

Free - Take One



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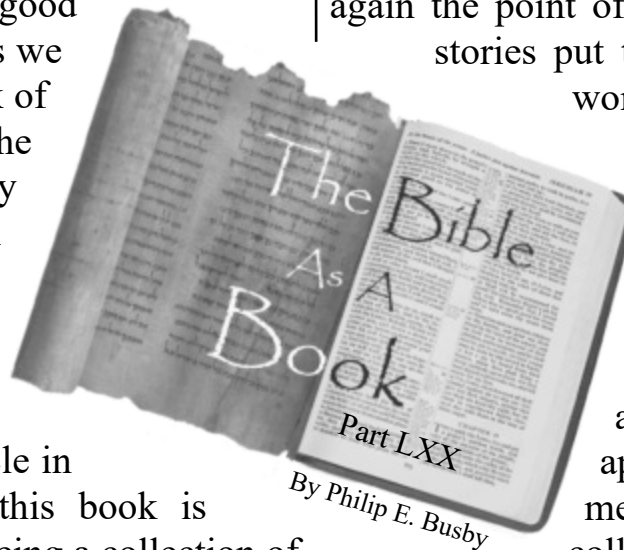
*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
Colossians 2:8*

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In our last segment, we talked about how the Book of Judges came to be named that. While it might seem a simple subject we got into a very good discussion about government in general and how it is nothing more than the extension of the authority God gave men in order to create the family unit. It also gave us a good perspective on the events we see going on in the Book of Judges as we see the people and the work they did within the cultural structure of the day. We talked about the answer to the question of who wrote this book, and in that we see what a miracle in many ways it is that this book is preserved for us at all. Being a collection of writings which chronicle this time period which covers a span of about 300 years, it is nothing short of the hand of God that it came together and is here for us to study. To be sure these events which we so often think of as individual stories are very important historical information to have, and that is why God preserved them for us.



book we should be aware of one thing and that is the fact the book is not put together in chronological order. Some might argue it is or that it's close enough and I won't get into that argument because it's not so important to the information we see in the book. That said, we need to understand again the point of this book consisting of stories put together into a cohesive work and presented as one book. As we talked about, that's why the book can be divided into roughly three parts; an introduction, the stories of the judges, and then a closing or appendix. What that means is the stories were collected, and while they are in chronological order to a great degree there are some of the stories that overlap each other. In some cases there is what one might look at as a grouping of the stories which logically belong together, which are all told together, before we go into a story that is more of what we'd call a standalone. That stand-alone story in some cases chronologically took place somewhere in between the judges of the

As we go into our overview of the

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grouping or overlapped them all. As we go into this verse by verse overview we will be attempting to look at the chronological order but in many ways ignore the overlaps. For one thing it's very hard to say exactly where the overlaps are, and it would get very confusing if we tried to jump back and forth that much.

While we are on the subject of chronology it should also be said that there are obvious events which extend across books of the Bible that now begin to come in between each other. Of course, when it comes to this study we are doing, we are certainly going book by book so we won't deviate off to these other stories. However, when we come to those points in the Book of Judges where other important events in the Bible take place, on occasion I will attempt to point it out in a way that doesn't take us off our main view of the Book of Judges itself. All that said, it's time we start into our overview, and after talking so much about chronology causing some variation in going through the book, we, of course, start in the introduction which has a fairly unique case of chronology we will talk about.

Beginning in verse 1 of chapter 1, we see the narrative picks up right where the bulk of the story ended in the Book of Joshua. I say bulk of Joshua's story because the very end of Joshua goes on to chronicle how the bones of Joseph, which were brought back from Egypt to be buried in the promised land, were taken care of. It also covers the death of the High Priest Eleazar who was Aaron's son and only the second High Priest to serve Israel. The burying of Joseph's bones is hard to place chronologically because it could have taken

place anytime after Israel became more settled into the land with control over most of the territory. This would have been close to the end of Joshua's life, but since the Book of Joshua tells it to us after covering Joshua's death, it is logical to imagine this was one of those details Israel found time to accomplish before the complete passing of the generation that entered the land. As for the death of Eleazar, that actually happened a little while into the Book of Judges, and it's far enough in that one has to believe it was sad for him to see Israel struggling even within just his lifetime.

In any case, as I said, we will stick to the Book of Judges, and it begins by telling us after Joshua died the nation did exactly as it should have. The people called upon The Lord to find, not if they should finish the job of driving out the people of the land, but who should now take the lead in that task. To this, God answers that Judah should lead the way in this fight and, of course, we see how right off, the tribe of Judah is shown to have importance when it comes to leadership. Just as it had been with Moses and then Joshua, God also confirms to Israel that He had already delivered the people of the land into Israel's hands. Following this small piece of narrative we find ourselves covering events, some of which took place within the Book of Joshua. If you find this confusing, one needs to look at it as a clue in how to understand the Bible as a whole. Important information is often compressed and presented in this way. First we are told of how following Joshua's death the people looked for leadership in facing the Canaanites. Then the narrative goes into things which had already taken place prior

to this moment in order to show how Judah had already been in the role of leadership. This shows us God was already working with the tribe of Judah and the men of God who looked to Him within it.

We start with an event that if we were paying attention during the overview of the Book of Joshua we remember how during the time the land was being divided among the tribes, the tribe of Simeon was given a portion of land that by description lay within the same region as that already given to the tribe of Judah. Thus, it makes perfect sense that Judah says to Simeon they would like for Simeon to go up with them to fight the Canaanites in Judah's portion. In return, Judah promises to go with Simeon to do the same for them. To this Simeon agrees, and we begin to see how easy it was and could have continued to be for the tribes to work as a family/nation in spite of the absence of a king. We are told as Judah and Simeon go up they find the success God had said they'd have, as in Bezek they slew ten thousand men. Overthrow of this location was no small task as we see there was a great king in/of this city/area named Adoni-bezek. This king flees before the two tribes but they pursue him and capture him. In a show of humiliation for a fallen king they cut off his thumbs and the large toes of his feet. This was more than just a humiliation, it also served to render a king unfit for that office. In the day and culture of that time it was greatly looked down upon for a leader to have some physical impairment. In truth, this should come as no surprise as we see that to be true in many countries even today. We may not really look at our leaders as

gods or godlike as people of the past once did, but we still would like for them to have a presence of strength which includes certain aspects to be true of even their physical form.

There can be no doubt that a person with no thumbs or big toes are going to have visible problems with everyday tasks much less in leading men into battle. We should also keep in mind this was an age before modern technology allowed one to overcome a lot of these kinds of troubles. Thus, this was done with the idea the man would never be a threat to rise up and be a king once again. However, this also implies that Israel did not intend to put this king to death. Instead he would be taken to Jerusalem and there he would die, presumably sometime later. This was something which shows us a bit of a crack in Israel's philosophy as to how to take this land properly. It was never really God's intent that Israel humiliate the people of the land but that they wipe them from the face of the earth. It is not as if leaving this one king alive had any real negative impact on that idea, but it does show how Israel was already beginning to drift a little from the perfect course. Aside from that point verse 7 shows us an interesting fact. Adoni-bezek himself would seem believes in God, for he says it was justice from God this happened to him. This was justice because he had done this very thing to seventy other kings and now the chosen nation did it to him! One could say the use of "God" here is simply reference to some false god, but it is capitalized in this verse. To that one could argue it's a textual error but be aware that

just because a person, especially in a bad situation, admits they believe in God does not mean they serve Him. It also does not mean they have really ever respected Him as The One True God and certainly not as the only True God. Once such a thing happened to this king it might have been the moment he began to change that thought, and if so, that was a great thing for him personally. However, the real point is that we see, once again, others in this land still knew there was a True God. Knowing and refusing to serve Him can be far worse than to never have known Him at all. (II Pet. 2:21)

Simple point of fact, taking this king to Jerusalem was long before Jerusalem became the capital of Israel, but at the time the tribe of Judah had taken it and held control that would one day be lost to the Jebusites until David takes it back once more. Following this incident Judah leads the charge to go down into the south part of theirs and Simeon's portion of land and drive out the Canaanites from the mountains and valley area(s) there. Then we are told a fact that is clearly covered in the Book of Joshua, which is the fact they took the city of Hebron and killed the leaders that resided there. They then march on to Debir which was named Kirjath-sepher at the time. This is the city where Caleb tells whoever goes in, or essentially leads the successful charge to take this place, to him Caleb would give his oldest daughter Achsah. A man named Othniel who was Caleb's nephew through a younger brother would accomplish the task and receive the reward. We then cover the same exact story told to us in Joshua chapter 15. It is the story of how Caleb's daughter wants her new husband to ask her father for a

certain field, but as it would seem he was unwilling or did not move fast enough for her liking, she jumps off the donkey she was riding and goes to ask her father herself. Caleb, knowing how to give good gifts unto his children gives her what she asks. (Matt. 7:9-11) We can believe such repeating is an error, oversight, redundancy or whatever we like, but the point of such repeat information is to sew together the stories we have heard with the stories we are about to get into. That is the point of all this retelling of information we were given in Joshua and it serves as a lead-up to what we are to hear next. For those who read only this book by itself such retelling of facts is very valuable for that purpose alone!

In verse 16 of chapter 1 we are told the Kenites, which were the people/family Moses married into after leaving Egypt and before coming back to lead Israel out of Egypt, first lived around the area of Jericho. As the tribe of Judah went into the southern portion of the land which was given as their portion, this group of people went with them and lived in the south of the South. This is likely because they felt closer to the area they came from and the people of the Sinai Peninsula with whom they lived originally. The Kenites are but a passing mention here but it tells us how they ended up among Israel in the southern area of the promised land, and they show up now and again in later events of the Bible. The next verses tell us how Judah was given success at defeating the people of the land even to the point of going along the far southern coast of the Mediterranean where the Philistines had dwelt since the time of Abraham. Of these we are told Judah and Simeon drive out those living in the higher

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment, we started into the true latter part of Abraham's life having finished the story of God's greatest trial for Abraham. He had taken Isaac to the spot God told him to take him and there instead of having to sacrifice his son God made the solid covenant with Abraham which we know today. Thus, last time we began talking about how much it was now time to deal with details concerning how that covenant was to pass on to the next generation. That brought us to talk about the death of Sarah, and in Abraham buying a place to bury her we saw how the first piece of this ground God had promised to give Abraham's seed came to be owned by a member of the chosen nation. From there, we turned to the next matter of great importance. As much as having a son to pass the promises of God onto was an important issue to Abraham and Sarah, there was now that question of how Isaac could one day do the same. Just like the importance of Abraham having a son with the right woman, so too it would be with Isaac. That's why we also talked in our last segment about how Abraham learned his brother, back in Mesopotamia, had success in having a family and that family included women who would be of the correct blood to provide a wife for Isaac. We ended last time right at the beginning of the story where Abraham gives the task of going to get that wife to his eldest servant. All this brought us into Genesis chapter 24 verse 3, and it is in that verse we will begin this segment.

One of the points I made last time was that in verse 3 we are told Abraham makes his servant swear an oath in accomplishing this task. However, Abraham does not ask his servant to swear to him or by him or any other man. No, Abraham tells the servant he must swear by The One True God! Abraham even emphasizes how much he is talking about The One True God by saying He was not just some god or whatever god one might believe in. Abraham wanted the servant to swear by The God Who is The God of the heavens and of the earth. There is something to be said here about how much Abraham wanted to emphasize this task be done correctly, but there is also a need to understand the culture they lived in. I'm sure Abraham would not have had this servant as such a senior member of his household if the servant was not a believer in The One True God, much less picked him for this task, but that aside, people of that day generally believed in many gods. Abraham wanted the servant to be clear on the fact he was not just going as an agent of Abraham but also to do God's work. That's why we talked last time about the fact this swearing was not for the sake of making sure the servant came back with a wife. No, just the opposite was true! This was about the servant absolutely, positively not coming back with a wife he had gotten from among the Canaanites!

This is no minor point in the matter and it shows us something Abraham had learned. When we talk about serving God we talk about the things on this earth God

wants to accomplish or that we at least believe are important to see accomplished for the Kingdom of God. However, again and again we must remind ourselves God's ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts. (Isa. 55:8) Thus, we go back again and again to the story of Abraham and Sarah thinking Abraham had to have a son so badly they would take matters into their own hands to make sure it happened. As old as they both were when they made this mistake, not only did God reject the child they had birthed according to their will, God did not immediately bring about the miracle of Isaac's birth either. In fact, when God comes to tell Abraham he would still have a son with Sarah, Abraham pleads with God that He accept Ishmael as heir to the promise. (Gen. 17:15-19) Almost ignoring this plea, God simply goes on to confirm Abraham would, in fact, have a son with Sarah. We look at this and say Abraham had no reason to worry about accepting Ishmael because God was still going to provide a way for them to have a son. However, that is missing at least part of the point.

It's true they did eventually have Isaac, but the real point God was making was that it would happen in the right way or it would not happen at all! This is why I talk about us thinking about what God wants or even "needs" to be accomplished. In thinking this way we often find ourselves affected by not just the positive aspect of being willing to serve God in seeing what He has said to do done, we find the negative aspect of thinking we may have to bend a few rules if that's what it takes to get it done. No matter how clearly Abraham and Sarah did or did not see how using Sarah's

handmaiden as a surrogate was "bending the rules," that is exactly what they were doing. We may not see it in our lives either, but more often than we might like to think we've probably done something along the same lines. Of course, it's almost not possible for us to do something that would have as far reaching consequences as Abraham and Sarah had in what they did. However, wrong thinking is wrong no matter how big or small the consequences may be. The rules can't be bent when you serve a righteous God. God had to be way out in front of our understanding about what directions we might take as freewilled beings to create a world for us and still have a way to deal with our potential sin without breaking anything righteousness dictates be done.

In the world there is plenty of debate and hassle over what is the right way or the wrong way. There are debates about things such as if it's alright to tell a small lie if it seems to do something good. Not so with God! With God there is one way that is right and all the other choices are wrong. It's just that simple, but that means if something cannot be done the right way, it doesn't get done at all. This is a fact to consider and meditate upon. God has it all in His hands and He has a plan for where it is all going to end. We as individuals live in a finite period of time. If Abraham and Sarah could be wrong in what seemed to be as obvious a situation as they had in needing an heir, we are in no position to make the determination as to what just has to be done or accomplished! Again, there is a right way and all the other ways are wrong. So when it came to who could be the wife of Isaac it might not have been clear what was going to happen if the servant went to Mesopotamia

and could not obtain a wife but there was one thing very clear to Abraham. Abraham knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that taking a wife from among the Canaanites was totally out of the question!

The bottom line of what I'm getting at here is that we may or may not believe we can see what God will do or what must be done to accomplish His will, but in no way should we believe that a surrogate or a substitute to God's perfect plan will do. It simply does not matter how the circumstances around us look, there is only one way to get it right or it just can't be done. In the end the lesson we need to see is the one Abraham shows here that he had learned and that is, do it right or don't do it at all! It is never correct to say, being good is just a fable I just can't because I'm not able. There are times when we cannot see the way to accomplish what we believe God wants done without bending the rules. However, that is the time to say, "I just can't because I'm not able. I will leave it to The Lord." This is what Abraham wanted his servant to understand, and that is why he does not ask the servant to swear he will not rest until he brings Isaac a wife. As we talked about last time, the chances are very good this servant already knew a Canaanite wife would not be correct for Isaac, but Abraham would attempt to take away any temptation or pressure this servant thought he had in getting Isaac a wife. The first and foremost demand was that he not bend the rules and settle for a Canaanite woman. The servant would find success in retrieving the correct wife or he would bring back no wife at all.

This point only gets emphasized all the more as we move into the next verses. Verse 4 is where we find the demand by Abraham that the servant go to his home country and retrieve Isaac a wife from among the family Abraham had left there. This seriously narrowed the field of choices the servant had in finding Isaac a wife and the servant clearly understood that fact. It might have been hard enough for the servant to find a wife for Isaac if Abraham had asked he just be sure to get one from the Mesopotamian region, but out of one family only? Verse 5 shows us the servant understood the difficulty as his response to Abraham is to ask what he should do if he can't get a woman to come back with him. There were so many factors in believing this might be the case. It was certainly true that parents in the culture and day traditionally picked a spouse for their children, but what reason did Abraham's family back in Mesopotamia have for giving one of their daughters to Isaac? It had not just been years, it had been decades since the family had seen each other. Abraham was the one who left for a strange land and when it came to keeping in touch with those back home, as we would say today, he never wrote; he never called; and he certainly had never made the trip back to see them.

Just think about it from their point of view. Even now Abraham does not come back to ask his kinsmen for one of their daughters as a wife for Isaac. We can point to the obvious which is the fact Abraham was too old to make the trip at this point, but why didn't he come much sooner? Even if your answer to that is that even at the time Isaac was born it was unreasonable for a

man of Abraham's age to make such a journey, why hadn't he sent one of his servants to at least try to find out information on such an important matter, until now? If we look ahead in the story we also find Isaac was at this point old enough to get married, which means Abraham was not looking to arrange a marriage for a son who was too young to go to Mesopotamia himself! There in might lay the real issue the family could have. If Abraham felt it so important to come back to the family to get a wife for Isaac and couldn't come himself, why didn't he simply send his grown son to retrieve his own wife? To us these issues might seem simple to answer, but the family back in Mesopotamia likely never really understood why it was so important Abraham come out to Canaan in the first place much less never come home even for a visit. To any woman this servant might find that fit the qualifications Abraham had laid out, Isaac would be a total stranger and even Abraham himself was merely someone they had heard stories about at best.

This is why the servant brings up this question of the woman being willing to follow him back to this land. Not only was he up against all we've covered but there is also that simple fact it would be a long journey home to Canaan from Mesopotamia. I think many of us take the servant asking about the woman following him to Canaan as being the issue of willingness to come in the first place, but there is more to it than that. As often as a daughter was given to a man by her father as nothing more than a trade, gift, or to seal a deal between people, such things happened with supervision. Not only was the eyes of the families themselves on the situation,

there was a cultural presser on the girl to do the "right" thing and stay with the man her father gave her to no matter how she felt. There is, of course, that cultural aspect as well that in the day, any woman who did not follow such rules could be punished by being relegated to a life of prostitution or slavery of some sort. They could even be put to death for such insubordination to the rules and customs. However, in the case of any woman this servant was able to obtain permission to bring back, many of these factors were washed away. She might go with the servant in leaving her father's house because she would not want to face what punishment they might give if she rebelled. She might even leave her home region for the most part, but would she make the entire journey back to Canaan?

To really grasp this, we must do what we need to do in so many places as we read the Bible. We must think about what it was like in that day and age. Today we could fly between where Abraham lived in Canaan and where the servant was being sent. In doing so we would arrive in a matter of hours. It is so close that if very quick success was found by the servant in making an agreement to take one of the daughters today, he could easily make the round trip and have the whole thing accomplished in not even the time span of a couple days. Even driving would not take too much more time, plus any overnight stays the journey might require would be nothing more than stops to rest at places meant for just that purpose, such as a hotel or the like. In our day one can travel great distances in short periods of time with very minimal contact with anyone but the people we are going to see. Certainly if we do not stop to "see the

What About God's Chosen People?

Part XLIV

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

"Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people."

In our last segment, we began to take a look at what is known as the "Oral Torah." In doing that we started talking about where it came from, but since that is a debate to some degree we really ended up talking about the debate itself. That led to a discussion that mainly centered around the subject of doctrine because doctrine is where we, as believers in God, find both good and bad. The Oral Torah is a great example of how this works in that for the Jews it can be such a good thing in helping answer many questions about how to apply or conduct the Law. At the same time it is such a bad thing because it becomes depended on and gets held in such high regard it often will not be questioned. We discussed how this is bad because we each need doctrine to be something that is solidly learned in our life, not something we just learn from other people, a book, etc. The only pure source of doctrine is our own personal walk with The Lord or what should be properly understood as our faith!

Faith can not be replaced by anything in our lives. It really does us little good to know what to believe if we do not know why we believe it. One of the deepest wounds Christianity suffers from is the long-term effect of this very problem. For centuries there was doctrine decided upon and laid down to Christians which they were told was their duty to perform in order to be

considered a "true Christian." There was a concern that Christianity was and/or might be corrupted by false doctrine. The real fear came in the idea that what it was to be a Christian might totally be lost in the world and men set out to do something about it. As certain things were agreed upon there was good in some of it but also bad. The good helped individuals get a foothold on what it was to be a true believer but the bad was far worse. The bad was that it stunted growth and basic understanding of doctrine went from being a starting point to being all that was "required for salvation." As time passed this was seen by Christian "leaders" and they experienced something God very much intended the Jews to see in having the Law. They saw those doctrines could never be enough. In seeing this they made the same kind of fatal mistake the Jews had often made and which we see at the time of Jesus. With the Oral Torah, we see doctrine grew into an understanding as to what it was to be a "good Jew," and that caused the Jewish religious leadership to reject the very Messiah the nation was formed to bring forth.

Instead of being the people who with open arms received Jesus as The Messiah and who introduced Him to the world, the Jewish religious establishment became the very instrument of The Messiah's death. Over the centuries the church has greatly villainized the Jews for doing that but it was nothing more than a foreshadowing of what the church itself would grow to become. Church leaders saw that following their simple creeds

and doctrines were enough to define who was and who was not part of the “Christian faith” but they were not enough to make a person a “good Christian.” Thus, they set out to codify and solidify more and more doctrine. As they did, arguments came about as to what was and what was not correct. Different churches went in different directions but the end result was all the same. Christians of all churches became reliant on these doctrines when it came to how to believe. People would and still do change what church they go to and this is often based on that sliver of personal doctrine they may have, but they do this in hopes of being part of a church that at the very least matches with their doctrine as much as can be expected. The problem is, people still need a church, even when a good one is not available, because they do not really know how to rely on personal doctrine to be what guides their actions in life.

I have known so many people who admitted God had led them to a certain belief or way of thinking but because they could not find a group of believers who also believed the same way, they gave up the path those personal doctrines led them to because they wanted to stay with the group and/or not be “odd.” This adds to the real danger of doctrine. As time passes and people follow the doctrine of this church or that they find themselves going through the motions but not understanding why. Because the doctrine was taught to them instead of being a learned by faith belief system, the whole church can easily come to question why some old, seemingly dusty rule is followed. For a time people may seek to find the why, but after a great deal of time not even the teachers of the doctrine itself really know the why. Because living a true life for God is going to bring both large and small differences in how one

lives their life, true believers will find themselves out of place in this world. When this happens people seek to change or at least bend the doctrine to be more “comfortable.” More often than not, all this results in a doctrine which is seemingly more suited with the time period in which the people live. In this process doctrine becomes not just hard rules instead of personally learned beliefs but it becomes dated.

When something becomes dated there can be no doubt it will one day fall out of accomplishing its task of making a “Christian” life more comfortable. This requires the doctrine to be, updated! This is done to, once again, bring it in line with the surrounding world and/or culture of the day. In some ways this process becomes so common that many simply believe it is the right thing to do. To put it another way, it comes to be seen as, the way the process works. Those who feel this way see no reason to hesitate in changing or totally dropping certain doctrine along the way when it does not fit with the time. They only find resistance from those who, if nothing else, feel traditional about things. These people will try to slow the process or put a halt to it. Some even feel it is their duty to stand up for the older ways so as not to lose their identity. The religion of Christianity can even seem to disappear for some if too many doctrines change in their lifetime. Such people are looked at by those who feel comfortable in changing doctrine as, backward, old fashioned anchors who are holding the church back from reaching the new generation. Yes, the argument often gets framed to be not so much about right versus wrong but about the stunting of evangelism itself! Another problem is, since it's true church doctrine has long ago been morphed

to fit an earlier generation's thinking the argument that traditional thinkers are outdated actually holds some truth. If the doctrine was based more on what a past generation believed than it was about what God actually has to say, holding older doctrines are nothing more than holding onto one wrong thing in resistance to accepting the “newest” wrong thing!

Most all this comes about from the simple basis people never really understood why they believe what they believed. This causes some to hold onto it simply because it was what they were taught and others to let it go because they see no point in continuing the doctrine. Throughout time we have seen what is called revivals or awakenings that have changed some of this and in many ways they have been good. However, from the Protestant movement, which brought many out from Catholicism, to many of those times that brought about new Christian denominations, the real value was short-lived. It usually only takes a short time period before the same exact process of codifying doctrine is looked at as necessary in order to solidify the ground that was gained. The end result maybe a church organization, denomination, etc. that is “better” than where the people came from but one that is again on the same downhill path that caused a need for the revival in the first place. What an actual revival reveals is the truth we have been talking about in these segments. That's the truth of understanding what it means and feels like to have God directly directing your understanding, beliefs, and ultimately your doctrine. However, people seldom see this as the real meat of what they found, and in a panic to not lose what the process gained

they feel the need to lock it down. This, once again, stunts that organic growth a true believer should have and the group stagnates with only what they found for a short time, never moving ahead in their relationship and learning process with God.

In all this complexity the Jew finds themselves with a slight advantage over the religion of Christianity. Since they do not reject the Torah Itself and they know It to be very ancient, they understand with some clarity that they hold an ancient religion and belief system. While the need to update it in order to reach a new generation or appeal to a greater number is always going to be a temptation, it doesn't mean as much for Jews to be accused of being archaic. To them, this is not really an argument that is in doubt. Of course, their ways are archaic but that holds no bearing on the debate. Christians don't have this handhold. In spite of it being almost two thousand years since the first appearance of Christ, to many, Christianity is still fresh and new. Due to the disconnect that took place between the religion of Judaism and Christianity which many see whether they defend it as correct or not, Christianity looks to be a religion that is meant to be fresh and new. Is that not what Jesus said with His own mouth? “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” II Corinthians 5:17 Due to false doctrines most Christians believe that at the Passover Seder Christians call “The Last Supper” Jesus did just that in giving a new ritual called communion telling us, “...this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.” I Corinthians 11:25 Surely Jesus was establishing the idea of giving up the old in

exchange for following Him and the work He was about to accomplish.

All this winds itself together into a web easy to be caught in. It all seems to make sense when you base one false doctrine on another, but when you look at what is really there you will find what Jesus was doing was solidly connecting His believers to the Torah! He was not having a “Last Supper,” He was performing an early Passover Seder, and there is almost nothing more Jewish you can do that is more archaic than that! In doing it Jesus gives not a new ceremony for believers in Him to follow but He says to His Jewish apostles, who had been observing Passover all their lives, from now on you will understand when you do this it was not really about your freedom from Egypt as much as it was about what I am going to do. Those stuck in doctrine could never see past the traditions of Passover to understand this, but those open to faith leading their doctrine could now see the reality of this archaic Jewish ritual. For them, old understandings passed away as they saw Passover in this new light, but Passover itself remained. This is the pentacle example of what God meant when He said, “...Behold, I make all things new...” Revelation 21:5 What to many people might have seemed old and dusty did not crumble and pour through their fingers as it was replaced by something new. Instead what was old was suddenly revealed as so relevant to their lives, their day, and their spreading of God's Word they couldn't believe they hadn't seen it before!

This is the true way in which God works. Man lives in a temporary environment. Moth and rust truly corrupts what we build; ideas are lost and forgotten; treasured possessions are left to be

unappreciated by future generations; and the cycle of living and dying keeps marching on. (Matt. 6:19-21) Thus, man's ways are ways that do morph with time. That does not mean that what was once looked at as old does not become new again, it simply means we are in a constant state of flux. For many people it's what gives life meaning. In a big way it's what makes new generations of people feel relevant. Should it be a surprise that this is looked at as the perfect way for humans to handle doctrine? Of course it shouldn't, and so it is done just that way. However, when we look at the ways of God we find He is eternal, never changing, and it is not just that fact which causes Him to inform us that to Him a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day! (II Pet. 3:1-11) God tells us this because while He is endless and time is not relevant to Him in the idea of running out of it, it speaks to His unchanging nature. God is no more effected by the passage of a thousand years than He is the passage of a day. Time will not change Him and it's why Jesus said we should look to Him for He is God. Specifically, “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” John 14:6 No man can have The Father without The Son.

The opening words of the Gospel of John tell us something we should put with this understanding. There we are told Jesus was in the beginning of everything we know and nothing was created without Him. (John 1) Jesus is not the new versus the old; He is not the old instead of the new. Jesus is both and all of it. He is God, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” Revelation 1:8 From the opening words of Genesis to the

closing words of Revelation, He is and He is the same. Human doctrine taught the Jews to see things such as Passover as history, and for the Jew that was not incorrect. Passover did and still does remember their deliverance from Egypt and a Pharaoh who deified The Living God. However, to the one who walked/walks in faith it also foreshadowed and now remembers another linear event of God coming to this earth to show He loved us so much He was willing to be The Passover Lamb which the Jews slew that year. His blood came pouring down that cross as He hung there in humility, being ridiculed for being so powerful and yet coming to such a fate. People said, surely a man who could come to such an end was nothing in spite of all His earlier deeds. Yet, for those who walked in faith He became more powerful than they could have hoped. Even that fact was not immediately seen but it was brought into clarity for them on the Feast of Pentecost by The Holy Ghost. (Acts 2)

The reason behind Passover, The Feast of Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, and Pentecost was held and is still held to this day by Jews who saw/see them as history and ordinances from God. However, whether Jew or non-Jew, to the one who believes in Jesus The Messiah, the reason those events were established by the Law is something relevant and core to the reason we live each day in hope! It is not about being locked in as the Jews are to the traditions that remember their history, it's about a living breathing daily walk in faith. Jesus above all things showed us what God has wanted since He first took the time to form Adam from the clay of this earth and breathe the breath of life into him. God wants to be - God with us! (Gen. 2:7, Matt. 1:22-23) The Law illustrates a ritualistic way to live for God, but it should

not be enough for any believer who desires God. To live for God is why Jesus said there would be many who would stand before Him on Judgment Day and speak of all the glorious things they had done in His name yet be told to depart for He never knew them. (Matt. 7:21-22) To live for God is something we are only rightly compelled to do because we first and foremost desire to live with God!

We can discuss all we want about how religious Judaism came to be, but when we do we are pointing more fingers back at ourselves than we are at them. Some may feel I've wandered too far and wide from our look at history, but writing this segment speaks to what I'm talking about. I had two choices, spend this time writing what I felt was a good continuance of our look at Jewish history or write what I felt the Spirit of God urging me to write. Sadly, I have to admit I have not in every incident totally followed the latter but it has always been and is my prayer I always will choose it. Simply put, there is a way that seems right to a man but the end is dust, death, destruction. (Prov. 14:12) Only in The Living God is their hope of life everlasting. This world is waxing worse and worse. There can be no confidence we each will live another day or that if we do what that day will hold. If God is our only hope then living directly with Him is what we need to do. Nothing of eternal value is gained in following any doctrine no matter how right or wrong it might be if we don't have that personal walk with God. If that is not what our lives are about, we have nothing. That point is why what we have been talking about is totally relevant to our look at Jewish history and more specifically the Oral Torah.

It was during this time we are talking about in Jewish history that the religious Jews

looked out and observed their temple was gone with little hope it would be built again any time in the near future. With the temple gone so too were the sacrifices that were such a large part of what it was to be Jewish. Without those sacrifices how would many of the days of observance be accomplished? Without the temple as the stable place to observe the passage of time and set the beginning of the year and each month how would we know the feast days that were dependent upon knowing? The obvious answer was that in their homes there was still the Hebrew Bible. Its words could still be taught in spite of the inability to perform many of the actions the Law spoke of. It was time to choose if God's Word had substance without the physical enactment or not. This is a question those who believe in Jesus and come to see the deep relevance of the Torah are faced with every day, but to be blunt, the answer is so very much yes! The words have not just relevance even without the actions but the applicability they were always intended to bring to the everyday actions of a believer's life goes unaffected. This is why Jesus is described in the Gospel of John as, "The Word." (John 1:1-14)

We can follow many traditions as ways to remember the past and the Jews still had that option open to them, but once mistakes of men left them without the temple Jesus was what remained of the Law. However, for the religious Jews this was another "problem." They looked out across this devastation of their nation and saw a "new religion" which clearly sprang from their nation, spreading like wildfire across the larger world! The religious mind immediately hears the panic of losing what

once was or at least what seemed to be left of it. The religious Jews now found themselves in a fight for relevance and survival as a people. Of course, it was not God but man who had caused so much of the Law to be unable to be performed, but God was not going to allow the Jewish nation to disappear from the earth. A Jew walking in faith knew this but a religious mind says, it's our job to maintain what we are. When you are religious that is true because God is not interested in maintaining the things of men. That said, when it came to the Jews God did use this in a way He never would for any other people. This was not to fulfill an obligation to a promise God had made Abraham or anyone else. No, God made the promises to Abraham because God would always use the chosen nation.

No matter who understood it or who did not; no matter how few had eyes to see or not; no matter how many liked it or did not; no matter how many would consider it fair or not; God had guided how the Jewish nation came to be what it was at its core! The real fulfillment of the promise to maintain the Jewish nation was not as much in the things God did in times such as those that literally insured the nation not disappear into the history books. The real fulfillment was in how God had formed them to be who they were. Whether Jews believed in Jesus as The Messiah or not, they would be compelled to maintain their heritage. It's very easy for a mostly Gentile church to go off into a false doctrine that says the Law has passed away into the past, replaced by the work of Christ, because to them the Torah is not a heritage and history. Not so with the Jews. They could recognize Passover as being the

foreshadowing of Jesus' work or totally reject Jesus having any connection to it, but for them the reason to remember Passover in some form remains in either case. The same is true of almost all the Law, and it was the attempt to maintain that truth for future generations that the Jews set out to accomplish in this time of history.

One can look at all the negative ways we have examined the subject of doctrine and feel there is nothing but negativity to the doctrine that sewed the religion of Judaism together. When one does, we can feel it's all bad and fail to see the good of God using this tendency of man as a vehicle for maintaining the nation going forward, but that would be a mistake. We speak to the negativity so that as individuals we can see how much our life with God is personal not group based. When it comes to the Jews as a nation, their continued existence is group based. Just as men desire to set down doctrine to maintain and guard the existence of the church, denomination or the like, the Jews desired to maintain their national identity. The difference is, there is no reason for a group of believers to worry themselves with the longevity of any organization. No organization of men, no matter how it is established can maintain even the right your group's doctrine might contain. How do I know that? Just look at the Jews! That's a statement I feel like shouting. The point is once again, if God could come down and literally give a written Law for a group of people to follow and they could fail to hold its truths to the point their main leaders and teachers would end up killing the very Messiah they were all waiting to appear, what more could be done and what hope is there for a group of people to maintain and be the guardians of right doctrine?

The answer, of course, is resoundingly none! So I repeat, doctrine has to be personal no matter who likes it or not, no matter who thinks that's the best way to go about it and who doesn't. Will it be right? That depends on if the individual derives their personal doctrine purely from what others teach them or from their faith. Others can be helpful if they give us the right things to consider, but even that help will fail if we do not conjoin it with confirmation from The Holy Ghost that what we are being taught is true and correct. Thus, there is no real hope for the long-term value of any organization of men, only hope that good men will always be available to teach valuable things! Because this can not be guaranteed among men, God gave us His Word both in stone and flesh. To ensure the stone version of the Word would always be maintained He would commit them to a nation to whom He would give historical, traditional, even what could be called sentimental value in making sure they are never lost or forgotten. That is what the Jews have done and what they would continue to do, even in a time when they would form a religion out of that fact in much the same way all human religions are formed.

Isn't God amazing? In the Jewish nation and all we have been talking about one should clearly see how God turned human weakness into a strength. A negative propensity into something of profound value. When we read the words of the Hebrew Bible we know who the "Hebrews" are in a living breathing way in our day. When we read how The Messiah was a Jewish man, born to Jewish parents on Jewish land, we know what people He was a part of and in what land they belong. We hear them spoken of constantly in our news as they fight for their right to one small piece of ground to call

home in this world. A piece of ground that has been their home since God made it so several millennia ago. Those who fight to deny the Jews this God given birthright are the most unwitting actors in this whole thing. They make an ancient people desiring an ancient homeland whom many would not even care to memorize the location of in Geography class, such a big deal it is an endless part of human history and an immense struggle in our modern age which threatens all humanity desires to build on this world and in this life! All of that is due to a determination religious-minded Jews had, one that killed The Messiah Himself and fulfilled the plan of God their feast illustrated for centuries before, and it is all because God knows us so much better than we could possibility know ourselves.

God would desire we all be a part of His plan because we willingly follow Him as we walk in faith with Him, but this is very personal and must be desired by the individual. Especially in a world where men have demonstrated from the very first a desire to go our own way instead of staying in the comfort of God's unfailing hand, any large group(s) that would continually serve Him could/can only be maintained through one of two ways. One would be for God to force a group of people to do as He desires, but where would be the point in that? Thus, God chose the second option which He and only He alone could pull off. That second option is to guide a path of national development with His miraculous blessings as God has done with the Jewish nation. In doing so God fulfilled a great promise any man would love to receive, a promise God made to the great man of faith, Abraham. In going in this direction God gave Jacob's

family what they wanted, comfort in a plentiful land just at the edge of the most developed and developing nation in the world of that day (Egypt). When the evil of men turned against the Jews they would cry out and the God who had promised to use them would hear their cry and respond. God would fulfill their wish for freedom in a way they could never have hoped possible.

He would give them opportunity after opportunity to learn His great power by showing them no matter what the physical circumstances around them made it seem was true, no matter how bad it looked, God always had them in His mighty hand. God would eventually take the Jewish nation and in actions a conquering army could not even hope to perform on their own, God would take from a sinful people the land He had promised to Abraham and give it to the Jewish nation. God never failed to bless the nation and He never will. Even in all the ways they have done the typical things all humans do which take us from God, the Jews have found themselves on a path that points right back to Him! God has truly accomplished what He told Abraham so very long ago; God has blessed them that blessed this nation and cursed those who have cursed it. (Gen. 12:3) I could teach for pages on how much this is true, but lest we forget, God did not stop there. No, for it is an unshakable truth that through the chosen nation, all the world has been blessed whether they like it or not!

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

***Questions submitted to the Institute,
answered by Philip E. Busby.***

FBS continued from pg. 8

sights and take in the local culture” our exposure might be so small we wouldn't even know how to describe much more than the scenery of the places we passed through.

In the time period we are talking about here the servant's journey to Mesopotamia would take days if not weeks. Traveling was truly an adventure whether you liked it or not. Not just the slowness of the travel by foot and/or camel and the like caused it to take time, but what might need to be done as you passed through each place could slow one down considerably. This is why merchants of the day found trade routes very important. No matter if you had or had not been on a certain path before, knowing a trade route to follow from point A to point B was of great help. What it meant was that there were people and places all along the way who understood you were just passing through and readily accepted that fact and/or found some reason to interact with the activity in some positive way for all involved. Even for an individual it would be easier to follow a known trade route anytime you needed to simply pass from one place to another in spite of the fact you did not offer what merchants could. Certainly Abraham's servant had no want for funds so the expense would not be a problem and he would have trade routes to follow for some of the journey. However, on other parts, especially in parts that might affect the woman most, he would not likely be on a trade route. This would require him to search for cities, towns, or settlements of some sort for supplies he needed and places to stay the night.

It would no doubt be easier for him to

make the journey to Mesopotamia being he was just a man and one accustomed to sleeping in a tent or less, out in a field if need be. However, once the woman was with him on the return trip that would not be the case. The servant and the girl could not claim marriage as a reason to leave them alone, in cases where they feared people might not respect anything but that. She would not be his slave girl or property in any way as well. In the days immediately following their departure from her home she would find places familiar on a cultural level in which to stay. As they got further north and west they would pass through some very interesting places with developed cities and possibly fascinating new experiences. There is simply no telling what temptations might lay between Mesopotamia and the land of Canaan which a woman adventurous enough to agree to go with the servant might want to explore. Once the servant took the woman from her home he would have nothing but her word she would go with him all the way. If at any point she was offered what seemed to her a better situation to stay in a place they passed through, it would only be her honesty which would cause her to continue on to what was to her this unknown place called Canaan.

In some ways that might sound like an odd argument to make, especially in light of the culture of the day, but while human technology has changed a great deal in our modern world, who people are at their core has not changed one bit! A shy girl might beg her father to stay or even attempt to run back to family after being forced to go. In spite of the dangers women faced being on their own, an adventurous girl would still find a world to be explored all along the

way with no marriage, slavery, or cultural pressure to remain tied to Abraham's servant. This especially if she felt she had anyone who might take her in along the way. Thus, in all ways, shapes, and forms the servant had a point in asking what to do if he could not get a woman to agree to come with him in the first place or one who did not stay with him all the way back to Canaan. However, in such a circumstance the servant saw one good alternative which shows how much Abraham was justified in making sure the servant was straight on not taking a wife from among the daughters of Canaan. He asks Abraham if he then should take Isaac himself to Mesopotamia!

You can take the reason for the servant asking this a couple different ways. The way I believe most take it is to think, if he could not retrieve a wife for Isaac, it only stood to reason Isaac go to seal the deal for himself and return to Canaan with her. This would make sense considering it would give both the men of the family back in Mesopotamia, as well as any potential bride, a chance to meet Isaac for themselves. Isaac might find he is very attracted to one over the other and she him. That as well would make it all go smoother. Isaac going himself makes sense for so many reasons it might have seemed to the servant Abraham was only sending him as a first attempt to accomplish the task without Isaac having to go. When we look at this we talk about all the temptations it would have been for Isaac to simply stay in Mesopotamia. After all, Abraham was old and other than servants he had grown up around, Isaac would be without any real family once his father was gone. Sarah was already gone, and once

Abraham was too Isaac would be much like Abraham was after his father passed away and he came on into this land of strangers. Even Abraham had his nephew Lot, not to mention the direct calling from God to do this. What did Isaac have? Had God spoken to him directly? How much if any of what God told Abraham on the Mount where Isaac was to be sacrificed did Isaac get to hear? I believe it was all of it, but even at that, how much did he take it to heart?

If it was so easy for Abraham and Sarah to think they could use a surrogate to have an heir to the promise, how important did Isaac understand it was that the family be in this land? There are all kinds of questions. How bad would it be if Isaac stayed in Mesopotamia for many years and simply brought his family back here in later times? Would it really hurt for his children to know their family back "home" or for his new wife to at least get adjusted to being married to him and the idea of leaving for Canaan before they returned? All these are things we think about when we hear the servant ask Abraham if he should take Isaac and we see the temptation there would have been for Isaac to never come back to Canaan. However, there is an even worse thought which as far as we know was in the servant's mind when he asked this. In saying it I don't mean to diminish the servant in any way, but understand he was swearing to take on this responsibility to get Isaac a wife. If he understood the covenant of God and the point Abraham had made clear about Isaac not marrying a Canaanite, it would seem the important things were to get Isaac the right wife so he too could have the right heir(s) while remaining separate from the

Canaanite people among whom they now lived. Both these things could be accomplished if this servant was to pick up the entire household and simply move it back to Mesopotamia!

You see, this servant understood Abraham was sending him not because Abraham might be tempted to stay in Mesopotamia. No, the servant was being sent because it was likely Abraham would not survive the journey there and back. This means as far as this servant knew, once he got back from his attempt to accomplish this task Abraham might be dead. This would immediately make this very senior servant of the house the right-hand man of Isaac. While the servant may clearly have understood the reason he was going instead of Isaac himself was because Abraham did not want Isaac to end up in Mesopotamia, what might have seemed more important considering Abraham's demand he not end up with a Canaanite wife was that Isaac marry the right girl and have the family he needed to have. If that took returning the household to Mesopotamia indefinitely that could be a small sacrifice to accomplish what was "needed." It would be a safe way for the servant to keep Isaac from taking a Canaanite wife, and in human thought that made sense. Now, one might argue there is no good reason to look at the servant's question that way, but whether there is or is not it is important to consider this idea. If Abraham was gone the servant needed to know how to instruct/advise Isaac on the right course of action to be sure he got the right wife and, once again, we see the question of how much do we sacrifice one right thing to get a more important right thing?

As we move into verse 6 we see Abraham's response to this and it matters not what the servant was asking in detail. Abraham is just as emphatic the servant not take Isaac back to Mesopotamia as he was about not taking a Canaanite for a wife. In verse 6 of the King James Version we find the only use in all the Book of Genesis of the word "Beware," and it is translated from the same word in the original language as it is all but a couple of times we see it in the entire Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). It is no small thing to understand this word in order to make this verse really mean what it should. The word it's translated from is a prime root and it means, "to hedge about as with thorns." This is not to be taken as the illustration of a prison wall with barbed wire around the top in order to keep something in; this is the illustration of a wall with barbed wire around the top in order to keep everything on the outside on the outside. The servant might have been asking what he should do or just what he should advise Isaac to do if he did not return with a wife for Isaac, but it matters not. Abraham tells the servant not only was it out of the question to take Isaac to Mesopotamia but the servant should stand watch to be sure that is the one thing that never happened!

In a day when men often took more than one wife, if Isaac was to make the mistake of taking a Canaanite woman, that is something God might rectify later by bringing the right wife into his life and him having a son through her. Who knows what God would do in order to correct such a mistake. After all, Isaac's own birth was nothing short of a miracle. Thus, we do not see Abraham scolding the servant in this manner when it comes to being sure Isaac

not take a Canaanite to wife. It was only that the servant not be the agent to bring one back as if he had accomplished his mission of finding Isaac the right wife. This, no matter if it was known or unknown she was a Canaanite. On the other hand, Isaac returning to Mesopotamia, whether to move there or just to get a wife and return, was something the servant was to guard against in every way he could. The mere suggestion this might be a possible solution to the servant not accomplishing his goal caused Abraham to use a very clear and very emphatic word. In our modern thinking such a word would bring up thoughts of a place guarded by a high thick wall with cameras mounted to watch for trouble and guards with guns and dogs. Isaac going back to Mesopotamia was very much something Abraham knew should not happen!

This is interesting to look at in light of the fact Isaac's son Jacob would do exactly that. When Jacob and his mother conspire to take the birthright from Esau it goes without saying Esau was not happy about it. To save Jacob's life their mother tells him to run, and the place to run to was back to her family. (Gen. 27:41-46) In that story we see Jacob does not go just for the sake of getting something but as a refuge from a brother who is his same exact age. Jacob was not likely to outlive his brother and find a time to come home. With his brother so angry at him Jacob had every incentive not to come home unless his mother could absolutely confirm things had changed with his brother. Also, in Mesopotamia Jacob found a comfortable life, with wives and children living in the

company of family like his father Isaac had never known. Jacob had become wealthy and seen the birth of almost all his children in Mesopotamia, which represented the whole next generation of the chosen nation. Yet we see Jacob gets homesick and takes the risk of slipping away from his father-in-law's house to return to Canaan. Lord willing, when we get to that story I'm sure there will be much more to talk about concerning that issue, but what we need to see now is the importance of building that homesick feeling in Jacob. That is being dealt with right here in the verses we are studying. It was so important that Abraham leave his home and come to this land never to return. Now, it was equally, if not more important Isaac be the generation to truly solidify Canaan as home by never having lived anywhere but Canaan and never having even visited Mesopotamia. Any stories of Mesopotamia and what life was like there which Jacob and Esau would hear would come from their mother alone. Their father would know nothing of it other than it's where his father originally came from. Isaac's pride in this life would purely be what God had given him and his father in this strange land and that's the legacy Abraham wanted to be sure got passed on, not just to Isaac but to later generations, and that's why he tells his servant to "Beware" he never take Isaac back to Mesopotamia for any reason!

Until next time, Shalom!

country but failed to drive out the ones living in the valleys due to the iron chariots the people possessed. However, the real reason they did not drive out these Philistines is because they feared them, not because a certain kind of chariot made it impossible. This set the stage for many things we would see later on as the Philistines would be an almost constant thorn in Israel's side throughout this early history!

We are then given other clean up information which explains the presence of other Canaanites in later events who at this time would seem to have been defeated. Caleb had successfully taken Hebron, and Judah overall had defeated the city of Jerusalem to take the surrounding area. However, the responsibility for totally destroying the Jebusites, who had ruled over the area to that point, fell to the tribe of Benjamin. Benjamin failed in this responsibility and did not drive out the Jebusites completely. This is why we see them able to rise up and take back the city of Jerusalem, leaving the task of retaking the city to David much later on.

Next, we are told how the tribe of Joseph fought in this fight against the Canaanites. Of course, there is no tribe of Joseph, only half tribes named for his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh. Whether these two half tribes went together or it was one or the other does not matter in this story as we are told they went to a city familiar to us from the days of Abraham and Isaac. That was the city of Bethel which was at the time called Luz. Because this city is one of great importance to events both before and after

this time is why we are given this piece of information. There is also the fact that it shows us another mistake we can get into when we do not follow God's instructions to the letter. Before attacking this city they sent spies to look it over. These spies found a man of the city to whom they promised mercy if he would do their job for them and show them where the entrance was. This he did and the children of Joseph took the city with ease but they let the man and his family go free. The mistake is shown in that this man flees out of the promised land to the land of the Hittites who would be another great thorn in Israel's side. There the man would build a new city and call it Luz. It might seem a small thing but we are told it remained there untouched, meaning it was not destroyed by anything other than what takes down all of man's accomplishments eventually, that being time itself. It stood as a testimony to how if one piece of cancer gets left it has the potential, at the very least, to fester and once again become a very large problem. As Paul put it, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Galatians 5:9

From here we start a list of Canaanites and/or their cities which various tribes failed to drive out of the promised land. As you go through this list there are names of places just like Jerusalem which we were told Israel defeated at some point in the process of taking the land but now it would seem to be contradicted by this information. It is not, in fact, a contradiction but the point! Over and over we are told God gave Israel success or that God gave this tribe or that tribe a certain area, city, people, etc., but then there they are again later. The answer to this is simply

that just because God gave it to Israel doesn't mean they actually did the job of taking it completely. Just as we see Judah fail to drive out the Philistines of the valleys in the southern coast, this happened all over the promised land. Again, like a cancer that has the ability to come back, these Canaanites would rise to be trouble over and over, even possessing cities they were once driven out of. To help us see how many bits and pieces were left of the Canaanite populations and people, we are told Manasseh failed to drive Canaanites out of several of their cities. Ephraim failed to drive out the Canaanites of a very important stronghold called Gezer. Zebulun failed to drive out Canaanites from a couple of important cities they were to possess. Asher failed to drive Canaanites out of quite a few cities in their territory. We are told Naphtali failed to drive out Canaanites from a couple of their cities but instead simply lived among them and made them pay taxes in the form of tributes. The Amorites would oppress the tribe of Dan, keeping them in the mountains and not allow Dan to live in the valley areas. Amorites remained among some of the children of Joseph but were, at the very least, made to pay taxes for the right to continue living in the land. In the end, the Amorites were allowed such a strong presence they are credited with living, not just among Israel, but had a territory that was recognized as theirs!

All this shows just how much Israel had caused the problems we are about to see them in. Not just because they failed to serve God with their whole heart at the time judges were sent to help them but they had

failed from the very beginning to set themselves up as God had instructed them. Peace on this land could not be obtained by finding compromises with people already on the land. The things of God are enemies of the things of this world, and the fact the Canaanites represented a very sinful piece of what is of this world is why God had told Abraham long ago He would give this land to his descendants and had now instructed Israel to totally drive these Canaanites out! (Gen. 12:7)

As we move into chapter 2 we are getting very close to the end of what is considered the introduction part of the Book of Judges, and this is where the chronology thing gets difficult. For those attempting to put all the Bible's passages in chronological order we see just these first 11 verses of chapter 2 get strewn into various places very separated from each other. That said, this is an example of how there is value in understanding the chronology of the Bible but we should never let it take us from understanding the Bible as it's put together. In these first 11 verses we find, once again, the words that tell us of Joshua's death. This fact alone will cause many people attempting chronological order to believe the the first of these 11 verses took place during Joshua's lifetime and that is just not the case. We are clearly told in the part of these verses which cover Joshua's death that the people served The Lord all the days of Joshua. If the first part of these 11 verses are before Joshua's death that statement would be incorrect! Thus, what we find is another point where the chapter and verse

separations do us a disservice. We come out of chapter 1 with a clear picture of how the different tribes failed to drive out certain Canaanites from certain areas. We not only see that but we see some incidents of certain Canaanites in certain places being, “put to tribute.” Putting someone to tribute is not just leveling taxes against them, it's a larger agreement or covenant, pact, or the like that binds both parties to particular rules.

In these cases we see here it might have been as simple as, you (Canaanites) pay us a certain amount or percentage of your increase and we (Israel) will allow you to live in a specific part of the land that was yours and is now controlled by us. I don't believe there can be a more direct violation of God's commandment to Israel that they make no covenant with the people of the land than making an agreement that allows Canaanites to remain, not just alive, but on the promised land and as a people! (Ex. 23:29-33) What we read through in chapter 1 is a rundown of all the major incidents of Israel allowing Canaanites to remain, whether because Israel did not believe they could drive them out or because they made a deal with the Canaanites. What we see here at the start of chapter 2 is the angel of The Lord coming to give the nation a solid rebuke for doing such things. We are then reminded in the next verses how Israel had served The Lord all the days of Joshua. However, as he and others in his generation passed, the new generation of leadership did not serve God. The rebuke by the angel was just the start of a time period that would be filled with problems due to Israel not only failing to drive out the Canaanites in the first place but in never seeking The Lord for the power needed to correct that mistake. In

turn, Israel would also face the exact problems God had warned them right up front would happen if they failed in their task.

Looking directly at the verses of chapter 2, we see in verse 1 that an angel went up from Gilgal to a place called Bochim. Probably the first things that comes to mind are, who is this angel and why does he come from Gilgal? The answer to who he is can be found in Exodus chapter 23 where Israel was told specifically by God in verse 20, “Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.” If you keep reading from there one finds Israel being instructed to obey his voice and how serious it was they do so because the angel had specific instructions from God. Those instructions did not include showing mercy in helping Israel in whatever path they chose to take. No, this angel was sent before the nation for one reason and one reason alone; to lead Israel across the promised land to wipe out its sinful inhabitants. We also find in these verses how God says it would not happen all at once because Israel was not yet large enough to fill the land and God did not want the land to just turn into a giant patch of thorns. This means the angel would be with Israel, not just in the short term, but in the long haul of accomplishing the task of clearing the land of its inhabitants. For this angel to come at any point and deliver the message of rebuke we see in chapter 2 of Judges means Israel had failed, not just in the short term, but in the long term. This angel was standing by ready to help drive out the Canaanites. Every time Israel turned back from destroying the people for any reason it meant a task was left undone. The

angel would continue to stand by ready to complete these unfinished tasks, but what we are being shown in him coming to deliver this rebuke to Israel at Bochim is Israel, as a nation, had by this time settled on the land with no intent of finishing the job!

Now, why did he come from Gilgal? The answer to that is found in Joshua chapter 4. Gilgal was the first place Israel camped immediately after crossing over the Jordan. This also means it's the first place the Ark of the Covenant resided in the heart of the promised land. Gilgal was the spot that marked the connection point between Israel on the west side of the Jordan river and Israel on the east side. Gilgal is also special because there Israel once again made certain all the males of the nation had the symbol of the covenant, meaning all uncircumcised males were circumcised. (Josh. 5:2-9) Another event that happened in Gilgal was that Israel celebrated the first Passover within the heart of the promised land, and on The Feast of Firstfruits the manna God had provided the nation all those long years of Israel's travel, stopped appearing. In so many ways Gilgal was important to those early days of Israel being on the land. Gilgal had been the place where Israel camped through the start of their conquest of the promised land, and it was as important to those early days as Jerusalem was in later times. It was Israel's home base and where they knew Joshua would be in order to come to him as a people would come to a king. In that way it could be said Gilgal was Israel's first capital city.

So why did the angel come to this

Bochim place? For that we need to understand the place was not Bochim, it was named Bochim because of this incident. No one knows for sure where Bochim is but it's likely somewhere close to Shiloh. Shiloh was the place where the tabernacle had been set up in a more long-term way than it had been while traveling to the promised land, and there the presence of The Lord resided in that physical way it had through Israel's traveling. This made Shiloh a natural location for all of Israel to gather, and while we are not told this incident of the angel coming up to all the nation took place on one of the main feast days, which would bring all of Israel together to celebrate, it's highly likely that was the case. If not, then it was at some other time Israel had gathered so the heads of the tribes could consult with each other or even possibly a time the nation came to celebrate the thought, they had taken the land. That kind of time would be a perfect time for this angel to come to them. However, no matter what the reason for Israel being gathered together at this place, wherever in the land it may have been, the angel takes this opportunity to come and inform the nation they had, in fact, failed in their task. Just because a new generation of Israel had taken the helm of the nation after Joshua, Eleazer, and that generation passed on, it didn't mean they should have forgotten the angel in Gilgal who was waiting to instruct them in, when and how, to take up their weapons and continue the great nation building task that was still before them!

Let's stay in God's Word!