

Today we're continuing with the series entitled *Strengthened in Might* with this being *Part 3*.

In *Part 2* we began to go through the story of Joshua and the children of Israel when they were coming to the promised land. They'd conquered Jericho and now they were coming into the land that God had given to them. God had given them very specific instruction that they were to carry out, and so we went through some of that in Chapter 7 where right away from the very beginning there were things that they didn't do that they should have, and so God addressed that with them.

I thought it'd be good to go back and look at some of the last part of that because there was an individual by the name of Achan, if you remember, who was of the tribe of Judah, who had taken some of those things that he wasn't supposed to, that no one was supposed to, things that God had set apart, again, that weren't to be taken by anyone, and he took them. He took some silver. He took some other things as well, as we'll go through part of this. I don't remember if this is what I'm going to review here, but anyway, you remember some of the story of what we went through. God dealt with that in a very powerful way.

You can't help but be moved by certain things like that and it should move us. It should sober us. It should really stir up not just a soberness but even a fear to ever do anything contrary to what God tells us because God will take care of those things, especially with us. Now, He did with them as a nation, as a physical people because He was working with them as He was, but I think of ourselves. I think of the Church and things that I've seen since '69, since I've been in the Church. God deals with things; God takes care of things. If things aren't right He addresses them. It might not be in our time. It might not be, sometimes if we see a thing, that it happen immediately. It may go on sometimes for years. God may allow some things to take place for a long time because His people can learn through that. God teaches us through various things that we experience. There are some things you can't understand or learn until you've experienced it. God allows us to have various experiences. Some of these things we experience. All of us have experienced various things since we've come into God's Church. It's a great way to learn.

You can be taught. We can learn certain things by what we're told Sabbath by Sabbath but when you experience it in your own life, when you experience some of the things you're taught, that's what makes them come alive even more so and help to embed them more deeply in our mind to where we gain understanding then. It's not a matter just then of knowledge, it's a matter of understanding.

So it's an awesome thing how God works with us and then through time as we learn to apply things in the right way and respond to the understanding that God has given to us because then

we're absolutely without excuse. It's one thing to have knowledge, it's another thing when you have understanding and then you turn against God, go against something He said.

So, stories like this, to me, help to help in the sense of that which is sobering and to be reminded don't do anything against God! Don't go against His word. Don't go against His way of life. Don't resist it. Look to God continually. Work to put Him first in your life. That's a process of something that only we can choose to do. We learn from that. Stories like this that are in the Old Testament, though they be physical very much in nature they have many spiritual lessons that go along with them.

That's why we're going through some of these things, to learn some of those things, to think about some of those things, and with the experiences we have had to grow even more because understanding in time is to turn into wisdom. And what does that mean? Well, wisdom, true wisdom is that which comes from God, God only. That's why I like how it states that in the Proverbs. In the New Testament even the word, "word," "logos," it's the same thing. It's the mind, it's the being, it's the revelatory thought of God, and that is wisdom. It's wisdom for us to desire, to want to have the same kind of mind, the same thinking. So the reality is with time through experience, through understanding and the fact that we apply those things of understanding, in time it can become a part of wisdom to us, that we think like God.

Now, that's an awesome transformation that takes place in the mind, that we can actually have the thinking changed in our mind. That's what it's all about in Romans 12 when it talks about those things and the transforming that can take place and how we think. To me that's a beautiful and awesome thing that we can have that developed within us over time. We still have human nature, but what an incredible thing that we can have more of the mind of God as we grow spiritually. That's what growth is all about, becoming more at one with God.

So in this story of Joshua let's pick it up here in verse 24. **Joshua 7:24—Then Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them to the Valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why did you bring trouble upon us?** That's why they suffered like they did. That's why some of those soldiers or the army that went up against Ai, that they were killed and they weren't given a victory. God wasn't going to give them a victory; He wasn't going to help them to conquer.

I love that if you understand what that means in the New Testament, "to conquer." The word "overcome" in the New Testament is "to conquer." It's what it means, the ability to conquer, the ability to overcome. God will not give us the ability to overcome and to conquer if there is sin involved, until we fully repented of sin. So this is a part of the lesson that's being learned here, or that is available here to be learned. God dealt, then, with them, with him in a very specific way.

He says, “Why have you troubled us?” The reality is that sin is a trouble to God’s people. It’s a trouble to God’s Church. It hurts. Scriptures talk about how that which is a matter of leaven can spread quickly throughout a Church. I’ve lived through this over and over again in God’s Church. Since 1969 I’ve seen various waves of things come along. Early 70’s, up to ‘72 and that period of time, and then ‘74 with Pentecost, and then on and on you go, different times when there have been eruptions or what the scripture refers to as a quake, like an earthquake. In the Bible those things aren’t just a physical thing, but a shaking. That shaking we’ve experienced many a time and it just grew worse and worse until we had the ultimate of shakings with the Apostasy in 1984.

So to go through these things like we have has been incredible. The reality is, as it talks about in Corinthians, as Paul explains when he talks about the Days of Unleavened Bread and preparing for the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, is to get rid of leaven, to get rid of sin because it spreads quickly and it can spread throughout a Church. That’s happened in church area after church area after church area since I’ve been in God’s Church and since some of you’ve been in God’s Church. Some of you have gone through and learned some of those things.

I think of Washington, D.C. area, hundreds and hundreds, well over a thousand people (because they were under one regional minister at that time), who left because of his attitude and because of his teachings and a little subtlety over time, just like Satan did the angelic realm. It’s exactly the same thing. He begins to bring in his own thoughts and ideas, things negative about doctrine, things negative about Mr. Armstrong, and then after a while he starts teaching them a little bit something different here that they “ooh” and “ah” about. Human nature is an incredible thing. After a few years under that an entire church, churches (plural), can be swept away.

I think of Hawaii, who went, I think, through three of those, two for sure where it was totally decimated. Totally! Various regions in the Church in different areas have gone through that from time to time until we finally experienced it Church-wide around the world.

So it’s not something to be taken lightly. God makes sure that we learn. He pulls back from us. He allows various things to happen so that we can learn from it, but we suffer when there is sin around. The Church does suffer when there’s sin. I hate it.

I think of the times past because I don’t feel like we have it—I know we don’t—to any degree what we had years ago, and even five or six years ago or four years ago, because a lot of that’s just been gotten rid of thankfully, thank God, and those things hurt the Church, they truly do. They can spread from one person to another in that. Being on guard, it becomes more of a battle because then you have friendships and relationships that interfere.

So this is what was taking place. God wasn’t going to allow them to have any victory, any ability to conquer, to overcome an enemy until they’d dealt with this sin. Awesome!

He says, **Why have you troubled us? Today the LORD will bring trouble upon you.** Eventually...eventually everyone pays. There is a time for judgment. There is a time when God executes the judgment. That's just a reality of life. No one...no one gets by with sin.

So Israel stoned him with stones. Basically means they did exactly that, but they killed them. That's how they were killed. **...and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with the stones. Then they raised over him a great pile of stones that is still there to this day. So the Eternal turned away the burning of His anger.** I really don't like that, how it's translated, some of these things in the Old Testament because when we think of the word "anger" we think of human nature and anger, when people get angry. It's not the same thing. The word really has more to do with a response, "Because of what you've done, and now because of what you've done, I have to deal with it. You have to go through certain things now as a result of this. Judgment has to be executed." That's what it's about. So He does it. He executes the judgment. It's not a matter like we do as human beings and we lose control or whatever or start to lose control or we raise our voice and get really loud and argue and fight. God doesn't do that. Okay? The Great God of the universe doesn't do that.

So again, there are some things like this in translations that people just can't get so this is how it's written because that's all human beings can understand without God's spirit. Hopefully, we see it far more clearly.

Therefore, the name of the place had been called the Valley of Achor (literally "trouble") to this day. So because he troubled Israel God troubled him, brought trouble to him, ended his life, had his executed judgment.

Joshua 8. So after the sin had been addressed then God sent them forward to show them that He is the one who gives courage, strength, favor, and greatness. That's what He does for His people when we obey, the more we obey in our individual lives, the more, especially the more we obey as a collective body, as the Church of God even - because that's what we're to learn from these things because the principle is the same. One is to a physical nation; the other is to a Church. The more we grasp and understand those things this is why God is having us focus upon that because of where we are in time.

I marvel at that. We're hearing things in the news constantly that are just like prophecy just flowing out there right now, things that are happening and things that are ready to go whenever it's God's time. Things that are being revealed to this world, to mankind, I think of government alone. Government of the world of man doesn't work! That's being magnified many times over. People sit around now and they talk about it and they debate it and they don't come to the conclusion, "You know what? We can't govern ourselves." But they can't come to that conclusion. They can't see it. They can't grasp and understand it.

Instead, they think some way is going to come through here and somebody's got to be right and somebody's going to do something to help. But you can't please all the people by any measure,

even within a single party, supposedly heading the same direction. They're not. They disagree. They want their own special interest taken care of. All the garbage that goes on out there and all the lying, and today some of the bitterness and hatred and smugness. No respect for offices whatsoever. You think, this is incredible what we're experiencing. God is blessing us, the world, for these things to be manifest. Man cannot govern himself, only God can. It's because of how we live and how we think that things don't work.

I think of how dumb human nature, human beings can be. Vote, get somebody in, then vote to get them out to put somebody else in because they didn't take care of my problems and this next person, I really feel like they will, and back and forth. It's been that way for centuries. You think, where is the great lesson in all this? Who has ever solved your problems? You go through cycles; you go through various things. I'm sorry, I just, I can't help it. I am so sick of this sick world and I think God has given us a great, big dose of that, especially within the Church, to be able to see these things. Because we know them, we see them. The world can't and you feel sorry for people. They're imprisoned with all this. They're captive to all this. What a blessing when they're finally able to come through all this and to finally begin to see. "Now I get it. We can't govern ourselves. We'll destroy the earth." If God didn't intervene. That's where we are.

I've got a post coming out. I won't go into that, but, anyway. After six months, like I said to someone, there should be a post coming out, but timing is not fully mine either. There is a purpose for those things. But anyway, I couldn't help but think here today as well, and have for some time, how we live at the pinnacle of time. I think of all the time of all people at any age we live in the greatest. You may not see that. You may not fully believe that. But we do. There has never been a time like this. I don't think sometimes we grasp what we have just because of where we are in time.

Then the added awesome thing is that God has called us at this time because this is when we're alive. He called the Church, He called a group, then He called a remnant out of a Church that was scattered. How awesome is that above and beyond everything else then? He's given us such understanding because we live at a time of a change in government, a time when Satan is going to be put away, the demonic world is going to be put away and not have any affect upon mankind like he has for the past 6,000 years. To be of a group of people that some are going to be able to go right into that government that the world has wanted for so long when the Messiah establishes God's government on earth. This is that time. We get to see it all transpire. I don't know what that means to you but I can't help it, I'm dumbfounded by it, I really am. What can you say? There aren't enough words, the right words.

I want to read this, too, before I go on. Just some things in the world, of how people are talking. This is from the Associated Press: **Putin issues ominous warning of Rising Nuclear War Threat**¹

¹ <https://www.apnews.com/deaa45c70d3c4da98410d5a3ec309510>

People might think, well, what does that mean? But if you know the time we're in, if you know what is coming, if you realize what's happening with the economy of the world right now and you see how close things can be at any moment in time and something's going to push it over the edge at some point here. That's what brings that one on and things begin. But people are already pushing at each other in stupid ways and around the world things that are taking place.

I think of what's happening. I mean, what do you do? They've been fighting for centuries - Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran - it goes way, way back in time and it's just been a continuation of tribes fighting each other. None of them get along. They never have. They'll continually kill each other. What a sick part of the world! It really is! For people who do want to have families and have children and have a decent life, they're caught in something, they're trapped in something that's been going on for centuries. It doesn't matter who's there; it's going to continue to happen so you have to make choices and decision. But the world, governments can't see those things.

So we pull out, Europe maybe feels like they're forced to go in. I mean, they have their own army now and that's what they're talking about, and they want to have a certain relationship with Iran that the U.S. doesn't want to have. These games that are being played out there right now are incredible. They really are because this is what's pushing us to the edge and lining everything up. It has been. The stage is set, like I said at the Feast, it's just a matter of when it's God's time.

Then you have someone like Erdogan in Turkey. He wants to go in those areas. So you have a conversation with Erdogan and you decide to pull out. Well, it's a choice. But to let someone like that come in? We don't know what we're doing.

Greece right now, and Turkey, they're so close. One incident and they're at war. Just one little incident is all it's going to take because the rhetoric is already there. They've hated each other for a long, long time and that hatred right now is being stirred up more and more. There are certain islands out there in the Aegean that they're disputing and fighting about because, candidly, Erdogan thinks they belong to him anyway, that whole region. So this is the thinking that's going on and so they continue to push at Greece and Greece is starting to push back a little bit more, and one day whether it be there or some other part of the world, when these things happen they happen all over the world because these skirmishes, these hatreds. Japan, China, it's going to come right back. This time a little bit flipped in the sense of what brought it together. Everything is ready to go and all these things are all around the world.

I guess I was talking about Erdogan, but dare I say some of it? I've already said enough in the past. To trust someone like that, that they be in NATO is absolute insanity...absolute insanity! But there are politics involved and there are nuclear weapons involved, and there's Incirlik involved, the base that we have over there to do some of the things we want to have control of or be able to have access to throughout the Middle East. So people play these games and they trade off one thing for another. It's happened again. It happens.

“MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a chilling warning Thursday about the rising threat of a nuclear war, putting the blame squarely on the U.S., which he accused of irresponsibly pulling out of arms control treaties.

Speaking at his annual news conference, Putin warned that ““it could lead to the destruction of civilization as a whole and maybe even our planet.””

He’s talked about this in the past. You think, now, if a leader with that kind of power says those things is it really in his mind? Yeah. There’s something in his mind alright.

Then going on down through here, some of this he’s speaking of things in Washington and then he makes a comment like this: ““They need an external threat to cement NATO unity,’ Putin said, accusing the U.S. and its allies of exploiting ‘phobias of the past’ to achieve domestic political goals.””

He’s right! Nations do this all the time back and forth. That’s what they’re doing out there. These fears, they build them up, and it stirs things up and it’s not a good thing. It goes past a cold war.

He says, ““As for ruling the world, we know where the headquarters trying to do that are located, and the place isn’t Moscow...”” You know what? I have to say overall he’s pretty right in what he has to say. The policeman of the world? Who has felt that responsibility? Who has said that’s what we have to do or else... But what do you do? We can’t govern ourselves. The world is out of control.

Then he said this, “noting that the Pentagon’s annual budget of over \$700 billion dwarfs Russia’s defense spending of \$46 billion.”

There’s a pretty big difference there. But he has a lot of nuclear weapons and if you put a bunch on the border? Do you remember what happened when they came down and tried to put some in Cuba, put a base in Cuba? Now, how did that make the United States feel? But if we do that to them it’s like, “Well, that’s different.” Well, what’s different about it? Why shouldn’t they feel pushed into a corner? When you start shoving a bear into a corner what do you think that bear is going to do? Yeah! Stupid! We’re stupid!

“Turning to nuclear weapons, Putin warned that if the U.S. puts intermediate-range missiles in Europe after its planned exit from the INF Treaty banning them, Russia will be forced to take countermeasures.”

That’s all you can expect! Naturally that’s going to happen. Do some do that on purpose in order to stir up some of those feelings and have greater control of certain nations and places and NATO and Europe? Yeah, sure do. We’re foolish if we think otherwise.

I could read more here. I’m going to go ahead with some of this. Blows the mind sometimes.

“As for what he described as U.S. reluctance to extend the New START nuclear arms reduction treaty, he said: ‘You aren’t interested? You don’t need it? OK, we will survive. ... But it will be very bad for the whole of humankind, because it would take us to a very dangerous area.’”

You know what? He's right. Because the world doesn't understand where we are right now. Certain people understand certain things that are taking place and they don't like it. They see a change is taking place.

Then also he said in part of the article here, or it's stated here: "He noted that he's still keeping the door open for a meeting with Trump, but added that the prospect for that looks increasingly dim in view of the Democrats winning control of the House."

So here is what he said: "You can predict new attacks on the president with 100-percent probability..." Yeah, well, true. It hasn't stopped yet and it's not going to stop.

"Putin said, 'I don't know if he could engage in a direct dialogue with Russia in such conditions.'"

True. How can you talk to them now? How would the world, how would the public, how would both parties look upon that? Not too favorably with everything, all the hype that's gone out there about things that have been blown out of proportion and many of them aren't true, sound fully. But the point being, at a time when we really should be talking is the time that we're not and hands are tied. Hmmm, interesting.

"He charged that the continuing U.S. political infighting reflects a 'lack of respect...' Well, this is a bit of politics here, but anyway, "a lack of respect for voters' who elected Trump." Anyway, sometimes you whitewash over here and a little over here. "They don't want to acknowledge his victory and do everything to delegitimize the president," Putin added.

But then it goes on to say here: "He insisted that a Russian woman in U.S. custody has not carried out any mission for the Russian government..." May or may not. We don't know fully. "...even though she pleaded guilty this month to acting as a covert agent of the government. Putin claimed that Maria Butina — accused of trying to infiltrate the NRA..."

I think of all things, you can infiltrate the NRA? Well, that's a dangerous thing. I can't believe that. It's a mind boggling thing to me. Isn't that crazy! Being sarcastic, here. "Infiltrated the NRA and American conservative circles." Well, you don't want to infiltrate the American conservative circles, do you? I mean, what does that mean for the world, for the government. Anyway, going on... "infiltrating the American conservative circles around the time of Trump's election — entered the guilty plea because of the threat [this is what Putin is saying] threat of a long prison sentence in the case, which Putin described as fabricated."

Well, part of that I totally believe, because that's what they do. They'll build up one thing and exaggerate another thing, and then threaten. And what do you do? Well, in some cases you know you're going to prison so you might as well plea it down and get less. That's what he's saying, basically, that she's doing. So, anyway, the games that people play out there are incredible. But I think it's a horrifying thing to think that they could infiltrate the NRA. I'm sorry, but isn't that stupid? I mean, really! Going to prison for certain things, and because you're from one country, and you must have caused a lot of harm there. I'm sorry; it's just insane, absolutely insane.

Going on in the story here of Joshua, what happened. Joshua 8:1. So again here, this strength, favor, these are good examples. God can take it away and God can give it. God can give victory, especially with the Church because this thing of conquering and overcoming is a matter of something that comes from God. It's something that only God can give, and the kind of strength, the kind of confidence, the kind of boldness, the kind of encouragement that we need in being able to go forward through all the things that are in front of us is something that God gives. It's a matter of keeping our eyes on Him, putting first things first, and we don't have to worry.

Does it mean we're going to have a struggle? Well, we always have struggle in this human body, in this human life, and when the world is really bad around us, yeah, there are going to be some struggles, but God is there to take care of His people.

Joshua 8:1—Then the Eternal said to Joshua: Do not fear, because there is nothing to fear when you place God first. On the contrary, that's the time to be encouraged, because that's what God will give. ...neither be discouraged. You can be encouraged instead. ...and take all the people of war with you to stand up and go up to Ai.

So God is telling us we're going to go up against some hard things out here. There are going to be some horrifying things that we can't comprehend. But no matter how bleak or how ugly it looks out there or what it might seem like you don't have to worry about it. You don't have to fret like the world does. You don't have to be in the kind of fear the world is.

I have seen things in God's Church, interventions of things. I know of certain things that have happened in people's lives where God has intervened to do incredible things...incredible things. When it's time and when it's needed God is there. So we don't have to experience those right now in our life, as a whole, but God has given enough throughout time, through the time of Worldwide and on up to the time of the Apostasy, of things to happen that He intervenes on a very physical plane in our lives when it's needed. Okay? We see that from time to time in various things that happen, usually from sicknesses and illnesses and things that can happen, but even there, God allows us to experience the other part of it as well.

But when we're going up against what we're headed for God wants us to be encouraged. God wants us to be strong. That's a matter of a relationship with Him. It's not a matter of trying to work it up. It's not a matter of trying to think positive about it. It's just a matter of more of a relationship with God. Prayer. Prayer. Fasting. Prayer. To really desire to communicate, to be close to God.

He says, "and take all the people of war with you and stand and go up to Ai." I'm just going to read the verses to you and we're going to continue on here in Joshua, but in **Zechariah 4:6—Then he, speaking of an angel, answered and spoke unto me saying, This is the word of the Eternal unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might nor by power...** Now, here it's talking about in the sense of what we can do as human beings, in the sense of what can be done physically on a physical plane. It's not what people can do. It's not what others are going to do, it's not, frankly, what

anyone can do on a physical plane. It says, **but by My spirit**. Because real strength, real might comes from God.

Not that which is physical, not that which we tend to look to as human beings. There are certain things we're supposed to do in preparation for things that are ahead, but on a limited scale compared to what is really going to take place. We can only prepare so much.

We do that because we're told to, because we realize God wants us to have certain preparation. But then everything else that's going to be far greater we know that we look to God to be on our side, to be with us, to give us the kind of strength of mind, the kind of courage in the mind that comes from Him, and the ability to know when to do certain things and when not to. God can communicate with your mind, move you to do certain things in a very powerful way whenever it's needed. Or to literally have angels, angelic beings, come to your rescue, as I've known of stories in times past where God has done that very thing - slammed people up against the wall who would harm someone of God. Nothing to be seen. Slammed up against a wall. Those are the kinds of things. God has the power to do anything He wants for His people.

That's why Christ said, "Do you think that I can't call upon twelve legions of angels." He mentioned here at the particular time when he was about to be put to death. Reality is we can call upon God and He'll take care of us one way or another. He'll lead us. He'll work with us. He'll protect us. He'll put things in people. There are examples in the scripture where God has put things in, thoughts, sometimes favor in a person's mind toward His people. How does He do that? Very simple. All of a sudden (they don't know why), but they favor you. Incredible! There will probably be more than that than direct intervention of angels, frankly.

So again here, reading the verse again. **Joshua 8:1—Then the Eternal said to Joshua: Don't fear, and neither be discouraged; and take all the people of war with you, and stand up and go up to Ai and see how I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land.** Now, that was an incredible time when they had gone into the promised land. Look at where we are. We're going into a far greater one, a far more meaningful one. We really are.

Verse 2—You shall do to Ai and her king as you did to Jericho and her king. That should have given encouragement, more boldness. God's promise, He said, "I'm going to do to them... See what I do for you as I did to Jericho," **Only**, or as in saying, **In this time you shall take the spoil and the cattle for a plunder unto yourselves.** See, before they weren't. When that was taken out of Jericho that was sin because it wasn't theirs to take. This time He's saying, "But this time it is yours to take, all that you can take."

Lay an ambush for the city behind it. So Joshua rose up with all the people of war, to go up against Ai; and Joshua chose thirty thousand mighty men of strength and sent them away by night. And he commanded them, saying: See that you lie in wait against the city, even behind the city. Do not go very far from the city, but all be ready. So be ready and go to a specific location and this is what you're to do.

Then all the people that are with me will approach unto the city; and it shall come to pass when they come out against us as before, that we will flee before them. For they will come after us and we will draw them away from the city, for they will say, *They are fleeing before us as before/again. So we will flee before them.* So it's a matter of trying to pull them out of the city so they're going to do this thing, to go up there, and they're going to think all of a sudden that they're fearful and they've decided not to and they're fleeing out of here. So he said they're going to come after us then.

God gave him to know all this. God spoke these things to him and told him various things. Some, whether He spoke them directly or whether it just was communicated to the mind, "This is what you're to do," He did it. Incredible to understand some of the things that Joshua did. He's kind of new at this in one respect because he had been with Moses for a long time, at the right hand of Moses, if you will, serving, and then all of a sudden he's thrust into this, goes over Jordan and goes to Jericho, and he's still learning.

That's why sometimes the things of experience are unique because there are things you can be taught, there are things you can learn, as he did through Moses and things that he did experience to a certain degree around him, but nothing like this because this is relatively new. They're going into a land and God says to do various things there, and all of it's to be given to you and you're to destroy everything as far as peoples are concerned, nations and people that are before you, because, well, that's what He told them to do, destroy it all. "Kill them. It's yours. It's not for them, it's yours to take."

Verse 7—Then you shall rise up from the ambush and seize the city, for the Eternal your God will deliver it into your hand. So when we obey and strive to honor God in our lives He strengthens us and makes us greater, whatever it is we need. That's incredible to understand, a boldness there to understand such things. Place your trust, your faith, as we've had sermons in in times past here now leading up to this, in God because you can't deliver yourself. You can't deliver yourself spiritually and you can't deliver yourself physically for what's in front of us. God can. God can also prevent individuals from continuing on and going forward - which He will do. Some from a Body that was scattered and some who were able to be a part with us, to share with us. Sad.

Verse 8—Once you have taken the city, you shall set the city on fire. According to the commandment of the Eternal you shall do. I have shown you what is commanded. Therefore, Joshua sent them forth; and they went to lie in ambush, and they waited before Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai; but Joshua remained that night among the people. So you remember the story here of what he was going to do. He said I'll come up with others then, other of the army to fight against, and the rest of you, several thousand there, are to be in ambush and then go in and burn the city when the sign is given to them.

Verse 10—Joshua rose up early in the morning and numbered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai.

And verse 11 it goes on to say, **All the people of war that *were* with him went up and approached before the city and encamped on the north side of Ai. Now, there was a valley between them and Ai. He took about five thousand men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city. And when they had set the people, even all the army that *was* on the north of the city, and those lying in wait on the west of the city, and Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley.**

And it came to pass when the king of Ai saw *it*, they quickly rose up early and the men of the city went out upon the plain against Israel to battle. So it's exactly like Joshua said it would be. They're going to go up, approach. Naturally a city, a fortified city, they see them coming again and so they're going to be quickly prepared to go out to battle against them or to be in battle waiting there for them. But this time here, obviously, they came out of the city.

He and all the people at the pre-appointed time. But he did not know that *there were* those waiting in ambush against him behind the city. So Joshua and all Israel made it seem as though they were defeated before them, and they fled by the way in the wilderness. Incredible!

And all the people that *were* in Ai were called together to pursue after them. And they pursued after Joshua and were drawn away from the city. And there was not a man left in Ai or Bethel that did not go up out after Israel. Again here, primarily they were going up against Ai, but Bethel is right there close by. I don't know exactly on which side of it, but anyway, the point being is they were allied together. They were of the same families and so forth and they were going to come out and fight against Israel.

And they left the city open and pursued after Israel. Then the Eternal said unto Joshua, **Stretch out the spear that *is* in your hand toward Ai and I will give it into your hand.** So again here, we don't know how He told these things to him but He did. I simply believe it's a matter of how God communicates with the mind. After certain experience in time you know this is what God is doing and you do it because you know how God works. Joshua had learned these various things, or whatever it took, through experience in time. It doesn't have to be something verbal in specific words, but it may have been. Time will tell. We'll know one day.

Stretch out the spear which that's in your hand toward Ai and I will give it into your hand. So Joshua stretched out the spear that he had in his hand toward the city. There are things that happen in our lives sometimes. There are things that God leads us to see and to do at a particular moment in time. We've experienced that in the Church, and frankly, God has worked with us more and more to think that way. It's like saying when we're told to turn left we turn left. When it's time to turn right we turn right because it's a matter of putting God first. It's a matter of being in unity and oneness and harmony, whether it be a physical people and nation as they were and all they'd experienced already, because they had come over Jordan. They had come over and the things that had been destroyed in Jericho and they witnessed these things. They had

experience in various things of how God worked with them. They were more convicted of a certain way that God works.

The more convicted even on a physical plane that they were, they did it and God blessed them. We've learned that in the Church in a very powerful way, in ways that I have never experienced in God's Church to this degree in the last many years. So it's a process that God is bringing us through as we draw closer and closer to a particular moment in time because that's what's needed, and because that's what we have to be prepared for...or He's preparing us for. So there are things from time to time that God will lead us to see and do, and we've already experienced those things, and there are things in front of us yet that we don't know about. We do it when God says to. We just do it because we have the experience, we've gone through enough things to understand this is it, or whatever this moment in time, this is what we're supposed to accomplish.

To me that's a comforting thing to know and to understand, because there are things you can rely upon, that you can depend upon and because we've experienced what we have to this point in time we're a much stronger people. That's why I think about what was written concerning an extraordinary 4½ years. We still don't grasp the depth of what took place at that time up here. God molds and fashions our minds. God molds and fashions our thinking. There is a unity and a oneness, as a whole, within the Body that's becoming stronger and stronger, because that which is not at one is going by the wayside more and more. That's been going on for some time now, candidly, within the Body, and especially since 2012 when some of these things began, this process.

I find them immensely inspiring because it's a matter of seeing God's hand at work and how He works with us as a people and how He prepares us and how He molds and fashions us. That's why I marvel sometimes in going back and looking at various sermons, whether it be a few months or a few years or just the last year, and you see there's a process, there's a building process, if you will. You build upon one thing to go to the next. That's what God is doing with us in our mind, but that which is being taught, that's which He's giving to us, it is a building process and it's exciting. The more we witness those things and the closer we are to God the more that we see them and grasp them the stronger we will be, the more encouraged we will be because it's about a relationship with God.

No one can give it to you. It's about your choices and your personal relationship with God, how much you want His way of life, how much you're striving to conquer and overcome self, how much you're putting into it, how much you're praying about these things. It comes down to each individual and what we do individually.

Verse 19—*Those in ambush rose up quickly out of their place; and they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand.* So again, part about here stretching the spear toward Ai, then that was a signal for them to do that which they were to accomplish. It says, **and they entered into the city and took it, and quickly set the city on fire. And when the men of Ai looked behind them,**

they saw this as the smoke of the city rising up into the sky, and they had no ability/means to flee this way or that way. They were caught. So they began to realize that. They began to understand that. What happens then? Well, the fear was on them because they saw something that they weren't expecting. It's an incredible story.

I think there are so many stories in the Old Testament of things that God has done and the unique ways He's done it to inspire people, to motivate people, to encourage people about His intervention in their lives, but very much on a physical plane. But all the time there are spiritual lessons to be learned along the way.

...to flee this way or that way, and the people that had fled to the wilderness turned back upon them, pursuing them. And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city and that the smoke of the city was rising, then they turned again and slew the men of Ai. And the others, in other words, those who had gone in to take the city and burn it, And the others went out of the city again... In other words, this is from their rear because they've gone out against the Israelites, now they see the city burning and they're caught in the middle and not knowing what to do, and here the Israelites are coming at them now to kill them on one side, and all of a sudden there are others coming from the rear to kill them from the other side. **...so they were in the middle of Israel, some on this side and some on that side. And they struck them down so that they let none of them remaining or able to escape.**

Again here, sometimes I marvel at some stories in the sense of how they can be read. Especially when God told them to go in and destroy everything and they did. In the mind of human beings sometimes people can't grasp that. How could God do that? Why would God do that? And yet just as we see certain things happening in certain nations today, like the Middle East, like Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Yemen, all those places that are having problems that they have, and you think of the centuries that these things have gone on and on and on and a mindset of people who have continually been killing themselves and killing others. Much of the world is like that anyway from time to time, from period to period. Look at the Assyrians. It's the way of the world.

Yet sometimes human beings can become a little pious and a little self-righteous and because they don't grasp the Great God and what He says and why He does, and because they don't understand His purpose and plan. I think of young children. I think of young children who live in certain parts of the world that for many of them because of what they experience, and I'm not going to go into some of the things they experience because some of it is really, really, really bad, but it would be better that some of those children die at a very young age, be resurrected in the Great White throne than to have things happen that hurt the mind, that scar the mind, and the years and years and years, once they're called even, with God's spirit, to have that changed. Oh, that's another matter. Sometimes what happens to some people they can respond in very horrifying ways, and sometimes they become the ones who had things done to them, and because of that, the mind becomes so corrupt that it comes to a point in time that they can't even be given God's spirit. Some can, some can't. Depends on how corrupt the mind becomes.

It's an incredible thing that God's revealed to us in the past few years about the corruption of the mind and what human beings can do to it because there was a time when we didn't understand, that it was basically believed within the Church that every human being who has ever lived will definitely be resurrected in the Great White Throne if they're not in the first resurrection. Not true, not to live for a hundred years.

When the mind is so corrupt, so vile, so evil that God knows the spirit in that mind what is the purpose? What is the purpose of giving life again and then offering them His spirit? It'd be like offering that to Satan, which can't be done because of a spirit being that he is and what he's already done to his mind, but that's how insane that would be. What's the purpose? The mind is already set in evil. It will never want Him. It will never desire Him.

There are some within the scattered Body, some that were a part of the Apostasy that I've wondered about them sometimes, that by the time they were put into positions of things that they did their minds were so corrupt, and they really came out in time they never wanted any of this. They never really believed it, never really wanted it. They always wanted something else. But they rode the ride for a while, acted as though they were part of the temple, lived as though they were part of the temple, spoke like they were a part of the temple. That's even more vile! To be begotten of God's spirit and you do that, how evil is that?

Anyway, I'm so thankful that we have learned these things because it gives a lot greater peace of mind. Because I think a lot of despots, very evil people who have lived through time, certain minds, and to think that they're going to be given an opportunity to be in God's Kingdom when their minds are so evil that they would never want something like that? It's one thing to come to repentance because you see your sins, but when a mind doesn't even want that because it's justified and it has such hatred and bitterness toward other kinds of people that it sees in a certain way, you can't change that mind if it doesn't want changed. To me that's an incredible thing to come to understand, that God has given to His Church in the past few years.

So again, all these people. They're going to be resurrected because God looks at time differently than we do. Traditional Christianity doesn't look at it in the same way. They don't understand. They don't grasp. Well, they can't even believe the things they have on a spiritual plane.

Their minds are so far out there in things that they think about life and death because they really don't know. That's why they judge in some of the ways that they do sometimes in such a distorted, perverted way. That's why they feel that this God here was a mean, cruel God because that's the concept that a lot of people have. That's the concept that when Jesus, when Joshua, well, they call him Jesus, when Jesus Christ came along that he got rid of his old harsh Father's law because it was too harsh; He was too cruel. He was too cruel in the Old Testament so he came along to help people. You think, what a distorted, perverted mind.

It goes on to say here, **verse 23—They took the king of Ai alive, and brought him to Joshua. So it came to pass when Israel had made an end of slaying all the inhabitants of Ai on the land...**

All of them. Not anyone was to be left alive. When they went in to take the land no one was to remain alive. God says, “This is yours. I am giving it to you and this is what you’re to do.”

So it came to pass when Israel had made an end of slaying all the inhabitants of Ai on the land, in the wilderness wherein they chased them, and when they all had fallen on the edge of the sword until they were destroyed, that all the Israelites returned unto Ai and struck it down with the edge of the sword. Everything except animals and so forth that they were able to take this time, and goods and so forth that were a part for them, that God had set apart and said this is yours now to take.

Verse 25—So it was *that* all who fell that day, both men and women, *were* twelve thousand—even all the men of Ai. For Joshua did not draw his hand back, where with he had stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. He continued to do that, hold that there until it was finished. It was a symbol of that which God had given to them to follow, to do, and they did it.

Israel took the cattle and the spoil of that city as a plunder, livestock, basically, is really the word, of the city as a plunder for themselves according to the word of the Eternal which He had commanded Joshua. And Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, even a desolation unto this day. And he hung the king of Ai on a tree until evening time. That was during the day and then had him hung there. Then, it says here, it’s evening, as soon as the sun was down Joshua commanded that they should take his corpse down from the tree and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise up over it a great heap of stones *that remains* unto this day.

Then verse 30—Then Joshua built an altar unto the Eternal God of Israel in Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Eternal had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses. So there are things written back in Deuteronomy that they were to do and there were two mountains and certain things that take place here in some of the story that we’ll come to at some point here. Anyway, this is where they were to do these things. It says, and to make an altar of whole stones, meaning uncut, in other words, without human hands, over which no man has shaped with iron *tools*. And they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the Eternal, and sacrificed peace offerings.

And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses. I don’t know how they did that, what part this was, but that’s what it says they did. The law was written there and the stones were there and it says, *which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel*. So again, how those things were accomplished and done I don’t have the foggiest idea. Whether they chiseled them out of the rock, I don’t know. Did they have rocks big enough for that? I don’t know. But it says that’s what he did, wrote out the word of God and the commandments of God that were given to them, the children of Israel.

Again, here as a people, as a nation constantly being reminded to look to God and here is how you are to live your life. Now, that was to a physical people from time to time when they had certain things take place in their life. Like this, a great victory that was given to them, they saw God's hand in it. They were to know this came from God. "You didn't do this. You tried once when you had sin and how did that go? Then when you obeyed I gave it to you. I gave you the strength. I gave you the help. I gave you the encouragement. I gave you the strategy to be applied to this, to take the city without loss of any life." That's what God did.

So those things were embedded upon a very carnal, physical people who didn't have God's spirit. I think of us. I think of the Church, then, how God continually, after various things in our life, no matter when it might be, but in God's time He reveals things to us, He gives things to us, He gives His word to us because we've gone a long way beyond just the commandments. The commandments are a code of life, of how we're to live our life, and there are those things we're to learn from it that we apply on a spiritual plane, but I think of all the truths that God has added to those things to expand them, to expound upon them and to show something even greater, starting with whatever, the three in Sardis, because it's about how we as God's people, as a Church must live, and every one of those we can learn things from, awesome things!

So, yes, there are ten that we're very much to live by, but those magnify them, just like tithing. Of all things, I think of that often now because of things we've gone through in recent years here where so many - not a few - far too many people have been robbing God. I think, not to steal? That's one of the commandments. It's one thing not to steal from other human beings or from your boss, or from your neighbor, or whatever it might be as a matter of thinking, but to do that on a spiritual plane when you've been begotten of God's spirit, to do that toward God and not to fear? Not to put aside the second tithe faithfully? Because, yes, it's going to be yours to use, but as God even gave the Israelites certain things here to do you're to use or do things in a very specific way and no other way.

Obedience to God, wanting to honor God, wanting to please God, and what do we learn from those things? Everything belongs to God. It's all God's. How blessed are we that He's given us what we have? How much more do we want, do we desire to have that we don't have, that we're not content with?

Does that mean that if we don't have more we're not going to survive, we're not going to be at peace, we're going to have too much drama in our life if we can't live here or have that vehicle or buy this or buy that? Which is more important to have? To have those things or to have God? To me, of course that's me, it's a simple thing. For human nature sometimes it's not so simple. But it should be if we have the impregnation of God's spirit in your mind. It should be a very simple, easy thing to do. It should be one of the first things of all things that's easy for us to do.

It's like I mentioned last Sabbath, I'd rather have what's inside that closet. If I have to live in there, put out a roll each night and live in there, or just a little bit more maybe, just maybe double the size. I'd like to have twice that because that's a pretty small closet. So I'd like to

have a little bit more than that, especially if there are two of us. Sometimes we get in each other's way right in the kitchen. But anyway...

But seriously, it'd be better to be content with that. I can do it, could do it. It's not a problem if that's what's required. Thank God, and thank God. Everything belongs to God and any time it's not about physical things. Physical things can be nice if you've worked for them, if you've earned them. They can add something to your life, but they don't make your life. They don't make you happy. They don't make you fulfilled. They might make some of the journey easier at times. A little more green, as long as it's holding up, things can be made a little easier sometimes. But you know, when there is a struggle, there's a struggle. What do you do? First things first. God's first. It's very simple.

I think of all the things that have been added, the 18 Truths that God gave through Mr. Armstrong to us, above and beyond the three concerning the Sabbath, that God's a creator and everything belongs to Him. I think of those two things alone, just the two - the Sabbath or Sabbaths, but the Sabbath at that point in time, tithing, and how they go together and what they mean and how they point to God and how we can learn so much just from those two alone. 7,000 years—God has a plan—every Sabbath. Thankfully we have a seventh day where we can crash finally and we're commanded don't go and do anymore because as human beings some of us would just keep going. We're told, "No. Put it aside. It's a day to spend toward Me in your thinking, in your mind, and especially in what I'm going to give you Sabbath by Sabbath." How blessed are we just with those two alone? Then all the others that God gave through time here whereby we live our lives and they mean so much. But we all have choices.

He wrote there, the law. **Verse 33—And all Israel, their elders, officers, and judges, stood on both side of the ark before the priests, the Levites, who carried the ark of the covenant of the Eternal, as well the stranger as those born among them. Half of them over against Mount Gerizim and half toward Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Eternal, this is back in Deuteronomy as well, as Moses the servant of the Eternal had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel.** So from one place they would speak of curses, from one place they would speak of the blessings. I don't understand all that but anyway. Why it's there hasn't been shown, but it's a process that God had for them to learn from.

And afterward, it says, he read all the words of the law, the blessings and curses, because that's where it was to be done and God was very specific how they were to do that there in the book of Deuteronomy. So this is exactly what he was doing, exactly what he'd been taught through Moses. **...according to all that is written in the Book of the Law,** so to read all the words of the law. See, sometimes for them as a physical people there are things throughout time that they did this, certain occasions that they did this, where that time was spent, big occasions, as a whole, but for us it should be just regular occasions. Not that we specifically go back and read all of Deuteronomy. There are things that apply to us more, obviously the 57 Truths. We know the 10 Commandments; we have the 57 Truths + 1. I don't know how else to put it. That's

the way it's going to stay, I think. It's just +1, the one that freed us. Awesome! Totally and completely! It separated us totally and completely from all the rest - Joshua the Christ.

Sometimes that's why I've encouraged people to on occasion to go back and think about, mediate upon, pray about, if you would, some of the truths, one of the truths, just from time to time. Just so they're deeply etched into our thinking, into our mind, because that can help stir up gratitude, thankfulness for what He's given to us, the ability to see them as we do, the ability to understand them, and it's a part of writing them in our hearts and minds. They don't just stay there. That's why God has us year by year go to the Feast of Tabernacles. That's why every year we have a Passover, Days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, because we have to be reminded and because there are things we're to think upon so that they're at the forefront of our mind. From time to time then we build upon those. As we hear different sermons we build upon those things, we truly do, in what's contained in them.

So it says here, **Afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursing's, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. Every word that Moses commanded Joshua read before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who lived among them.**

Then we're going on to Chapter 9 here.

They had come into the promised land, conquered Jericho, and news like that throughout the entire region spread like wildfire. All those countries, all those people, they all knew they were the ones that come out of Egypt! They knew who they were! That wasn't lost through time. The peoples out there knew it. When they knew that they were up to Jericho and what happened there, there were people who knew it. There were people who went out and spread the word about what happened there and it caused incredible fear because they knew the story. These are the people that destroyed Egypt, that God, their God that destroyed Egypt. However, they said it, whatever they believed, whatever was in their mind, but they were afraid because they knew the history and some of the stories here that there was no Pharaoh, there was no Egyptian army after that point in time. That went throughout the whole region.

Now we're coming upon the scene of some of these people and how they're responding to what they see because they have also heard the rest of the story. They've also heard the rest of the story, that God said it was their land, the God who brought them out of Egypt. They have heard the story of what was being said, that God had told them. Now, how that spread, how it got there, don't know, but it spread and they heard the stories. They heard what they'd been told, that this belongs to Israel, that that's what their God has said, that this is what these people that are coming up against you believe. Whether they believed it or not is immaterial.

Joshua 9:1—And it came to pass when all the kings who were on this side of Jordan, in the hills and in the lowland and in all the coasts of the Great Sea toward Lebanon... So again, all the way from that Mediterranean region all the way up through there, up through Lebanon and all

the way back then toward Jordan and so forth, all the way down through there, that huge region that we know that was given to Israel, even more on the other side of Jordan as well.

But going on here. And it came to pass when all the kings who *were* on this side of the Jordan, in the hills and in the lowland and in all the coasts of the Great Sea toward Lebanon —the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite—heard *about it*, that they gathered together in one accord to fight/battle Joshua and Israel. So they knew this was a large group of people coming up against them. They heard what happened to Jericho. They heard what happened to Ai and Bethel. They heard these things and so they were joining together to be an army together to fight.

But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they worked craftily (cunningly). In other words, they were very deceitful about what they were getting ready to do here, but they did it for a purpose and a reason that comes out in the story as we go along. ...and went and pretended to be ambassadors, in other words, from another country that were sent out to go out and talk to them. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and mended, old and patched sandals on their feet, and old garments on themselves; and all the bread of their provisions was dry *and* moldy. So why were they doing all this? Well, they were deceitful and cunning and crafty in what their aim was to accomplish here.

And they went to Joshua, to the camp at Gilgal, and said to him and to the men of Israel, **We have come from a far country.** That's why their bread's moldy, that's why our shoes, sandals look like they do, and things are broken here and we've mended them the best we can. **Now, therefore, make a covenant with us.** In other words, we want peace with you. We see how great of things that are taking place with you, and they went farther.

Then the men of Israel said to the Hivites, **Perhaps you dwell in the midst of us; then how can we make a covenant with you?** This is really, basically, we're skeptical here. So how do we know? Why did they ask that? Because they had been told to destroy it all. Okay? **But they said to Joshua, We are your servants.** And Joshua said to them, **Who are you, and where do you come from?** And they said to him, **From a very far country your servants have come, because of the name of the Eternal your God; for we have heard of His fame, and all that He did in Egypt, and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan—to Sihon king of Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who was at Ashtaroth.**

Therefore, our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, **Take provisions with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say to them, We are your servants; now, therefore, make a covenant with us.** This bread of ours we took hot *for* our provisions, lying through their teeth, obviously. ...we took it hot for our provisions from our houses on the day we departed to come to you. **But now look, it is dry and moldy.**

They were afraid and they wanted to save their lives because they believed what they heard and they believed that they could be destroyed or were going to be destroyed. They really were moved here to do something in a very deceitful and cunning and lying sort of way to get them to say something here about a covenant so that they could live, so they wouldn't be destroyed like they knew that God had told them was going to happen. See, these people heard.

And these wineskins which we filled *were* new, and see, they are torn; and these our garments and our sandals have become old because of the very long journey. Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not ask counsel of the Eternal. Now, that's kind of an awkward translation, but basically here, it's being pointed out here they really messed up and they didn't ask God about it.

Anything to learn from that? You know, God can bless us, give us certain things; I think of truths that God continues to give to us, things we take for granted sometimes in life. Sometimes familiarity breeds contempt, whatever it might be in life. Sometimes we begin to let down in whatever we're doing in our life. Sometimes we're not pushing forward like we should. Sometimes our attitude and spirit isn't right. Sometimes we allow physical things to get in the way. Sometimes, sometimes, sometimes we get ourselves into trouble because we aren't putting God first and because we're not seeking counsel from God.

No matter what it is we do in life we should go to God and ask for help, ask for wisdom, ask for insight. Now, sometimes people do that, and I want to throw something else out here. Sometime people will pray about something and then something happens in their life or they sometimes just make a certain decision to do something that they kind of wanted to do all along anyway. It's like, "This is what God showed me to do. This is what I'm supposed to do." That's not always true.

Sometimes we can read God into things and that's one area you have to be so careful of not to do, not to read everything into your life as though this is what God has given me to do. This is where I'm supposed to be. This is when I'm to do it. Be careful, because the majority of times it's just choices. But the point being is what you're to do is to look to God first and to ask God for guidance and direction in your life, help, prayerfully, in making certain choices and decisions, help in being able to see self so that we don't do things just because that's what self wants to do—big, big lesson there—but because you're truly, honestly, seeking God in your life, because candidly, that's your habit.

That just should be the way we are day by day anyway, whatever we do, whatever we put our hand to do asking God for guidance in our life, asking God for direction in our life, asking, most above all, if we understand it, God's spirit in our life, that we know we need His holy spirit, that we want His holy spirit, we want to be able to battle this, to fight this, and asking Him for help to see ourselves.

See, sometimes it's not asking to get something or to want a specific answer on a matter, but it's asking God for help to deal with this so that we can see this and understand this. It can be a hard

battle just seeing self and understanding what's in this and so it's a matter of asking God to reveal it to us. And you know what? God will.

If you really want that God will help you and He'll give you the help to deal with it, to conquer it, if that's really what's in your heart and your mind, that you want the help to see self, to see what's wrong in what you're doing and how you're saying things or how you're thinking about things or how you're talking to others or how you're thinking toward others. On and on it goes. You're asking God to reveal these things in your mind that you know you don't see fully and clearly because none of us do it perfectly 100%. Because the carnal mind, well, it's a battle and that's generally what's first in our thinking, what we desire to do, what we have planned, what we're thinking about, what we're kind of leaning toward.

So it's not like asking God to do and get what you want, it's a matter of just asking God for help and wisdom, insight to deal with how you're thinking, to hopefully and prayerfully that He would lead us to making wise choices and decisions and to be able to see the things that we can't see that are wrong.

The whole point here is that we're to keep our eyes on God and we're to ask God for counsel on a regular basis in our lives day by day. We really are. That should just be the way we think. As we do that then, especially when we're coming up against something bigger as far as a decision or something we're doing in our lives, some problem before it turns into great drama, when it's a little llama, and dealing with it then and asking God for help in it. That's good. That's wise. That's smart. God will work with you in those things if that's where the heart is, if that's where the mind is. It doesn't mean it's going to happen overnight, but through time God works with us in that way, He really does.

So here, what an incredible thing that they could have done, should have done, and didn't do. Even Joshua didn't at this point. It doesn't matter who we are in life, sometimes if we're not careful we can see certain things happening around us, we can grasp and see certain things that God is doing, and it just takes a moment...it just takes a moment to take your eyes off of something, to pass up something that should have been taking place. How simple would that have been just to go in prayer and ask God what should I do? See, they went ahead and made a decision without counseling God. It's a giant mistake in life to just bombard through life without seeking guidance, direction, help, favor, counsel from God. That means you're looking to Him for His holy spirit to work in your mind and in your life.

There we go. **Verse 15—So Joshua made peace with them.** Because that's what everybody wanted. The elders did, anyway. All the elders that were together there, that's what they kind of determined. "Yeah, looks right to me. Look at the sandals. Look at the wineskins. Look at the bread. Yep, pretty easy decision." Sometimes things might seem like they're pretty simple in front of us. Don't be too quick to think that way. There are decisions sometimes we make that can get us into a peck of trouble. They really can. God lets us make choices and decisions, but boy, wouldn't it be a whole lot better if we were to seek His counsel and because of that He

intervene to bring about, create some circumstance, some situation that helped us. You ever experience that? We should have in our lives if we are watchful.

So Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them to let them live. Because, see, if they were in the land they were not to live. ...**and the rulers of the congregation swore to them.** They can live. “We’ll not touch you. We’ll not strike you down. We’re going to make a covenant with you. You can be at peace. You can be our servants.”

And it happened at the end of three days, after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were their neighbors who dwelt near them. Now, that should have struck some fear in them, see. “Look what we’ve done! We made a covenant that we should not have made. God told us to destroy, to strike down everything in this land and we made a covenant.” It’s not a small thing. **Then the children of Israel journeyed and came....**

So, sometimes we just don’t seem to grasp. I think of different ones who have gone by the wayside. I think of different ones who’ve made bad decisions and some of the stupidest things we so sometimes as human beings. I’ve mentioned over and over again, think about tithing and second tithe and so forth because it’s happened far, far, far, far, far too much in God’s Church, even in the past year, okay. Sadly, even since the Feast of Tabernacles. Things of that nature.

There are other things that take place. The human mind, the desires, the lust of the flesh. That can be that which is sexual in nature because that’s a giant pull to the human mind as well and people stumble at those things far too often in God’s Church. Those are great battles in front of us as human beings and we need to understand that and strive to be on guard against that and strive to obey God, to ask for help and favor from God to fight those things.

Then the children of Israel journeyed and came to the cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath Jearim. But the children of Israel did not strike/attack them, because the rulers of the congregation had sworn to them by the Eternal God of Israel. And all the congregation complained against the rulers. “Why did you do this?” Well, because they were deceived, they were lied to, and they swallowed it and they didn’t seek counsel from God. God would have told them. God would have revealed it to them. God would have shown them one way or another what was true. God would have created a circumstance, whatever it might be, whether He directly told, communicated to Joshua or what, but God would have let them know, “No, do not make a covenant with them.” He would have revealed who they were and where they were from.

For all the rulers had told all the congregation, We have sworn to them by the Eternal God of Israel, and now, therefore, we may not strike them. So they were caught. They’d made a covenant before God. They can’t lay a hand upon them, of any of them in those towns. **This is what we will do to them - We will let them live otherwise wrath may come upon us because of the oath which we swore to them. So the rulers said to them, Let them live, and let them be woodcutters and water carriers for all the congregation, as the rulers had promised them.**

Verse 22—Then Joshua called for them, and he spoke to them, saying, Why have you deceived us? Basically, “Why have you lied and dealt treacherously with us?” Well, they’re going to tell them. They’re going to respond now with the truth. And why did you say, We *are* very far from you, when you really dwell near us? Now, therefore, you *are* cursed. So they didn’t get away with anything in one respect. He said, “You are cursed because of this. You brought something down upon yourself because you have lied to God’s people,” in essence. He didn’t have to say it that way, but that’s basically what it amounts to. **...and none of you shall be freed from being slaves—**So this was their lot in life from then on. From that point in time they were to be slaves. - **woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God.** So servants you wanted to be, servants you are from here on out. You’re never going to have freedom.

Verse 24—And then answered Joshua and said, Because it was certainly told your servants... I was thinking of the spiritual aspect of some of that, of lying to God, of things about being a slave. That’s what God gives us if we want it, just go right back into slavery. I think of so many, so many in the Church, so many associated with, being with PKG over the years. They don’t understand what they bring upon themselves. They’re cursed incredibly so. People don’t grasp sometimes what they bring upon themselves, the misery, the heartache, the suffering that they’re going to have, never to have this truth again in this age. Incredible. You wanted that? That’s what you got. Right back out there with the world. You’re enslaved to it and don’t understand it even.

Again here, **verse 24—And they answered Joshua and said, Because it was certainly told your servants how that the Eternal your God commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land...** They knew it! This word had spread. Incredible! **...and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you.** They had already heard these things. All these other nations that were gathering together, they’ve heard these things. These acted upon it because it was so close by, they heard what happened to Ai, and they were fearful, and so they wanted to be deceitful, and hopefully being able to save their lives as a people there and not having to pack up and move to some other part of the world.

...therefore, we were so very afraid for our lives because of you, and therefore, have done this thing. So in one respect, in a carnal sort of way, kind of shrewd on their part because if you really believe something that’s happening and coming toward you how do you respond to that? Well, they saved their lives and they became servants.

And now, behold, we are in your hand; as it seems good and right unto you to do unto us, then do so. And he did so unto them and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, so that they did not slay them. They were told no one was to lay a hand upon them, that these areas here, these specific areas now we’re not to destroy them. Everything else as we go into the country, into the land we’re to destroy, but them, you leave your hands off of.

...and for the altar of the LORD, in the place which He would choose, even to this day.

Joshua made them hewers, as it says here, hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation

I'm going to go ahead and stop there; getting into some other things here as we go on. So anyway, with that we'll stop for the day and continue on next week.