means jawbone. So, he came to Lehi, verse 14 of chapter 15 of Judges. Philistines come shouting against him.

The Spirit of the Lord comes mighty upon him. The brand spanking new ropes that were on his arms became like flax that is burned with fire. It doesn't say he broke them.

They melted off of him. This is an act of God. It's an act of the Spirit.

His bonds broke loose. Now, this is a reminder of the fact, by way of application, you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. You are a child of God.

There are times when the world, people in the world, opponents of some flavor, some variety, are going to try to put restrictions on us. They will hem us in. They will try to thwart us, to stop us.

And this is not like a universal get-out-of-jail-free card where, well, nobody can stop me because I'm a child of God. But, when you are filled with the Spirit, when you are fulfilling the plan and purpose of God, you are unstoppable. Same thing when Jesus said, if you abide in me and my words abide in you, you can ask what you will and it will be done for you.

People say, wow, Lord, I want a Mercedes. Lord, I want a new washer-dryer. Lord, I want a refrigerator.

I want a bigger house. I want to get better looking. I want to be more popular.

I want a promotion. I want a raise. Whatever you will, it will be done for you.

What is the condition on that promise? If you abide in me and if my words abide in you. Well, if you are truly abiding in Christ, and if Christ's words are abiding in us, when we ask something, what's going to be the nature of that request? We are going to be thinking along the same lines as God. We are going to be asking for things that further God's plan.

And I don't really think me getting a Mercedes has anything to do with God's plan. I can't really think of a way where I must have a Mercedes so that the plan of God can march ever onward and forward. I don't see where it helps Bible class.

I don't see where it's going to accomplish any divine objective. No matter how hard I try to justify it, if I could, I would. I would say, well, Lord, without that Mercedes, I think grace and truth would probably just fall apart.

I think everybody is expecting me to drive a Mercedes. It's just not going to happen. But if I ask for insight into the Scripture, because I have a responsibility to try to present meaningful Bible classes.

If I ask for endurance, if I ask for strength, if I ask for my sleep to be more effective, because I don't get as much of it as I maybe should. Do you think God would answer those prayers? And I can invoke that promise and say, look, I am really trying to fulfill my responsibilities in all of the different areas of my life. So, am I abiding in Christ? Are His words abiding in me? Am I thinking along the lines of what God would like to see done? And then I'm making my requests in that light? There's a high probability that those prayers are going to be answered in the affirmative.

Same thing here. When the Spirit of God is on you, as it is on Samson, and he is doing

something that God wants done, no force on earth is going to stop him. These are brand new ropes, which means what? Ropes are like wineskins.

There's your clue. What's the difference between a new rope and an old rope? Anybody who's been in the Navy knows this. What's the difference between a new line and an old line? A new rope and an old rope.

An old rope has been used to take a strain. It has flexed. It has stretched.

And the stretch is out of it. Sometimes that's a good thing. Now, I'm talking more about sisal and hemp and some of your older fiber.

You know, plastic is a thing unto itself. But, well, you know, nylon stretches whether it's new or old. But generally speaking, the old sisal and hemp type of ropes, when you would first initially get those stretch out of those, now they're going to bind something tight, and the stretch, the flex has been taken out.

But a new rope will stretch. Now, if you're afraid somebody's going to bulge their way out of a thing, they're going to break loose. Would you want to use a new rope or an old rope? You want to use a new rope that if they flex and stretch, it's got flex, and it's going to flex, and then it's going to snap back.

It's going to flex and snap back. If you bind somebody with old ropes, somebody could say, well, you know, he broke that rope because it was inflexible, and he just snapped it. He went past its strain limit, and it was an old rope anyway.

It's probably abraded, probably had some strands that were broken, and it's no big deal. He snapped an old rope. A new rope is two or three times as hard to break as an old rope because, among other things, not only does it not have the broken fibers and it's not abraded and worn, but it flexes, just like a new wineskin can expand.

For an old wineskin, the expansion is gone. So it's not an accident that it says new ropes. But ropes are used to bind and restrict and confine.

Now, think about the history of Samson here. He's got this origin, this holy origin by divine announcement. He is born to a woman that has been barren, much as the descendants of Abraham and the descendants of Isaac come from women, and even the descendants of Jacob.

These ladies are off and on with their ability to bear children. And so now the pagans, the Philistines, have decided that this representative of God, this agent of Yahweh, is going to be bound. And oddly enough, he is bound.

Who bound him? Was it the Philistines or the men of Judah? Who wrapped him up in the rope? It was the men of Judah, wasn't it? He said, we want to bind you and take you down to the Philistines. So Samson said, swear that you will not kill me. In verse 12, they spoke, saying, No,

but we will tie you securely and deliver you into their hand, but we will surely not kill you.

So they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock. They double bound him. They bound him with one rope, then they got a whole other rope and bound him again.

This is like a Houdini thing, where, well, we put a chain on you, we'll put another chain on you. Well, you think about Israel. How did they end up being in Egypt to be enslaved? Their own brother brought them down there.

Joseph brought them down, right? It was at Joseph's behest that they came down into Egypt to begin with. And they ended up, they started out okay, but they ended up in bondage and in slavery. Well, when it was time for that slavery to end, how much insurrection, how many battles did the Israelites have to fight to free themselves from Egyptian oppression? How many arrows did they shoot? How many spears did they throw? How many rocks did they sling? How many swords did they swing? Israel was completely passive when they were delivered.

All they had to do was march out when God told them to, right? Splash a little blood on the doorpost and out they come. They didn't have to lift a finger against the Egyptians, did they? How hard does Samson have to work to get out of these ropes? They melt off him. He didn't even flex.

It's kind of like they just incinerated off him as though he were the Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah being thrown into Nebuchadnezzar's fire. The ropes burn off, but they are not singed. So they became like flax.

His bonds broke loose. He found this jawbone, this lehi of a donkey. It's fresh.

We talked about that last time and what that means. He killed 1,000 men with it. So now, this is where we pick up.

Verse 16, tonight. So I want you to think about this now. There's a big contingent of men.

Let's say that this is 350 men. It says 1,000, but we know that Elif is a unit. But this is still a sizable number of guys.

We'll just pick a number out of the air. I'm going to say there's 350 dead Philistines around Samson. And he's killed them with this fresh jawbone.

There's meat and skin and pieces of gums and tongue and stuff stuck to this jawbone. And he's just been flailing with it. It's a nasty, awful piece of a dead corpse.

And he has turned all of these Philistines into corpses with it. He has used death to inflict death on them. He's standing there.

And he's surrounded with these dead Philistines. Now, this is a gory sight. I mean, you think about what it's going to take to kill somebody with a jawbone.

He's not tapping them lightly on the temple and they're falling over. I mean, they're torn up. It's probably the teeth.

Have you ever seen the teeth on a donkey, on a horse? Any of those grazing animals, those front teeth that clip the grass? Have you ever seen a jawbone laying there that's all white? I mean, the teeth, that's what he was using, is the teeth in the end of that jawbone. You've got the molars back there for grinding. You've got those front teeth for chopping.

Well, it's kind of like a hoe would be if you took an iron hoe used for moving dirt and you just grabbed the end of that thing. Or an entrenching tool with the blade at a 90 degree. That's probably an approximation.

So he's slain all these guys, and there's this bleeding, ugly mess of flesh all around him. And he's standing there with the jawbone still in his hand. That's right where we are at verse 16.

He's still got the thing. And Samson says, with the jawbone of a donkey, heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of a donkey I have slain an Eliph. I've slain a contingent.

I've slain a battalion. Now notice verse 17, and so it was when he had finished speaking that he threw the jawbone from his hand. But he stops, and it raises his soul to a poetic level.

This is a poem in Hebrew. Standing there surrounded by slaughtered Philistines with this E-tool in his hand, this donkey jawbone, it just brings him to the height of poetic creative expression. And he had to think for a minute, because Samson likes a good piece of poetry.

Just like his lion and the honey deal. Out of the eater came forth something to eat. Out of the strong came forth something sweet.

That's a poem. This is a poem also. And in Hebrew it's really kind of a pretty thing.

I'll see if I can read it to you here out of the Hebrew. Samson said, Bil-hi-ha-chamor-chamor-cham-ra-chayim. So that's the first line of the poem.

Bil-hi, that's ba-la-hi. Ba- means, that's the prefix. It means with or by or in.

In, by, or with. It's kind of like an instrumental. And then li-hai.

But when you stick it on the front, it changes form. So Bil-hi, that's with a jawbone. Ha-chamor.

Chamor is the word for donkey. C-h-a-m-o-r. Bil-hi-chamor.

Ha-chamor. Then you have that same word repeated two more times. It's ha-chamor-chamor-cham-ra-chayim.

Because the word for heap and the word for donkey are the same. So Samson is standing there with the jawbone in his hand, and he says, Bil-hi, and he's looking at the jawbone. And then, ha-chamor, and he looks over at the dead donkey.

And then he says, Chamor-chamor-ra-chayim. I've made a heap. With the jawbone of an ass, I've made a heap of asses.

With the jawbone of a donkey, I've made a heap of donkeys. I've made a heap of heaps. But it's a word play, because he's basically calling them donkeys.

He's saying, I've made them like this guy over here. I took his jawbone, and now they're just like his. It's really kind of pretty.

It's kind of a... You can make a refrigerator magnet out of this. So then the second line, he says, Bil-hi, ha-chamor, same start again, with the jawbone of a donkey, of an ass. Then he says, Hi-kayl-ti, which means I've struck dead, El-ef-eesh, a battalion of man.

Eesh. And it's got the same number of syllables. It's just a nice little nursery rhyme.

Little Jack Horner sat in the corner. Or he stuck in his thumb and pulled out a plum. Well, that's how this flows in Hebrew.

He says, With the jawbone of an ass, I've made a heap of heaps. With the jawbone of an ass, I have struck a battalion. And it just loses so much when it comes over in English.

But he's real proud of himself. And after he has composed this ode to the dead heap of Philistines, then he's done, and he throws away the jawbone. He's through with that.

Well, now think about it. What happened in Israel? This is loosely paralleling the history of Israel. Samson's life is paralleling Israel.

And what happened after they were freed from bondage without any flexing of muscles on their own behalf? Those from whom they had been freed came after them, and they were overwhelmed in the waters. They were destroyed. And there was a song that was sung immediately after.

Remember, Miriam sang a song. The horse and rider have been cast into the sea. And then they left.

Then they moved on. So you think, okay, well, that seems like a pretty loose parallel. And it is.

But we'll keep going now. Because what happens in verse 18? What does it say in Judges 15, 18? Well, I forgot. After he threw away the jawbone, he called that place Ramoth Lehi.

Well, Ramoth means mountain or height. And Lehi, you know what that means. He called it Jawbone Hill.

It's kind of like Pork Chop Hill. But this is Jawbone Hill. And there's some debate about whether he was actually standing on a hill or if he named the mound the Philistines.

He's like, I just made my own mountain here. I think I'll name it. This is Jawbone Mountain here.

And then he walked away. Because there's no indication that he was actually on a hill at all. The Philistines had spread out in the plains around the foothills of Judah.

And when he got taken to them, he apparently was in the plains. And so he kind of made his own mountain. And then he stood there and gave forth with a poem.

And then he named his mountain. And so then he's real happy. But now he's thirsty.

He became thirsty, so he cried out to the Lord. Now, why do we get this note? What on earth does this have to do with anything that he became thirsty? Well, you have to go back to Exodus. And you will remember that in Exodus chapter 14, the Israelites cross the Red Sea.

And afterwards, after they are devastated, Moses and the children of Israel sing a song. I will sing to the Lord. He has triumphed gloriously.

The horse and rider he has thrown into the sea. Who is the subject of this song in Exodus 15? I will sing to the Lord. He has triumphed gloriously.

Who is the hero of Samson's song? With the jawbone of an ass, I have made a heap of heaps. With the jawbone of an ass, I have slain a battalion. Somehow God was omitted, even though the Spirit is the one that came on and got him loose from the ropes, and so on.

So after Exodus 15, the first half of the chapter, the song of Moses, then Miriam took a timbrel, and she sang a song. Sing to the Lord. For he has triumphed gloriously.

The horse and rider he has thrown into the sea. What happens immediately after that in Exodus 15, verse 22? Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea. They went out into the wilderness of Shur.

They went three days into the wilderness, and what? Found no water. They came to Marah. They couldn't drink the water.

The name of it was called Marah. The people complained against Moses, and said, What shall we drink? So he cried out to the Lord. The Lord showed him a tree.

He cast it into the waters. The waters were made sweet. Then he made a statute and an ordinance for them.

And he said, If you diligently, this is Exodus 15, verse 26, If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his sight, give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord who heals you. And after that they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees, and they camped there by the waters. So they were thirsty, and God did two things.

He healed bitter waters, and then he brought them to a place where each tribe had its own

well. And each tribe had a bunch of palm trees. Well, you go back to the book of Judges, and Samson, after he sees his enemies all heaped up around him, he did it himself.

He gets thirsty, and so he calls out to the Lord, and he says in verse 18, You have given this great deliverance by the hand of your servant. Now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised? He gives sort of this token acknowledgement that God has given the deliverance, but it's, you know, my hand has wrought this deliverance, and now are you going to let me die of thirst and be taken by these uncircumcised? So once again, you see the attitude in Israel, where all through these cycles in Judges, they will cry out to the Lord, and they say, Oh yes, you're the God of deliverance, but it's a self-centered prayer. It's a self-centered attitude.

This is what we have to watch for, and this is our second point of personal application for the night. The deliverance that we ask for from God, what is our objective? Remember earlier I was talking about if you're in the Spirit, if you are abiding in Christ and His words abide in you, you can ask what you will, and it will be done for you. But many times when we are driven to God to pray or to ask for deliverance or to ask for a solution to a problem, what's our real motivation? Are we genuinely interested in seeing the plan of God come to fruition? Or are we in distress in saying, well, you know, God would probably do this if I asked Him.

I'll try to find a tie-in. Oh God, you're the God of deliverance and I appreciate your promises, so can you really help me out of this jam? I'm thirsty. Are you going to let me fall into the hands of these evildoers, these uncircumcised? And we try to wrap it in something that will... It's kind of like we're going to fool God into answering our prayer when He can see into our heart, what is our motivation? What are we really after? Well, Israel reflects their attitude toward God when the heat is off, when they're not oppressed.

Have they sought out the Levites? Have they built up the fallen-down tabernacle? Are they still trying to offer the sacrifices? Do they ever read the law? Do they pay any attention? They only cry out to the Lord when they're under oppression and the chips are down. And that's what Samson is reflecting here. He's gotten a great deliverance from God, really through no fault of his own, and now he's asking God for water.

Well, miraculously, God answers. You would expect that God would rebuke him or send an angel to chew him out or something, but God just answers. God split the hollow place that is in Lehi, and water came out.

This word translated hollow place is only used one other place in Scripture. It's used over in the Proverbs, and it's translated there as mortar, that which glues bricks together, sort of. It doesn't really mean hollow place.

It means a gap-filling substance. There are layers of rock that are separated sometimes by softer material, and apparently God, it was kind of like an artesian well, God broke some soft rock and water came spewing out from between two layers of harder rock. So God broke the mortar, is almost what this says.

God split the mortar, split the sediment between some hard rocks, and water came out. Now, again, it says that it's in Lehi, but once again, this is the word for jawbone, and it is not impossible to read that this was where he threw that jawbone. That's the place where the water came out.

The water came out through the jawbone. This portion of Judges gets very cryptic. Boy, the next section, you can't believe how cryptic it is when he goes to the prostitute in Gaza.

The Hebrew is very short and clipped, and there's no explanation, and the words are strange, and it's very hard to figure out. And that starts here. And so it's not real clear if it's talking about the place that was afterward named Lehi, because he names his heap of Philistines that.

There is no geographical place in Israel called Lehi. Nobody knows exactly where this is. But was this a gap in the rock? This literally says the mortar that was in the jawbone, or the material that was between the jawbone.

It's real strange. But water came out, in any case, and he drank, and his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore he called its name En HaKor, which is in Lehi to this day.

En HaKor, or En HaKore, En means spring. En Gedi is the spring of Gedi. En HaKor, this is from Kara, which means to call out, because it says he called out to the Lord.

He cried out to the Lord. And it's not the normal word for crying out like Israel does when they're asking for a deliverer. This is a different word.

This is where he shouted. He's kind of shouting at God. He's not really crying out in the sense of appeal.

He's shouting at God, Hey, you just gave me this great deliverance by my hand here, so now where's the water? Anyway, he calls it En HaKor, which is the spring of the shouter, or the spring of the caller. Shouting springs, you could call it, which is in Lehi to this day, at least the day of writing. Then we have this little cryptic notation.

He judged Israel 20 years in the days of the Philistines. Now what's different about that and the notation of all the previous judges, where after their days of deliverance or their mighty battle or whatever it was, says they judged Israel, what does it usually say? And Israel had rest, where there was rest in the land so many years. What does it say here? He judged Israel 20 years, but it doesn't say anything about rest in the land.

It says it's the days of the Philistines. The Philistines are still dominating. He's judging, but it hasn't overthrown the hegemony of the Philistines.

So Samson gets a mountain to name and gets a drink of water and so forth, but Israel doesn't seem to really benefit that much from his 20 years now of judging. What does the 20 years signify? What's going to happen as we move into chapter 16? That's what we'll see when we

come back from the break.