

Free - Take One



Shaqah

"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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Step Into the Springs!

We apologize that it has been so late in coming, but by the grace of God, for the fourteenth year, Living Springs Institute has published its daily planning calendar that gives you the Biblical calendar alongside the calendar most of us use every day. Since early 2018 the companion book, titled *Counting The Days*, has also been available. If you're a regular mail subscriber to this publication and have not already received a calendar, you should have received one with this issue of *Shaqah*. We'd also like to send calendars to all of our e-mail subscribers, but we don't necessarily have your current physical mailing address. Your 2022 calendar is waiting for you, so be sure to contact us and put in your order today!

As much as we have always felt the planning calendar is a great Biblical education product, even if you do not use the calendar, the calendar's companion book, *Counting The Days*, is still a book you're going to want to read. With a full example calendar in the back, this book is a great way to learn about the Biblical/Jewish calendar all by itself. *Counting The Days* is an overall teaching about the calendar and feasts God gave in the Law, but more specifically, it teaches the how and why God set up a calendar that contains distinct events, all of which prophesy about God's plan for our existence. It covers what each event prophesies about, why there is a Biblical and Jewish calendar, and much more! Of course, many of you have already received a copy of the book, but if you do not have one you will want to receive a copy when you order your 2022 calendar. If you already have a 2022 calendar, it should have come with a pink card inside that you can simply fill in with your name and address, and for only the price of a stamp you can order your copy of *Counting The Days*!

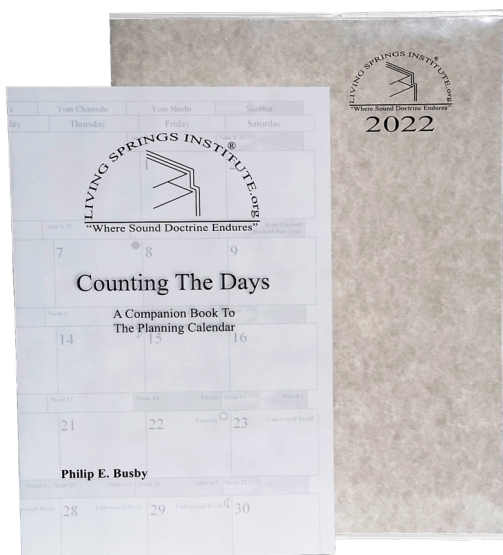
Now, by no means is Living Springs a ministry backed by a lot of money, so it is only by the continuing grace of God we are able to not only offer the 2022 daily planning calendar

once again, but it and a copy of *Counting The Days* are both FREE! To order your free copy(s) of the 2022 calendar and/or *Counting The Days*, you can simply write, e-mail, or visit us online. For online orders, just go to www.livingspringsinstitute.org, click on the "Resource Shop" button, order the 2022 calendar and/or *Counting The Days*, and type your mailing information into the lines provided on that form. To order more copies than the form allows, please use the comment box. If you are using e-mail, send your request to: resources@shaqah.com. If you're using regular mail, write to us at: Living Springs Institute, P.O. Box 271, Loveland, CO 80539. Just tell us you would like the 2022 calendar and/or *Counting The Days*. And be sure to give us your physical mailing address, and your order will be on its way as soon as we can process it!

For those of you who may never have ordered anything from Living Springs, know that ordering will not put you on any mailing list! Living Springs is happy to send people only what they request. Thus, we want to remind everyone that we also offer other teaching products, and all for free! If you would like a free subscription to this publication (*Shaqah*), don't forget to make that request when you write. We also

produce a PDF version of the calendar, along with many other materials in PDF, which you can download from our website at anytime.

In closing, I just want to say thank you, and please remember to share Living Springs Institute with others so they too may learn and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ! This last year has been a great struggle but we know with God's help we can carry on in doing His work. May God bless each of you, and as always, we pray you will be blessed by this issue of *Shaqah*!



P.O. Box 271, Loveland, CO 80539

(970) 593-9468

As we continue our overview of the Book of Judges we go forward discussing the specific stories of the judges God rose up to defend Israel. Last time we started by talking about Caleb's brother Othniel whom God rose up to drive the king of Mesopotamia out of Israel, and how that fits into the chronology of the Bible when it comes to the fact we are told in the Book of Joshua that Israel served The Lord all the days of Joshua and the elders of his generation who led Israel in taking the promised land. From there we talked about the next judge named Ehud whom God rose up to free Israel from oppression they suffered at the hands of the Moabites and the Ammonites. We then discussed the work Shamgar did in defeating the Philistines using just his farming tool, and we ended talking about how God rose up a female judge named Deborah. God used her to defeat an oppression that came directly from Canaanites Israel had defeated at the time of Joshua but who had rose in power once again. In that story we see how another woman named Jael, who was of the family Moses married into but who lived among Israel, actually killed the main Canaanite general. Her actions, along with the man who Deborah enlisted to lead the army of Israel named Barak, broke the hold the Canaanite king had over Israel. More specifically, we ended last time talking about the song of praise Deborah and Barak sang to The Lord after the victory was won. This brought us through Judges chapter 5 verse 2, and we will begin in verse 3 this time.

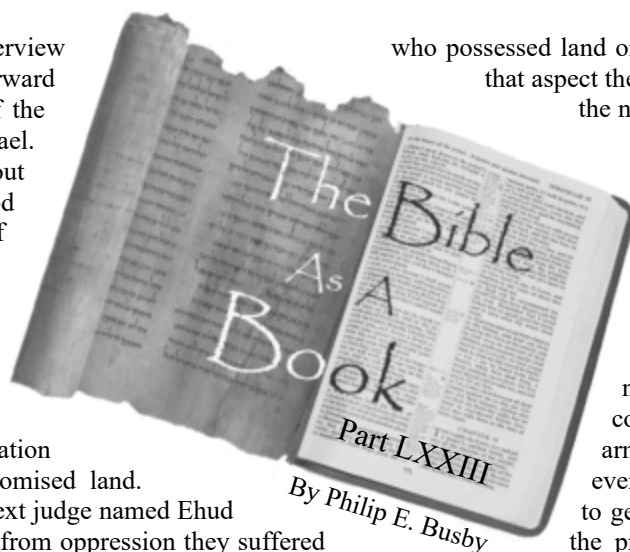
As this is an overview we will not cover all the specifics of this song of praise, for there is a lot contained in it. To summarize, the song goes forward in verse 3 very much like many Psalms we read where kings and people of the earth in general are called to hear the words. From there it speaks about God marching out of Seir and Edom. To some, this might sound odd, but it refers to a couple points they are making in this praise. The first point is something we touched on at the end of our last segment. God was going to maintain Israel as a nation no matter how much the people deserved it or not. Israel, being the chosen nation of God, was not allowed to simply do as they pleased and have peace just because they were God's chosen nation. However, God acts to preserve His nation always. The reference to God marching out of Edom has to do with the idea God was not as welcome as He should have been in Israel, or in another way to see it, Israel was not known at that time as the place God resided. In general, Israel also came up from Egypt and around the south end of the Dead Sea before they began their taking of land on both the east and west sides of the Jordan River.

This point is why the words of this song go on to mention Mount Sinai which was a major stop along Israel's journey to the promised land. Thus, the song is tracing the fact God had brought Israel from Egypt with a mighty hand to possess this land of Canaan that they had not owned at any time prior to that. The second aspect of this song speaking to Edom and Sinai both have to do with the fact the song would go on to speak of places, or most specifically tribes living in places going from the south to the north. There is also mention of the tribes

who possessed land on the east side of the Jordan River. In that aspect the song is praising God's ability to bring the nation of Israel into this land of Canaan and give them places to live across all the land the Canaanites once dwelt. This is of particular importance considering the fact it was a king of Canaan they had just defeated. That is also why the song references images and tells of God's great works in forming Israel into a nation and giving them this land which consisted of both mighty places where armies stand to fight as well as common everyday places like wells where people go to get their water. The song also speaks of the previous judges which in more recent times had been sent to free Israel from people such as the Philistines, the Moabites, and the king of Mesopotamia. These are praises of how God did not just bring Israel into this land and leave them or forsake them. No matter Israel's failures or their accomplishments God had worked to maintain the nation and would not allow them to be totally swallowed up by surrounding power nor those that might rise due to Israel's failure to finish the job of driving out the Canaanites.

In this same light there is, of course, also specific references to Deborah and Barak. These do not come in the song as notices of praise to these two individuals, but just as all the references of Judges in this song, it is to speak to the fact God would use those willing and able to be stirred by His Spirit when God was ready. The imagery is very vivid in such praises which we see in the Bible speaking to the idea of individuals, tribes, nations, etc., being woke up to do God's work. This is to speak to the truth those who serve God and do great works in His name are not people who came to serve God just due to the events that required them to act through God's power. Those who are true believers live day by day in a way that is simply following God's will for their lives. This is just to walk in the personal faith of knowing and serving God in a daily way. Then one day God awakes such people to do something big and noticeable. Deborah and Barak would note in their song that this was the case for them. They were simply two people living their lives and walking in faith with God until God sent them out to accomplish this defeat of the Canaanite king's army.

There is also further reference in this song to what we ended last segment talking about being spoken to at the very first of it. This is the point that Israel willingly yielded to this king. As we talked about last time and have talked about so much through this study and others, God knew Israel would one day demand a king and it would be based on the idea other nations had kings. One would hope that at the time of Joshua and that generation the people would have demanded that any king set over them come from the tribes of Israel and no outside people. However, the desire for a king can be so great that the following generations in Israel might have wanted a king to such a degree they would accept even one that came from the Canaanites they were suppose to have driven out of the land. What is clear apostasy to one generation can seem to another generation not such a bad idea. This kind of truth does not take long to form, and it's why when God is speaking what we call the Ten Commandments to



Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment, we continued our look at the story of Abraham sending his servant back to Mesopotamia to bring back a wife for Isaac. In that part we continued to talk about the prayer the servant prayed when he got there and how that prayer really was a call for God to show the servant His will. We talked a lot about how this prayer of the servant, in so many ways, really does mirror the prayer Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane the night He was arrested by the Sanhedrin. The servant was not asking for something and in faith believing he expected to get what he asked for just because he was a servant of God or of Abraham. Instead, we see in his prayer a true prayer of faith where the servant is in step with what God is directing him to do and simply asking that God lead him the rest of the way through in a way that would take the servant's ideas and thoughts out of the equation. For this purpose the servant had asked God that he be able to request a drink, from each woman who came to this well, and that God would show him the right woman by finding the one who offered to give him a drink and also water his camels. This brought us through Genesis chapter 24 verse 14, and we are ready to begin in verse 15 this time.

Verse 15 shows us the evidence of what we talked about in our last segment. We discussed how the servant might have to ask multiple women before he got the correct response. However, just as the servant had shown us that he was in step with what God was wanting to accomplish in asking for this sign, God responds in a way that shows us just how much he really was! Verse 15 tells us before the servant had even ended his prayer on this matter, Rebekah came with her pitcher to get water from the well. For some, this kind of response by God which shows He's working things out for us is the symbol that prosperity teaching is true, but again I stress how much this situation was one humans are not so often in. The servant knew what it was he was to accomplish. He was following the guidance of his master Abraham who definitely was in step with what God wanted at this point. All the servant asked for was that God confirm and makes sure he now found the specifics, which in this case was the right woman to take back to Isaac. What brought the timing of this servant's prayer and Rebekah's appearance together as it did was all these individual's actions working hand in hand in the flow of accomplishing God's will.

So often we are not in step with God's true will and what we are seeking is to find out what His will is. That's a good thing to seek, but even then we still do not always find we have it right or receive what we would call a clear answer. It is for that reason we should not be insistent on naming and claiming things before God. We need to be asking, seeking God's will with the understanding that if we do not have the picture clear as to what He wants or are wrong in the picture we do hold onto, we are still accepting and ready to go in the direction God wants us to go. This is why we are told to be instant in season and out of season. (II Tim. 4:2) We have times when we are right there

in the path God has laid out for us; times we do know we're working God's will and things are flowing. In these "in season" times it is easy to get the work done, to say what needs said, etc. The difficult part is the "out of season" side. Those times we don't know and don't understand what it is God is doing. Maybe The Holy Ghost wants to pull us aside to be used in a way we do not expect, whether for a short time or as a totally new path for our lives. There are so many times we just would not understand what it is God wants to do and/or why He would want to do it, accomplish it in that way, etc. Those are the "out of season" times it's so hard to be prepared to be instant.

In speaking to that, I want to point out that this servant was in tune with God to be instant out of season. I think we see stories like this one unfold and we take it as being the way things should be, but as I mentioned, we can't always understand or see the bigger picture as to why God wants to accomplish what He does in the way He does it. God's response to this servant's prayer was to immediately send Rebekah his way, but it could have just as easily been one of those times when God said to this servant, no but you will go here, do this or that, look for this other thing, and in that you will find the right woman. My point is that when it comes to what God wants nothing is set in stone until God sets it in stone! God was way out in front of this servant in preparing the right path. Abraham had felt it was true, the servant came to feel it was true, this means as long as everyone stayed focused on allowing God His will and not their own, God would bring the right things to pass. Before the servant ever prayed this prayer Rebekah was finishing up other chores and getting ready to head out to the well at a time that would make her the first woman this servant would encounter. Before the servant ever stepped foot out of Canaan to come to Mesopotamia God had already prepared Rebekah's heart to leave her home and journey with him back to Canaan to be Isaac's wife. Before Abraham felt it was time to even address this issue, years before, God had been working in the life of Rebekah for what was about to happen.

We serve such a great God yet we feel so desperate sometimes. What stories like this show us is that we just need to settle down and seek God's will, His face, His presence. Walk the path knowing God has already been out in front of us so far we can't imagine. I like to point out that people love to say everything happens for a reason and I don't doubt that one bit. The question is, did it happen for the reason that it was God's will or did it happen because we messed up and failed to follow God's will? This is not a question it does much good to try and answer after the fact. What has happened has happened. This is the question we need to be prepared to feel confident of the answer as much as is humanly possible as we walk forward each day. We need to be able to feel we are asking and seeking God's perfect will. Preparing ourselves to be flexible and responsive to God's instructions so when it is all said and done we might look back and know at the very least what happened, happened not

because we did what we wanted but what God wanted. We need to know, not just that it happened for a reason but that the reason was God whether we understand why or not.

Getting back to the idea that the servant might have asked for this to happen just this way in finding the right woman but God might have turned to tell him it would come about in a different way, I am reminded of the story of King David. Let us not forget King David was that young man who took supplies from home to his brothers on the battlefield and when he heard the taunts of Goliath he got upset. David was that boy who asked who this arrogant Philistine was who dared to speak such things against God and His chosen nation. When no one would go out to face Goliath David said he would. When the king's armor did not fit right David said, I'll just go out there and use the weapon I'm most familiar with. David knew it was not God's will for Goliath to stand out there unchallenged, speaking against the people of God. Can you kill a skilled military man, wearing armor, with just a sling and a stone? One would not think so, but David was confident because he knew it wasn't about who he was or what weapon he used. This was about being the hands and feet God could use to accomplish His will. With that truth firmly in his mind David went forth, slung his stone at Goliath, and literally before Goliath knew what hit him he was defeated!

In that story there is another view of how an individual was in tune with God's will. God had very often allowed the surrounding people to oppress Israel due to their disobedience to God. Not the least familiar of such people was the Philistines. By the time this incident takes place there was a long established history of war between Israel and the Philistines which I'm sure David was well aware of. However, David knew on that day Goliath was in the wrong and it was God's will someone go out to defeat him. If it would be no other, David knew he, as an unskilled untrained in the ways of war man could still go out and accomplish the task. He was right and it shows us David was in step with God's will even when no one else, including the king, was. Now, turn to much later in David's life. He was king of Israel and he had defeated far more than one giant Philistine. David had put down all the enemies of Israel, even added most of their lands to his kingdom. Once again, David knew something that had been ignored for a very long time. Something that had been left undone since the early days of Israel settling on this land as their home. That something was the fact the tabernacle was still in use instead of a more permanent structure which would be called the temple.

On top of that, the Law had been followed with such lack of care the Ark of the Covenant had been separated from the tabernacle. I find that one of the oddest things we are told in all the Word of God. This Ark, which should only have been seen once a year by the High Priest as it set behind a thick veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, somehow had been moved. It had been moved independently from the tabernacle itself. Just how did such a thing ever happen! One way or the other it had happened and David became determined to bring the Ark to the city he himself had established as the capital city of Israel. As the story shows us this was no easy task to do right, which again begs the question of how the Ark had ever gotten separated from the tabernacle.

To get back to the point at hand, this same young man who had defeated Goliath because he knew it was God's will to be done, was now a man getting on in years and the king of God's chosen nation, and he knew another piece of God's will. David knew it was God's will that a permanent place be established for the Ark of the Covenant to once again set behind the veil of, not the tabernacle, but a temple!

God had said when Israel reached the promised land and settled upon it, He would choose a place among the nation to permanently set His name on this earth. (Deut. 12:1-14) David knew that place would be Jerusalem. Thus, being so in step with God's will, David prays to God and asks to begin that great task of building the temple of God. David was not incorrect in that Jerusalem was the right city. David was not incorrect as to the time being well past that a temple be built and the Ark of the Covenant placed there. However, the answer David received as he asked to move forward with this great piece of God's will was a solid – no! (II Sam. 7) David could be right in all of what he knew God wanted, but what David did not expect is that unlike that day he walked out into the battlefield to take down Goliath, David was not the man God wanted to accomplish the building of the temple. Some would say the reason why is that the timing was not right, but I soundly disagree. The time was well past and the building of the temple could have, should have, taken place decades before the days of David's life. If we go back to the Book of Joshua, we find Jerusalem was one of the first places to be taken from the Canaanites. What's fascinating is that the story of how Jerusalem was taken is quite prominent, yet many who claim to be Christians are not really familiar with it.

Most all know the story of how Jerusalem was taken by David. How he challenged his men to find a way into this stronghold that was Jerusalem, yet all David was doing was getting back something that had been lost. If Israel had followed God as they were asked to, it's my unwavering belief Jerusalem would have taken the place of Shiloh very early on in Israel's history. Instead of what we see in the Book of Judges we could have seen a nation more in step with what the Law was trying to establish even in those early days. There would have been no king but the tabernacle would have been replaced by the more permanent structure of the temple and the Ark of the Covenant would have moved from Shiloh to Jerusalem. David would never have had to take back the city of Jerusalem because it would have been the major city of importance long before David was ever born. So was the timing right when David asked to build the temple of God? No, but not because the time was not yet; it was because the time had been far past! Israel had not followed God as they should have. It's why there was a Goliath for David to fight. It's why the Ark had been separated from the tabernacle and it's why David had to take the city of Jerusalem from the Jebusites.

Timing by the days of David had been all messed up because so many things in Israel were not what they should have been. Thus, the only correlation there is between timing and the answer of no to David's desire to build the temple was that David had to spend so much of his life setting straight what the nation had allowed to fall into disrepair. In doing so, David became the man known to the nation and much of the world, not

What About God's Chosen People?

Part XLVII

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 continued looking at how the religion of Judaism began to form the chosen nation into more of what we know today. While we have talked much about the ills of religion in this study, we talked last time about how God used this weakness among men to do His work through the chosen nation in that their religion would be formed on the basis of their culture. So many religions are formed based on culture or a religion that already exists forms a culture, maybe reshapes others. We talked about how related culture and religion are and how God used this in the chosen nation but He could not have used it among the non-Jewish church. Christianity was clearly shaped in post-apostolic times by the pagan cultures of men while Judaism was formed on the culture the Jews had been given in and through the Law God gave the nation. As we move forward we will want to keep that in mind as it relates to the question this study is based on, because that point is why God was able to continue using the Jews as His chosen nation and could not have replaced them with something such as the church at large!

At this point, I feel we need to take all we have talked about and put it together in a more cohesive form. We have talked about Judaism in post-temple times and what really took hold among the Jews between the 2nd and 6th centuries A.D. is what in technical terms should be referred to as Rabbinic Judaism. This is not a term you will hear used often, and I would suspect that's because it's considered a scholarly technicality that the Judaism we know today is Rabbinic Judaism and not the same as what might have been called Judaism in the time period the temple stood. That said, we have covered all we have covered, and especially what we went over last segment, to point out how much we are still talking about a chosen nation when talking about the Jews. God is still using them day by day and year by year in our world. The fact there is a difference between the Judaism given to the Jews by the giving of the Law in the beginning of their history and the Rabbinic Judaism we see today is an important point to keep in mind when in any kind of debate with others, or in just your own mind as to if the Jews are still God's chosen nation. In spite of how little it might seem to some that our last segment spoke to the point of what Judaism today is, I can't stress that segment's importance to this study enough!

Understanding that God, in designing the Law to work among the Jews, was prepared from the beginning to overcome even the obstacle of not having the temple is critical to seeing God in no way rejected the Jews. The idea that God rejected the Jews for killing The Messiah and/or replaced them with the church is one we should soundly put out of our heads. That is not to say Rabbinic Judaism is all God wants it to be. It should be an

obvious fact the Law, in operation as it was at the time of Moses and again at the time of Solomon right after building the temple, shows us what God ultimately wanted. However, what we also learn if we really look at all the Jews went through, even in just the history the Bible covers directly, is the fact the Law was always what Paul describes it as in Galatians 3:24. The Law was a schoolmaster to teach us truths of God's Nature and Will. This is why it's bad that people believe living for God is somehow based on being a Jew or following the ordinances of the Law. We won't get to heaven by doing our school work over and over. We get to heaven by having the walk with God that school work is meant to teach us to have.

While this is more true for the non-Jew than it is for the Jews, that's just a technicality on the basis God gave the chosen nation the job of maintaining the classroom, so to speak. I repeat over and over that even for the Jews the Law would never save them. It's a simple matter of obedience to God's command that they follow the ordinances of the Law to demonstrate them to the world. There is no more basic definition of sin than disobedience to God. When we understand these facts we see the Jews really had little choice but to attempt to maintain the Law in their lives and culture as much as was possible without the temple and later as they were not even on the promised land. As I started into above, we know Rabbinic Judaism is not all God would want it to be, but that is not just in the obvious truth they don't have the tabernacle or temple or that they were for a great deal of time not predominantly on the promised land. It is in all we have talked about concerning how man makes religion in his own image and not the image of God. However, I again must return to what we talked about last time, which is the fact the Jews had far more to draw on than any non-Jewish people. They had a culture that was based on the Law, and in forming a religion in their own image which we can call Rabbinic Judaism there was/is still much of the Law of God for them to include by both pressure from God's commandments as well as cultural pressure to maintain what it was to be a Jew!

So, in a most basic way what we see the Pharisees do is form a religion for the Jewish people. That is the religion we call Judaism today but in fact is Rabbinic Judaism. I want to stress that it's my hope no one get fanatical about calling Judaism that, but as I stated, it's important we as students of God's Word understand that Judaism is a pure religion and not the true enactment of the Law. The true enactment of the Law can only be accomplished with the temple in place in Jerusalem, and as far as I can tell by what the Bible gives us that won't happen again until the return of Jesus Christ. Even now preparations are being made by some Jews to see the temple rebuilt and it's exciting stuff to see in someways, but I still don't believe we will see the temple in full again until Jesus returns. I believe it's really true to say we won't see the full proper administration of the Law's enactment again until Jesus comes back, if for no other reason than the fact Jesus is the only rightful High Priest! What

all this shows us is that the full enactment of the Law is not what makes the chosen nation the chosen nation. God choosing the nation of Israel is what makes them the chosen nation.

Some might believe that strengthens the argument that something such as the church could take the place of the chosen nation, but there is simply nothing in what God tells us has happened and will happen to support that. We are told Jesus will return to Jerusalem which even in our modern day is the city, not of the Christian religion, but that of the Jews! Many who call themselves Christians don't even begin to see the importance of Jerusalem as the place we all need to be keeping our eyes on. That fact is why many Christians don't fully appreciate the impact of knowing the real signs of the time come not from how the world treats the church in any particular place but how it treats the Jewish nation of Israel. As we look at Israel today, we see that while it is Jewish, it is still very much secular. Some of the most orthodox Jews and their various branches live in Israel or at least are headquartered in Israel, but the nation as a nation among the world is secular. Yet there is still that cultural religious overtone to everything the nation does. Again, this is the work of God using the weakness of men and the evidence as to why God could never have replaced the Jewish nation with something such as the church.

No matter how secular, humanistic, etc. one believes the religion of Rabbinic Judaism is; no matter how much you believe it is simply right or wrong in all its choices, the point remains that Rabbinic Judaism is not what makes the chosen nation the chosen nation. God establishing the chosen nation over three thousand years ago; God giving the nation the Law as they came out of Egypt by His mighty hand; the Jews being chosen to be the chosen nation of God those many, many centuries ago, that is what makes the Jews God's chosen nation! That fact is why we really have spent so much time talking about the ills of religion. Religion cannot make any people the chosen nation of God nor can it make any individual part of God's chosen people. It's been a long time in this study since we covered the difference between what those two things mean, but here we are again talking about why it's important. God's chosen nation is the nation of Israel simply because God chose them to be and established them to be. Individuals, whether Jew or non-Jew, become God's chosen people because the individual chooses what God has offered every last human who ever has and ever will live upon this earth. God's chosen people are God's chosen people because they accept and walk in the relationship with God which is only available because God offered it to us. An individual's faith is not about being part of the chosen nation or not part of the chosen nation. An individual's faith is the substance of what individuals who desire God and His ways can have in the here and now. Faith is the evidence that there is an even closer walk and an even better life to hope for after death takes us from this one. (Heb. 11:1) Faith is what makes you part of God's chosen people, and that's something a Law given to God's chosen nation could never do for any individual!

We should be able to see that the argument over if the Jews are really God's chosen nation or not is a moot point when it comes to salvation. The point only becomes relevant when we look around this physical world and wonder where God's work is being manifest. Of course, it's manifest in the lives of each individual who walks in faith, but as a physical core there is no

guarantee any great number of such individuals will congregate into one specific location especially for any great deal of time. That is where having a chosen nation comes in. Whether "secular" or tremendously religions, the Jews have and continue to have a draw to the promised land and the city of Jerusalem due to their heritage and culture. This means if and when God makes it possible for the Jews to be on their land, that's where many of them are going to want to be. This we see in our modern world and it gives God the ability to accomplish what He could have only accomplished two other ways. God could have accomplished the creation of a focal point for His work among men by having a nation size group of people who were sold out to His plan enough to follow all God wanted through pure obedience to Him, and this would have needed to continue over generation after generation. The other possibility is that God could have forced a nation size group of people to show all He wanted to show the world.

The beauty and wonder of what we see when we understand that, is that God would never force any individual to do such a thing. It violates the very core nature of free will God built into humanity at creation. What we see in looking at how God set up the chosen nation is the best plan that could ever have been put into place, and that was to give a nation size group of people the chance to be used by God through pure obedience. It didn't turn out exactly that way, but simply put, if Israel would not be those people, we learn it is not possible to form such a nation. Thus, what we see is God having what we might call a backup that would somehow still accomplish giving God a focal point to show His work among men in spite of Israel's disobedience and flaws. That truth is what we see when we read through and study the history of Israel as given to us in the Word of God. That is what we see confirmed to us as we study the history of Israel that is outside the facts given in the Bible. The answer to the question of, is Israel still God's chosen nation, stares us in the face throughout history, and I dare say no generation outside this generation can see that more obviously than those of us living right now!

The other question answered by all of what we have covered of late in this study is the question concerning if those who are Christians should take on ordinances of the Law? Some churches/groups teach such things, but if Rabbinic Judaism is what the Jews themselves had to settle with, it should be glaringly obvious there is no way for any individual on their own or small group to follow the ordinances of the Law in full. If you want to take on kosher eating practices that's a personal health choice you can make, but be aware that pushing such thoughts on other believers is no different than what the apostles had to deal with early on when individuals were going out teaching new believers in Christ they had to be circumcised to truly be saved or live for God in general. (Acts 15) You are doing the same if you believe there is a requirement to observe the feast days or any other ordinance of the Law as if it's a God commanded prerequisite to salvation or just the definition of being a good Christian. Studying the Law to gain the guidance it can give is what we do if we walk in true faith and not in dead religion. We may observe the feasts, eat the foods the Jews generally eat on those feasts, and when we do we learn and can be touched by the presence of God, but most all of that gain is destroyed when we make it a religious requirement. Again, and again, and again I repeat, religion that men can form from his own thoughts will

always fail us. Personal choices directed by The Holy Ghost, driven by God's Word, inspired by God's nation can have great value to our walk with God, but religious ordinances and requirements will bring death to our faith!

Rabbinic Judaism exists because the chosen nation did not accomplish what God wanted them to accomplish in this world through pure obedience to God's Law! The Law is what allowed God to use the nation in spite of this truth. The Law's commandments are the basis for why Jewish people had/have interest in Rabbinic Judaism. The command that as the chosen nation these individuals must observe this and that, some of which is possible and some of which is impossible without the temple, is why Rabbinic Judaism exists. The fact God knew at least a great deal of people within His chosen nation would feel this pressure generation after generation is why Rabbinic Judaism exists and why God built that pressure into the chosen nation. They were either going to follow the full Law in the pure obedience God wanted them to have or they were going to strive to come up with a religion that made them feel they were in some way accomplishing what God commanded in the Law even after the loss of the temple and clarity of who the High Priest should be. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28

This does not mean every individual Jew who follows Rabbinic Judaism gains salvation anymore than any Christian who is a "good Christian" according to the Christian religion gains salvation. What it does mean to the world at large is that we all, believer and non-believer alike, know who God's chosen nation of people were, are, and will always be! That is the working together for good Paul was talking about, and it's one of the most beautiful things we will ever see on a large scale while living on this earth prior to Jesus' Second Coming. God is still using the chosen nation to shout to the world that He's still in this thing. God has not left us nor forsaken us, and this is true no matter how many have left Him or forsaken Him. God used religious-minded humanistic thinking and its pressure for the good of all who truly seek Him. To some that might sound a bit harsh or a harsh way to put it at the very least but it's true. People who do not serve God are still going to follow some religion. It always makes me laugh a bit when someone says they are an Atheist and do so in the idea they are not a religious person. Can't we see how even the belief there is no God or gods is a religion in and of itself? The belief in evolution is very often a part of that religious belief because people still seek answers to things that if there really was no God should be irrelevant. To those who would dispute this, I say just look at yourself all red-faced trying to deny it! No one does that who is not taking a belief religiously.

When God established the chosen nation He asked the people to dedicate themselves and their children who would live generations after them to perform His Law. To this the nation said yes! (Ex. 24:1-8) Those who want out can still get out. There are many Jewish people who you would never know are Jewish even if you knew them personally enough to be aware of their day by day lifestyle. Many individuals of the chosen nation have simply walked away. However, to do so is to walk away not just from God or His Law but one's heritage. God has not trapped any individual into serving Him, even on a religious level, but He has given every Jew serious motivation to, "stay in the faith,"

to use a religious term. Man was always going to taint the purity of God's Law with his own ideas. This is what we see right off when Aaron's two sons offer strange fire before God and were consumed by God's wrath for doing so. (Lev. 10:1-3) What happened then? We see God giving the Jews a specific Day of Atonement. (Lev. 16) This would be a day when all the elements of performing the Law's ordinances would be sprinkled with blood to symbolize their rededication to God's work and purity in being able to do so. Israel's willingness to follow this day of rededication was a way of admitting we have all sinned and are not, even after years of faith, perfect before God. Thus, we will all still die one day. That is a fact we accept. However, in that death is the beauty of God's plan because He can then take us and truly purify us to be what He created us to be, but only if we let Him!

My point is simply that nothing is going to be truly pure while on this earth. Even the Jews following the Law to the best of their ability was going to be made impure by their flaws and mistakes. Thanks be to God, it is not the following of religious ordinances that saves us but God's grace in granting us faith and our willingness to accept that faith. Some Jews followed the Law in the beginning of things because it's what was asked of them. They did not do it because they really cared to walk in faith with God but because it was their obligation. To those who followed the Law in this way, even the more pure things of the Law at the time of the tabernacle was a religion to them. From the very start the Law was able to be accomplished as either a sincere work that came from the heart of individuals within the chosen nation or just as a religious practice. If it had not been, what do you think the chances are the Law would have accomplished anything before it was tossed aside by all but a few who would get lost in time?

Again, this is the beauty of the Law and how God designed it. Just think about it. What might the nation have looked like in comparison to what it does today if all the Jews from the beginning would have simply followed the Law as a religious practice and done it with strict dedication generation upon generation? It is my belief that we would have seen a nation living in the comfort of the promised land with all the blessings of God poured upon them, through all these many centuries. Why would we doubt this could have been true? The answer to that has to do with the Job's miserable friends truth! (Job 16:1) We want to judge who is in the true right and who is in the actual wrong by what is happening to them physically. This is to say if someone is being blessed then they must be living right but if they are suffering through hardship, sickness, and the like, they must have done something to displease God. We want this to be true, and due to that desire so deep within us many can't bring themselves to believe the chosen nation could have been blessed if all they had done was follow the ordinances in nothing but a strict and rigid obligated practice while not being what God wanted them to truly be in their hearts. We may not want it to be true but it's exactly that! God designed the Law so that it could be followed even in nothing more than a strict religious practice and it would still show us all what it was meant to show us. As we have already covered, this is the only way God could have accomplished what a chosen nation could accomplish without forcing people to do what He wanted them to do.

Now, even if you don't believe what I'm saying here just

go with me for a minute. If I'm right and the nation could be greatly blessed with the comfort the Law promised to a nation who followed the Law even if done in nothing more than a obligatory thing, what do we see? We see that even that does not work! Job's friends could not be correct! It cannot be true that God blesses those who are in the right while cursing those in the wrong. It can't be true that we can determine who is living right and who is living wrong by looking at who is physically got it good and who does not. From the beginning of creation we see the dynamic of blessing people for doing good doesn't cause a freewilled being to do good. If anything blessings in this physical world can often be what turns us to make mistakes. Think about all the blessings Adam and Eve had. It was truly paradise! However, in a moment Eve was willing to give it all up, or at the very least risk having it all taken away, just so she could eat the fruit of one single tree. How ridiculous is that? You have all the trees across an entire planet to eat from and you just have to know what it's like to eat from the one tree God told you not to!

From almost literally day one, humans show that the dynamic of bless me and I'll be good doesn't work. So why would we think God has or still operates in that way? Many would make the argument the Law of God teaches us that's what God used in forming the chosen nation, but all that is, is an admission that what I said above is correct. If all the people in the chosen nation would have followed the stipulations of the Law to the letter they would have been blessed regardless of if they were serving God in sincerity or not. God literally obligated Himself to bless the chosen nation with certain and great blessings if they followed the ordinances of the Law. It was only in failure to the ordinances they would receive the curses. Of course, it seems to stand to reason that what God was saying is that the nation had to follow Him with their heart and, of course, that is what God wanted. However, we need to be careful not to get tripped up on the idea of what God wanted and lose track of what God promised in truth. In truth what God promised is something that today many people who call themselves Christians would literally kill for. In some ways it's why we see so many churches seeking a set of rules to go by in order to be saved. A formula that would bring the blessings in this life and salvation to make it to the next would be exactly what many people would love to have, but it's just not what God is looking for. With the chosen nation God could show us this truth through a Law that demonstrated not that this is how God works, but that no one would make it to heaven if that was how God worked!

When we look and so often judge the nation of Israel for all its failures and flaws, not the lest of which Christians would say was killing Jesus, it is our knee-jerk reaction to say God has rejected them or must have done so. This is because we totally buy into the idea of be good get good, do bad get bad. There is a pagan religion out there that has a name for that, it's called "karma." However, God showed us in His Law and by giving it to the chosen nation that if He judged us in this way, we'd all perish. II Peter 3:9 makes it clear that's not what God is willing to see happen. So why is it true the Law is set up this way? Because if we have not seen it in the stories of humanity that come before the giving of the Law we can see it in the Law God specifically gave to His nation. The proof karma is not what the

Law is trying to show us is good has a lot to do with why we have covered so much of the history in this study that we have. When we go back and look at what the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) Itself shows us, we see the chosen nation failed so bad they lost their land and went into captivity. Karma right? No because equally important should be seeing that getting it together and beginning to serve the Law with sincerity in either practice or in their hearts is not how the nation was freed from that captivity and returned to their land. On top of that, what we actually see after Israel gets back to the promised land is a nation more resistant to following the Law's ordinances than the generation that came out of Egypt!

If we're paying attention this begs the question, why were they returned? If right means blessings and wrong means curses then the nation should have been rejected long before Jesus ever walked on this earth! This is the point that really speaks to the question we are answering in this series, and if you get what I just said you are seeing the point I'm making in this segment or at least starting to. The answer to why God did not reject the chosen nation but instead returned them to the promised land in spite of their continued failure in performing the ordinances of the Law is that The Messiah had not yet come! Israel had to be returned and allowed, or maybe we should say greatly prodded, to rebuild the temple so Jesus could come the first time and offer Himself as the solution to the fact even the karma dynamic was not working for Israel. If we further do as we have done in this study and look at the history of the Jews during the time between the Testaments, we see just how true this is. The nation was on so many levels literally hanging by a thread when it came to being even enough in the right they could be held together until Jesus appeared. This fact is exactly why people want to judge the nation for crucifying Jesus because that is exactly what that fact caused them to do!

God has already shown us He can offer us exactly what we say we want and we still won't do it. While it might seem Adam and Eve had to follow God in more sincerity than just not eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in order to continue being blessed, it is quite clear the nation of Israel did not. Yet they still failed, and so would any of us; that's the point! Still, God loved this world so much He gave His only begotten son to die for us; to die because of the state we had/have fallen to. Why? Because sin may curse us in this world or it may bless us and that can depend on one's perspective. (Heb. 11:24-26) However, to be saved from this life one must lose it. The fact we will all lose it one day is why it doesn't matter if we are blessed in this life or cursed. The only thing that matters is that we come to believe, accept, and actually act upon the knowledge that only God can save us from ourselves!

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. 4

to mention history itself, as the conquering hero, the mightiest of the mighty in Israel. David had slew Goliath and many, many others. Some will say David's hands were covered with blood and that made him unclean to build the temple or even be the man in charge of overseeing the task, but that is not the right way to see it. David was told he could not do it because the temple was to be the Temple of God. If David had built it, it would never have been looked at in that way. We would not call it Solomon's temple, we would call it the Temple of David. It would be the crown jewel of this powerful leader of Israel!

So many other cultures have such monuments. Things that great and mighty leaders built to pay tribute to their accomplishments and that of their armies. The world is filled with people who desire to build something that will outlast them and go into the future telling people long after they are gone what a great person they were. If it's not something the individual does in their lifetime people as a group will often come together to build a monument to a long gone hero, great leader, etc. The Temple of God was not to be such a thing. Thus, God told David he could not be the man to build the temple in spite of how overdue its building was. However, God promised David it would be the son who took the throne after him who would build it. Solomon was no doubt a great king, but he was known for his wisdom which was granted to him by God. When we speak of Solomon's temple we speak of it that way to denote it's the version of the temple Solomon built versus the one built after the return from Babylon, etc. Thus, we call it by that name because we are people living far down the timeline looking back on not only the fact the temple did not get built for a great deal of time into Israel's history and that due to the nation's failure to follow God's Law, but we also see many of the mistakes made as the centuries passed after the temple stood. When Solomon built the temple, and at the very least until the return and rebuilding of the temple after the Babylonian captivity, no one called it Solomon's temple. It was simply the Temple of God!

You see, God can easily be out in front of us just as He was in giving the nation of Israel a specific reason to take the city of Jerusalem right off after entering the promised land, but that does not mean we stay in the plan He's prepared. Just think if Israel had come into the promised land those forty plus years prior to when they did as God wanted them to, how different the history of Israel would look! We can only speculate, but one thing we can be sure, God had a plan already in the work for how the nation would have settled on the land those many decades earlier and we could be talking about the temple being built, or at least started, before the years we even see Joshua bring the nation into the land much later. So the question we are really hammering at here is, are we prepared to follow God's will; both that will that exists because we are in the flow of God's timing as Abraham and his servant were in the story we are studying, as well as the will that exists because maybe we or maybe others have already messed up? David shows us an example of having an enthusiasm for God's will both in season and out. He shows us that enthusiasm whether he got to play the part in God's will he wanted or not. David was so sure of what God had put in motion that would allow Solomon to build the

temple, David began to store up supplies to make sure it happened to the best of his ability. David says that his son Solomon would not have enough time to gather up all the resources it would take to build a proper temple. If that were true, how unprepared might David have been?

We can ask that question but cannot answer it, nor does it matter. David believed one thing, he served The Most High God! David believed God deserved our very best effort, resources, and all we are. Solomon turned out to be blessed with such great wealth David could not have imagined how great a temple Solomon could have built even if David had stored nothing up ahead of time, but that didn't matter. David knew God had been ahead of the will of the nation for a very long time and he believed it was time he help do some catching up. What a great attitude to have. Not one that pushes for what we want but one that is determined to do our best to be prepared to serve God's kingdom! By the time Abraham sent his servant to Mesopotamia we see a man totally prepared to accomplish God's will. Abraham sends a servant who was totally prepared to accomplish God's will and the result of looking for a wife for Isaac would come out right because a young woman, whom neither of them knew, was also prepared to accomplish God's will! When we ask ourselves to be and attempt to be instant in season and out of season we don't know if we will be a David or a Solomon; whether we will be an Abraham, his servant, or a Rebekah, but that's the point. We allow ourselves to be led of God and we'll know when to put that jug for water on our shoulder and head for the well at just the right time to meet up with God's plan!

Verse 15 and going on into verse 16 we see the description of who Rebekah was. As was to be, exactly as Abraham had told the servant, Rebekah was the daughter of Bethuel. This is what we were told Abraham had found out. When news arrived concerning the family Abraham had left behind in Mesopotamia Abraham learned his only remaining living brother had a family. It's very appropriate that we come to this just after covering all we just did about God's perfect will and us being in step with it or messing things up. We should remember at this point that Abraham's father did not take just Abraham out of his house to head toward Canaan as God had wanted Abraham to do. Terah had taken from his house a wife for Abraham and one for Abraham's nephew Lot. Terah then took both these men and their wives out of the house and on the first leg of the journey to Canaan. After Terah died, Abraham would leave where his father had gotten them to and go on into the heart of Canaan as God has instructed him. He also would not go alone on this leg of the journey but Lot would go with him. This set the stage for enough of the family to be in Canaan right from the start that a genetic line could be created to form the chosen nation. However, Lot chose to go among the people of Canaan while Abraham remained a separate entity.

This was not a total problem, but Lot had gone so wrong he found himself in a place so bad God determined to destroy it. In order to preserve what had been started, God sent angels to retrieve Lot and his family out of Sodom and Gomorrah before the cities were destroyed. These angels were not sent to retrieve Lot by himself but also his wife and children. What we see in this story is that Lot had been successful in

starting a family in a way Abraham had not been. While they were daughters and not sons to carry on Lot's family name and line, this might have been the perfect thing. Abraham would have the son to begin the chosen nation and Lot very well might have been the one to give birth to the right wife for that son. As it turned out, at least some of Lot's daughters had been given to men of Canaan and Lot had to go out in an attempt to retrieve them and their husbands when the angels told Lot God would destroy the cities. Lot was met with no success in this attempt because his daughter's Canaanite husbands would not listen to him. Whether due to this alone and/or their attachment to these cities, its people, and/or their worldly possessions, Lot and his family did not wish to leave when the time came. The angels, in showing God's mercy to Lot and his family insisted so greatly that they eventually took Lot and his wife along with the two daughters Lot had still living at home, and whisked them away to outside the cities God was to destroy.

One might argue Lot's daughters were already too old to be a wife for Isaac, but there in is the temple story all over again. Just as we do not know how the history of Israel might have unfolded if Israel had went into the promised land when God first wanted them to, or how the temple's story might have unfolded had they done that or Israel had truly followed the Law once they did take the promised land decades later, we don't know how Lot's actions affected the plan for building the chosen nation. Maybe Lot would have had more daughters or a daughter at the right time for Isaac. Maybe Isaac would have been born much sooner had Lot stayed true to serving God as Abraham had. We just don't know. What we do know is that Lot and his family were still of possible importance to the plan of God. Thus, God sent the angels to get them out of the cities in time to spare at least Lot's and his wife's lives. The angels had gone so far as to physically remove them from the cities when they would not go on their own, yet there was one thing they were instructed which only they could do or not do as the case may be. They were not to turn back to even look at the cities whether longingly or just to see what God was doing. This instruction Lot's wife did not follow, and when she turned back to look she lost her life! With Isaac's birth still a year away, this put an end to the possibility of the right wife for Isaac being born through Lot and his already genetically correct wife who could have done so.

That brings us to God preparing all of what we are covering here in chapter 24 and the importance of the information Abraham received in chapter 22 about his remaining brother having a family through the correct genetic wife. You will note if you return to chapter 22 verse 20 the information was not just that Nahor had children but specifically Milcah had given Nahor children. When we come to verse 15 and 16 here in chapter 24 we are told Bethuel had a family and he was specifically the son of Milcah the wife of Nahor. All these facts show us the men are not the only important element to be correct. We see that clearly in the story of Abraham having a son through Hagar which God said could not serve as the son of promise. In that story we take it as obvious fact that Sarah is important in that she is the wife of Abraham not a surrogate woman, but do we see it was

important Sarah be the biological mother of the son of promise? God performed a miracle to make that possible because it was important, even on a purely physical level. Here it may not be obvious, but we see it again. Lot's correct wife was gone so it does not matter how he had sons through his daughters, he could no longer have a daughter with his original wife. Nahor did have children through his correct wife and that's why Milcah is specified in these places.

While she is not named in these verses we can assume Bethuel had a wife that was of the correct blood to begin the chosen nation, or that the genetic markers were set enough by Bethuel himself being the son of Nahor and Milcah. We see the idea of who would become Jacob's wife was still important to come from this same family, but his sons' wives would not be so specifically important. Only God could know how this all needed to be set up in order for things to turn out right and Israel to be a nation of people with a distinguishable difference from all the other people in the world. The specificity of who was born of who was important in these very beginning generations, but diversity of blood would become important later. What was important for Isaac is that he have a wife born to this family and Rebekah had all the right parents and grandparents to make that happen. Verse 16 goes on to describe Rebekah outside her biological makeup in that it tells us she was fair to look upon. I love these verses in the Bible and the words God used even as they come to us in English after translation. If you read a translation other than the King James (which may or may not actually qualify as a true translation) you might see different words. However, in the King James Version we see not that she was pretty, gorgeous, beautiful or any words that could be taken in a specific way by any particular individual considering one's tastes.

What we are told is that Rebekah was fair to look upon. She was for her day and under the standards one might generally judge by within the culture of the time, an attractive woman. Now, one might wonder about the importance of pointing this out when no one knows better than God, true beauty is what's inside. To that I'll just say, one of the main points of telling us this is to let us know the servant did not end up with Rebekah because she was the one the family would like to, "pawn off" on someone. She was a desirable woman by any normal standard of the time. In other words, her options were open as to who she could be given to as a wife and that's important to keep in mind when thinking about her willingness to go with the servant to a strange land. The other very important facts are that she was a virgin. One might not be surprised this was of importance, but it's also not just a repeat or another way of putting it to go on to point out no man had known her. She was as available as available gets and as pure as pure gets. I ended last time by talking about how Abraham, this servant, and Isaac represented the Triune Godhead. Equally illustrated to us in Rebekah is the spotlessness of the bride of Christ! (Eph. 5:25-27, Rev. 19:1-9)

Until next time, Shalom!

The Bible As A Book continued from pg. 2

Israel, He speaks of visiting the sins of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations. (Ex. 20:4-6) People can be quick to change and accept even the once unacceptable. This process can grow to the point that once a few generations have passed, the children of a new generation and those beyond, become so far removed from any people of the generations that did not accept something that they think nothing of the acceptance of the once unacceptable!

Thus, what God is telling us when He says He visits the sin of the fathers upon the children is not that He holds children accountable for the sins of their parents, grandparents, etc., but that He does not accept the speed at which we change in this way. (Deut. 24:16) In human thinking, once something is starting to be accepted in one generation the next will totally accept that thing or way even during the time there are those of an older generation who will tell them that's not something we accepted in "our day," or something to that effect. We are quick to believe times change and values should change with them. This might be and can be true among humans talking about purely faddish things we do and wrongs that have come in. However, the preacher of Ecclesiastes tells us there is nothing new under the sun. Many things popular to one generation will quickly be rejected by the next, often just because the last generation liked it. No matter how great or small this is done, what was once popular will be popular again, and this many times happens with older people finding it ironic that something they did which their children rejected is now something their grandchildren or great-grandchildren are coming back to or a version of that which was popular in their time.

These are not the things God is talking about unless those things involve sinfulness, which they very often can, but one way or the other God is speaking to the laws of righteousness. What is truly a righteous or unrighteous way does not change with the passing of our generations. That said, there does come a time when things go downhill so badly the knowledge of something being unrighteous can be totally lost leaving future generations devoid of it. God, in His infinite mercy, will eventually grant mercy to a generation who didn't have a chance to learn or maybe even were raised in a world that did not allow them to see certain things as unrighteous. What we need to be clear on is that God does not grant that mercy as quickly as we might want Him to. A third or fourth generation may not have so many people around them that believe in something anymore, but the knowledge is still out there to be found even within human understanding. This is why we respect the wisdom of old age. (Job 12:12) Every generation has its faults so this is not to say whatever an older generation believed is correct, but the point is we have a chance to seek knowledge and hear it for ourselves. This gives us a chance to walk in a relationship with God and take it before Him desiring an answer. Maybe the answer is that the older generation had it wrong, but maybe it's that they had it right. In finding a truth of righteousness we may find ourselves the only one we know who follows it, but righteousness is still righteousness and unrighteousness is still unrighteousness. Truth is not dependent on how few or many know it or follow it, and only God can determine where the line is of Him granting mercy for us not knowing it. (Phili. 2:12)

Getting more directly back to the song of praise, we see again these references much later on down the song that speaks to the fact Israel really had willingly yielded to this king. Something that just a generation or two ago would have seemed unacceptable seemed not just fine but a good opportunity. The song refers to the princes of Israel riding on white donkeys, and this speaks to the fact Israel did, in fact, have leadership. They may not have been princes in that they were part of some dynasty that ruled the land, but they were people who were there to lead communities and tribes in the ways they needed to go. The problem is that people are always looking for government to act as a parent. There is an understanding that the power of government is derived from the family unit God established at creation, and we have covered this before. In short, this is why there are tribes which grow having some family taking the lead among the families, and these can grow to be bigger groups with established dynasties over nations. If we understand the spirit behind what drives what is a good idea at its core, which is to be giving to and concerned about one's community (in other words care for your neighbors and those within reach) we see how this goes from something we are thankful to find in individuals to something expected. One day we are praising those who care about our community, the next we are beating people over the head with the idea they must do this or that because they are part of a community.

We begin to see the freedom of the individual go from putting others first being a virtue righteous individuals possess at various levels, to it being a demand of the society. This then causes more and more of an expectation for government to enforce such demands. This seems to inevitably evolve into the idea that the governing authority should take from the haves to give to the have nots. While this can seem like an act of righteousness when it comes to government, it becomes an act of theft. This is not speaking to the fact government has to take a certain amount of taxes to maintain the infrastructure used by all of us. That is only fair, but there is a fine line between governing what people need in order to live together and taking for the sake of funding what a certain group desires to accomplish or what they see as beneficial to the whole of society. This is why God told Israel they would not have a king. God did not desire Israel to face this kind of pressure, and instead be an example of what righteous people could be when they make the freewilled choice to follow what is righteous not what is determined by a king/government.

In the end of it all, when people get used to a government giving them things or they can see how the government could be used to give them things, they want it more. We begin to look at a king in the same light as a parent. They are suppose to be caring for us. This is a selfishness and laziness within the corrupted human heart. In its worst form it goes full circle to become the excuse to ignore what it means to think of those around us. Why should we? That's the king's responsibility! Now, I've gone a bit wide on this subject outside the scope of our overview, but in many ways it's because it's important in our time. Getting back to the words of the song that Deborah and Barak sang in praise to God, we find they are telling us Israel was not devoid of leadership. Israel had leadership higher than just community organizers or the town leader; Israel had princes that rode on white donkeys. In spite of this, the people willingly yielded to this Canaanite king and these princes went right along

with them. What the song is pointing out in an overall way is, again, that fact God spared all these people using just a handful that were able to hear God's voice. God called and people like Deborah, Barak, and Jael listened. They did the work others would not do to free the nation from an oppressive power Israel had originally gave themselves to. I can't write about this without thinking back to what we are told happened leading up, or down as the case may be, to the flood of Noah's day. Even after those who served God turned to intermarry with those who did not serve God and corrupted the world in a way it never had been up to that time, there were still giants in the world who stood out because they chose to follow God. Deborah, Barak, and Jael along with other judges in Israel during these times were giants, the work of which all benefited from even if they did not have the eyes to see it. They were giants due to what God could do through them, and that's what this song is really all about!

As what we see as chapter 5 comes to the end, the closing words tell us the kind of information we have been told before concerning the deliverance the judges brought. After the work of Deborah the land would have rest for forty years. However, as chapter 6 opens we also see familiar words, which is the fact Israel once again did evil in the sight of God. This time we are told God allowed Israel to be overcome by Midian, and Midian would oppress Israel for seven years. These can not really be the same people we call the Midianites at the time of Moses because that group of people attempted to corrupt Israel with their false religion, and it would have worked if God had not intervened to put a stop to it. (Num. 25) As punishment we see one of the last acts of Moses' life was to send Israel out to destroy the Midianites. In doing this the army killed every man of Midian and brought the women and children back to the camp of Israel. When Moses goes out to meet them and sees what they had done he scolds them and then instructs them that all the male children were to be killed, and all the women that had been with a man were also. Only virgins of Midian could be left alive, and this had to do with the fact these were the very people who had corrupted Israel. (Num. 31:1-18) Moses didn't want any of that corruption to walk right back into the nation nor did he want any remnant of the Midianites to live on. Thus, when we see Midian becomes the oppressor of Israel here in Judges we know this is speaking of people more so geographically from the area of Midian than the nation of people who attempted to corrupt the chosen nation.

This would turn out to be the most destructive oppression Israel had experienced yet. Other kings and people wanted the power in the region and oppressed Israel to gain that power, but the Midianites came into Israel to truly pillage and steal all the nation worked for. The Midianites would come along with the Amalekites and other people from the eastern side of the land Israel had taken east of Jordan, and we are told they were like a swarm of insects. They would attack and take the crops Israel raised. They let Israel do the work and then they took the reward. They would also steal the cattle of Israel and other livestock the nation had. These people did not really oppress Israel in that they ruled over them but in that they left Israel with nothing. This story is quite the opposite of what God had promised Israel if they followed Him and obeyed His Law. Israel was brought into this region to own houses they had not built and possess vineyards and the like they had not planted. Now Midian

and people from the east were taking everything Israel had produced, and we are told this went on until Israel was greatly impoverished. This also was not isolated to those on the east side of the Jordan River, but these people went up and down the land taking everything up to the border of the Philistines, and that's why Gaza is mentioned.

This should not be misunderstood as telling us it was just those in the South of Israel that suffered but to give us a picture of how the hordes entered Israel from the Southeast, and went up north on the east of the Jordan then crossed over and worked their way back down south on the west side of Jordan. Israel became so desperate during this time the people started something we would see used much later on in the nation's history at the time after Jesus' first appearing when they fought with the Romans. Israel began using the cliffs in the hills as strongholds to attempt to keep themselves safe and store some supplies that these hordes could not get to. This does not mean Israel used the hills to create strongholds protected by any kind of military force but that they hid as much as they could in the hills and cliffs, including their families. This would not be greatly productive as it's difficult to grow food in these cliffs and rocky hills, but it's the best they could do. They would grow what they could, where they could, and if they could bring it back to these hiding spots before the Midianites got a hold of it, they could preserve something of their labor to live on.

Of course, the children of Israel wasted little time turning to cry unto The Lord under these circumstances. That is why we are told, instead of fifteen or twenty or more years, Midian is said to oppress Israel for a mere seven. However, God's answer to this cry of Israel was not to send a judge to immediately deliver them as before. This time we are told God sends a prophet to speak to Israel. This prophet is not named but, once again, we go back to the point there really is no line between a prophet as we think of one and these people we call judges. All of them are sent to speak the words of God and do a work in Israel no matter if that work is more verbal as we think of a prophet as being or more physical as the acts of a judge often were. No matter how you look at it, the first thing God did was send this prophet to remind Israel of the simple fact the God Israel served, or was suppose to be serving, had brought them out of Egypt. Egypt was a mighty nation, much more powerful in the world than these Midianites. He also reminds them that God had intentionally brought the nation to this land in order to give the chosen nation land He had promised to Abraham; land that belonged to other people who were likely more powerful than these Midianites. The prophet reminds them that God had told Israel not to fear the people of this land, and what we see at this time is that Israel was in fear more than they ever had been. Thus, the finishing words of this prophet was to point out, in spite of all God had promised in the way of doing good for the nation they had not followed The Lord nor had they obeyed His voice. Once again, Israel would need a giant, an individual who was willing and able to hear God's voice, to deliver them!

Let's stay in God's Word!