

# OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

## *Lesson 24 – Part 3*

### Judges – Archaeology

Courtroom law is a lot of fun to me. Before you go into any trial, you have a chance to do “discovery.” In the discovery phase of a case, you find witnesses, learn what those witnesses will say under oath, read relevant documents, and perform investigation. Ultimately, a lawyer uses that data in preparation for the presentation at trial. Then at trial, each lawyer tells the jury his/her story of what happened, the jury listens to the lawyers, examines the evidence, and then collaborates to make the final decision on what “really happened.”

Trial lawyers quickly learn that the facts gleaned through discovery routinely fall into one of three categories: they help, they hurt, or they are innocuous. I have been doing this for almost 27 years, and I have yet to see a case without some facts that hurt!

One of the biggest questions in each trial is how to handle the facts that hurt your case. Most beginning lawyers *ignore* the facts that hurt, and hope the other side never figures them out. Unfortunately, the other side *always* figures them out! More experienced lawyers will mention the negative facts to the jury, seeking to minimize them in hopes that the jury will find the “good facts” outweigh the “bad facts.”

I go around the country giving dozens of lectures on *how* to try a lawsuit. In those lectures, I routinely suggest that lawyers try a different approach. Rather than ignore facts or minimize bad facts, I suggest the lawyers try...(drum roll)... honesty! I tell lawyers that all the facts are part of the story—all of them are important. Lawyers should tell the jury *what really happened* rather than simply their own side of a case. By telling the whole story and incorporating the bad facts into that story where they really belong, the lawyer has the best chance of getting a jury to decide the truth.

Because the truth is rarely one-sided, the truth—the real truth—involves all the facts. It includes the facts we like and those we wish would disappear. I believe (and teach) that one way in which juries assess the credibility of a lawyer and of the lawyer’s case is whether that case represents all the known facts, *i.e.*, all the truth.

As we consider the archaeological issues behind the book of Judges, this principle rears its head. Too often, scholars and students pick and choose the evidence that supports his/her “story” (or interpretation) and disregards or minimizes that which does not fit too well. My suggestion is that a better approach is to simply consider all the evidence, that which supports one’s view, which opposes one’s view and

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which seems neutral, and then consider whether one’s view might need some alteration!<sup>1</sup>

Again, as I have suggested in earlier archaeological lessons, the purpose here is not to use archaeology to “prove” the Bible. I think its best service is to help put the Bible into an historical context for increased understanding. Still, there are a number of scholars who try to use archaeology for the reverse—to disprove the Bible. It is in response to those biblical critics that careful study should be given, all the facts should be examined, and then the interpretation (*i.e.*, the “story”) can be told.

## APPROACH

This archaeological lesson falls into two parts. In this first part, we consider the principal complaints certain scholars lodged against the Biblical account of Judges. While it is impracticable to list all the complaints that critics bring to the Judges account of Israel’s history, we can at least list some of the most common. We will then assess these complaints on their merits. As part of that assessment, we will consider what Judges actually says. This will allow us to see whether there is a valid “story” in the Biblical account that fairly includes all the evidence – the helpful, the neutral, and the difficult. We will start with the simpler complaints and move toward those more complicated.

Our next lesson will then look at the archaeological evidence that seems clearly consistent with the Biblical account. The ultimate goal is to use this week’s material and next week’s to put together a “full story” that takes into account and makes sense of all the facts. In trial speak, after addressing the evidence, we will “give summation” and see if a single story can account for a fair interpretation of all the evidence and still be consistent with the Bible.

## COMPLAINTS

For our list of “complaints” comparing the accuracy of Judges to the biblical and archaeological record, we will consider some of the more outspoken and noteworthy critics’ complaints.

*Complaint 1: The chronology presented in Judges is impossible to accept.*

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<sup>1</sup> We should note at the outset that *very few* people would agree to abandon their viewpoints completely without overwhelming evidence to the contrary. On issues related to this subject, there are those who are going to hold to a perspective of the biblical reading and evidence regardless of what we or someone else might present. This lesson can be used to provide some rationale for already instilled beliefs, provide references for further study, and more importantly, provide a few points helpful to those undecided on the issues.

This complaint centers on the amount of time that the Judges led the Israelite tribes. I Kings 6:1 states that Joshua began building the temple “in the four hundred and eightieth year after the people of Israel came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign.”<sup>2</sup> Yet, simply adding together the years of each Judge, according to the book of Judges, gives a total of 400 years. To that time must be added the period under Moses, which adds 40 years for the wilderness time bringing a total of 440 years. Then, we add the time of Joshua and the time of the elders (between Joshua and Judges, elders ruled the land). On top of that time must be added the time of Samuel as well as the reigns of Saul and David. The total well exceeds the 480 years given in I Kings 6:1.

The complaint is that Judges must be incorrect at least in its reflection of the time periods for the various judges.

A careful reading of Judges, as well as a reading of other historical records, indicates the fallacy in this complaint. A careful reading of Judges indicates that the judges<sup>3</sup> are more appropriately considered local warlords or tribal chieftains rather than a national leader ruling over all of the twelve tribes. This means that the judges were not successive rulers like we might see in a monarchical line. A number of the judges likely ruled/worked concurrently.<sup>4</sup>

Egyptologist Ken Kitchen notes that in the biblical world, especially in times of disarray, it was common to have periods with multiple rulers in the land. Kitchen provides multiple examples from Egypt and Mesopotamia.<sup>5</sup>

This first complaint is not as common as others we detail below, at least among the scholastic community, likely because it is hard to support either by the text or the historical era.

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<sup>2</sup> We remind readers of our lesson dating the Exodus that there are alternative ways to understand this date rather than 480 years of 365 days as in the western calendar. Both that lesson, and the others in this series, are available at [www.Biblical-Literacy.com](http://www.Biblical-Literacy.com).

<sup>3</sup> We reference back to the first lesson on Judges where we discussed the care necessary in using the title “judge” when referring to these leaders. The American concept of “judge” does not properly reflect the role or “job” of these leaders.

<sup>4</sup> In the text, several of the judges are noted as following after a preceding judge, but this is not true for all the judges. See, *e.g.*, Judges 10:1-3; 12:8-15. An ancient map of Canaan with an overlay of the tribal allotments readily shows that many of the judges operated in different parts of the country. Othniel and Ibzen, for example, operated in the south, areas of Judah and the Negev. Gideon, however, was operating in the north central part, while Jair and Jephthah were on the eastern side of the Jordan River. This geographic diversity helps us understand why the judges could have concurrent stretches of leadership.

<sup>5</sup> Kitchen, Ken, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, (Eerdmans 2003) at 203-204.

*Complaint 2: Judges contradicts Joshua on facts about the conquering of cities.*

This complaint, although worded a bit more antiseptically,<sup>6</sup> is one of the first lodged in the essay by Joseph Callaway and J. Maxwell Miller in Hershel Shank's book, *Ancient Israel*.<sup>7</sup> Contrasting the accounts of Joshua and Judges in a section identified as **Joshua vs. Judges**, the essay asserts,

Furthermore, in contrast to the sweeping statements in Joshua that Israel wiped out the inhabitants of the land, Judges 1 concludes with a list of 20 cities in which the people were not driven out by the newcomers (Judges 1:21, 27-33). The list includes some of the most strategically located and influential cities in the later history of Israel: Jerusalem, Beth-Shean, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, Megiddo, Gezer and Beth-Shemesh. In the summary of Israel's victories in Joshua 12:7-24, however, it is expressly stated that Jerusalem, Gezer, Taanach, Megiddo and Dor were defeated by "Joshua and the people of Israel."

In assessing this claim of "Joshua vs. Judges," the first step is to check the biblical citations to see whether the text truly says what Miller's revision claims. Does Joshua 12:7-24 "expressly" say the people were "defeated" in such a way that belies the claim in Judges that the people were not driven out of those cities?

Joshua 12:7-24 says,

And these are the kings of the land whom Joshua and the people of Israel defeated on the west side of the Jordan, from Baal-gad in the Valley of Lebanon to Mount Halak, that rises toward Seir (and Joshua gave their land to the tribes of Israel as a possession according to their allotments, in the hill country, in the lowland, in the Arabah, in the slopes, in the wilderness, and in the Negeb, the land of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites): the king of Jericho, one; the king

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<sup>6</sup> The essay asserts that Judges presents "quite a different view" from that of Joshua, and explores which one was right. Shanks, Hershel, ed., *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple*, (Prentice Hall 1999) at 55ff.

<sup>7</sup> The "Revised and Expanded" book is copyright 1999. The essay is attributed to "Joseph A. Callaway revised by J. Maxwell Miller." Because Callaway, a well known Southern Baptist archaeologist as well as minister, died in 1988, it is uncertain what he wrote and what was from the pen of Miller in revision. Miller, on the other hand, is well known from his publications for disregarding the factual accuracy of ancient biblical accounts. See, e.g., Miller and Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, (Westminster 2006).

of Ai, which is beside Bethel, one; the king of Jerusalem, one; the king of Hebron, one; the king of Jarmuth, one; the king of Lachish, one; the king of Eglon, one; the king of Gezer, one; the king of Debir, one; the king of Geder, one; the king of Hormah, one; the king of Arad, one; the king of Libnah, one; the king of Adullam, one; the king of Makkedah, one; the king of Bethel, one; the king of Tappuah, one; the king of Hopher, one; the king of Aphek, one; the king of Lasharon, one; the king of Madon, one; the king of Hazor, one; the king of Shimron-meron, one; the king of Achshaph, one; the king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one; the king of Kedesh, one; the king of Jokneam in Carmel, one; the king of Dor in Naphath-dor, one; the king of Goiim in Galilee, one; the king of Tirzah, one: in all, thirty-one kings.

In truth, nowhere does this text “expressly” state that the cities listed by Miller were defeated. In fact, if read in context, it states something very different. Consider the five kings listed beginning with the king of Jerusalem. These five kings (Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon) have the story of their “defeat” told two chapters earlier in chapter ten. Joshua 10:3 details that the king of Jerusalem gathered up the other four kings and went to battle against the Hebrew allies at Gibeon. The battlefield started in Gibeon and ended with the capture of the kings in a nearby cave (at Makkedah).

The account does not say that the cities were conquered, were burned, or were even invaded! The cities were not “defeated,” their kings were. In fact, the soldiers on the battlefield not killed by Joshua returned to their cities, which were noted to be “fortified”:

When Joshua and the sons of Israel had finished striking them [the opposing armies] with a great blow until they were wiped out, and when the remnant that remained of them had entered into the fortified cities, then all the people [Israel’s army] returned safe to Joshua (Josh. 10:20-21).<sup>8</sup>

The text also adds that, “Joshua gave their land to the tribes of Israel as a possession according to their allotments.” But, we are not being fair to the text if we “suppose” that means that all the lands and cities of these kings were at that point under the control, authority, and power of the tribes. Joshua goes on to detail that while the land was “given” as a possession, the tribes still had to “take” the land.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> This passage also makes a good point that the term “wiped out” as used by Joshua does not mean what many modern readers would understand. “Wiped out” does not mean that they were all dead. It means they lost!

<sup>9</sup> There are places in Joshua where the text reads that Joshua conquered “all the land”; however, the Hebrew idea translated “all” (*kl*) is not fairly assessed to mean “each and every square inch”

Toward the end of the book, Joshua, “old and well advanced in years,” calls the leaders of Israel together. Even there, he notes that he has allotted to the tribes lands that were still in the possession and control of other nations:

Behold, I have allotted to you as an inheritance for your tribes those nations that remain, along with all the nations that I have already cut off, from the Jordan to the Great Sea in the west (Josh. 23:4).

What then of the claim that in Judges non-Israelites inhabited cities that Joshua lists as defeated? Is this really a case of “Joshua vs. Judges?” Not at all! Joshua tells the history of Joshua conquering kings in battle with soldiers returning to fortified cities. Joshua adds that the lands given in possession were not all “ripe” for immediate possession. Judges then notes that foreigners were living in some of these cities and that the Israelites made the error of intermarrying with them. There is no inconsistency here; no one versus the other. The narratives fit each other well.<sup>10</sup>

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as it might in English. The Hebrew “all” has a core meaning of being limited by the context to things or persons mentioned. In this sense, it is like the Greek “all” which means much the same. So in the gospels where it speaks of “all Judea” coming out to John the Baptist for baptism (Mt. 3:5), it certainly does not mean Pilate, the Chief Priests, *etc.* In like manner the very context of Joshua puts limits on the “all” that was conquered. In Joshua 13 the Lord tells Joshua that although he is old and advanced in years, much of the land still needs possessing. Over the next several chapters as Joshua allots the land to the tribes, multiple passages speak of locals still inhabiting the land. (See, e.g., Josh. 13:13). In this sense also the word is used in Joshua 24:1 where the text notes “Joshua gathered *all* (Heb. *kl*) the tribes of Israel to Shechem. The idea is “each” tribe, not that all people went. Hebrew scholar and reviewer of these lessons Weston Fields has suggested the best interpretation of “all the land” is “throughout the land.” It gives the correct impression of “here and there” rather than “every single inch.”

<sup>10</sup> This complaint is commonly listed as first among reasons that the biblical accounts cannot be reckoned historical. See similarly, McDermott, John, *What are they saying about the formation of Israel?* (Paulist Press 1998) at 1-2:

It is clear that there are problems with viewing the biblical description of Israel’s beginnings as literal history. The first is that there are contradictions between different parts of the Bible. Joshua says the conquest was completely successful... Chapter 12 of Joshua goes on to list the conquered kings and cities of Jerusalem (Jebus), Hebron and Tanaach among others. The book of Judges gives a very different picture. It opens with a description of the places not yet conquered by the Israelites. The unconquered territory includes...cities of Jebus, Hebron and Tanaach; that is, some of the very same places that the Book of Joshua lists as successfully conquered by the Israelites.

Similarly see Dever, William, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, (Eerdmans 2001) at 122, writing about Joshua and Judges as different versions of history:

Many scholars, puzzled by the two often differing versions of events, have attempted to harmonize them, but the obvious contradictions are too great.

It makes sense that upon victory, the Israelites did not simply “move in” and take over all these towns. The Israelites had spent some 40 years wondering as nomads taking care of their flocks. It would seem most unbelievable had the text stated that these tent-living nomads immediately changed their way of living and started dwelling in the towns and mud/stone homes of those they had just killed.

A related complaint sometimes lodged against the veracity of the Joshua/Judges accounts concerns Jabin, King of Canaan. At first glance, it appears that Jabin was defeated once by Joshua and yet was still ruling at the time of the judges. In Joshua 11:1, we read of “Jabin, king of Hazor” raising an army to fight the Israelites. Joshua defeats the army, captures and burns Hazor, killing its king (Josh. 11:10-12). Yet after the death of Joshua, in reference to the Deborah story, we read,

And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord after Ehud died. And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor (Judg. 4:1-2).

Some scholars consider this story an insertion that came from the pen of a confused editor of the text. Realistically, however, nothing in the text mandates that conclusion.

The Joshua account notes that Jabin was king of Hazor, but that Hazor was itself the lead city of many. After identifying the kings of a number of nearby cities and areas (“rulers” may be more apropos), Joshua specifies that Hazor was “the head of all those kingdoms” (Josh. 11:10). Once Hazor was defeated and burned, that Jabin was also killed.

That another Jabin then arose to rule over “Canaan” (the area described in Joshua as led ultimately by Hazor) is no more surprising than the number of men named George that have been king of England. It was very common for king names to be repeated among generations. It was similarly typical for a ruling king to keep titles even if the actual rule of the land had passed. This is likely why the title of Jabin in Judges is different from that in Joshua. In Judges, Jabin is first identified as the “king of Canaan” (4:2). Following that, Jabin also carries the title of King of Hazor (4:17), only to again be called “king of Canaan” twice more (4:23-24).

While we would no doubt like much more information and clarity on these issues, we do well to remember that the text was written with a different purpose in mind. It was not written to answer all our historical questions, but to reveal the actions of God among his people and in the world.

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Dever then goes on to list the differing cities as the main contradiction between the texts.

What is more, we should always use at least a bit of common sense in understanding these accounts. Consider the time periods involved. Joshua likely covers decades of history in less than 30 pages! Judges runs through several hundred years of history in less than 30 pages! The complete history of reigning kings, the occupation and re-occupation of villages, battles were won or lost, cities conquered, and kept or then lost later through sin or military defeat – all of these details are not provided one way or another. We should be very careful pitting these texts one against the other when we do not remotely know *all* the significant events that took place over 250 plus years. We have only a few select events for select purposes.

*Complaint 3: Judges narrates stories of conflict between Israelites and Canaanites when, in fact, the Israelites were Canaanites.*

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, three basic views were most popular for an explanation of how the Israelites settled Canaan.<sup>11</sup> William F. Albright (1891-1971) was one of the foremost biblical archaeologists and Hebrew scholars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Albright and his followers are often credited with the “Conquest Model” or view of Israelite origins. Albright believed that the Conquest (he would capitalize the word in his writings) was not exactly as portrayed biblically, but was close!

Archaeological discoveries have compelled us to modify the standard tradition of the Conquest, as reflected in the book of Joshua. They have not, however, yielded results which conflict with the older traditions, which we find imbedded in the Deuteronomic narrative in the books of Joshua and Judges (chap.1).<sup>12</sup>

For Albright, the evidence pointed to Israel conquering the Canaanites, destroying town after town.

A second view that came into vogue in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, competing with Albright’s view, is frequently termed the “peaceful infiltration” view. Largely attributed to German scholar Albrecht Alt (1883-1956), this view held that the semi-nomadic Israelites gradually and peacefully settled the land of Canaan, building small villages and becoming more sedentary than nomadic.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> These three views were among the camp of scholars who did not accept the biblical view at face value. There were a number of traditionalist scholars who defended and explained the integrity of the biblical story as historically accurate, but their views do not fall into this “Complaint” portion of this lesson.

<sup>12</sup> Albright, William F., *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, (Oxford 1956) at 95.

<sup>13</sup> Albrecht’s student Martin Noth further developed this theory in his writings explaining that a number of these infiltrating groups consolidated as twelve tribes. See generally Alt, Albrecht,



A third view that had a few adherents is frequently termed the “peasants’ revolt” view. Associated first with George Mendenhall, this view held that the Israelites were a social movement of Canaanite peasants who sought to overthrow the Canaanite ruling class.<sup>14</sup> Some scholars attribute this view to an influence by Marxist social theory more so than archaeological or biblical sources.<sup>15</sup>

While those three views held sway among differing groups of scholars, a more modified view reared its head as the century drew to a close. This view, often termed a “revisionist view,” argues that the Israelites were really just Hill Country Canaanites who changed their lifestyle from that of nomads to that of villagers. Israel Finkelstein has popularized this view both writing for general readers and participating in television shows.<sup>16</sup>

These views are all debated in the literature by archaeologists who render one interpretation of the evidence or another. The basic structure of what happened in Canaan during the relevant time periods leads itself to multiple interpretations because one thing everyone agrees on was that *significant changes in Canaan occurred* during this time.

The general consensus among scholars of all camps includes the relative prosperity of Canaan during the Middle Bronze Age II (c. 1900-1550 BC). Following that time, Canaan experienced a decline as the country was brought under the control of Egypt, subject to taxation and occasional deportation in the Late Bronze Age I-II (c. 1550-1250 BC).<sup>17</sup> Toward the end of the Late Bronze Age II and into the early Iron Age, however, major changes occurred.

These changes are seen in the archaeological record as well as in ancient texts readable today. “Sea Peoples” from Crete tried invading Egypt but were repelled by the Egyptian army. The Sea Peoples then moved further north up the coast and

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*Essays on Old Testament History and Religion*, (Blackwell 1966); Noth, Martin, *The History of Israel*, (Harper 1958).

<sup>14</sup> See Mendenhall, George, *The Tenth Generation: The Origins of the Biblical Tradition*, (Johns Hopkins 1974).

<sup>15</sup> Ortiz, Stephen, “Archaeology, Syro-Palestinian”, *Dictionary of the Old Testament Historical Books*, (IVP 2005) at 63.

<sup>16</sup> Finkelstein’s more general reader is Finkelstein, Israel and Silberman, Neil, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of its Sacred Texts*, (Touchstone 2002). See also, Finkelstein, Israel, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*, (Israel Exploration Society 1988).

<sup>17</sup> Kitchen at 224.

invaded western Canaan. What Egypt termed “Sea Peoples” came to be known as “Philistines.”

This new invasion was not the only change that was taking place. Archaeology shows that in the decades before the arrival of the Philistines, there was a massive new number of small village settlements established in the hill country of Canaan.

These new villages were not simply re-establishments of older towns that had been destroyed or abandoned. More than half of the villages were *brand new*. Where did these hundreds of settlements come from? Where did the *inhabitants* of these settlements come from? This was not in the area of Philistine invasion, and the development of many of these villages pre-dates the invasion by several generations.

Finkelstein is one of the principal archaeologists that uncovered what he terms a “dense network of highland villages—all apparently established within the span of a few generations.”<sup>18</sup> About 250 of these villages all showed the same basic make up and seem to have been formed by people with a background in pasturing flocks. The villages differed from the Canaanite towns in the lowlands in that almost without exception they had no idols, no temples or places of local worship, and almost no luxury items showing trading or importing from the other Canaanite areas. What is more, most of these show a conspicuous absence of pig bones. The archaeological record is clear that these new villagers ate sheep and goat, but not pig.

Where did these settlers come from? Even Finkelstein, at least in his early writings, calls these “Israelite settlements.” But where the people came from is the matter at hand. Finkelstein goes to great lengths to argue his speculation that these settlers were actually Canaanite nomads who decided in the midst of the difficult times to move up and grow their own grain in villages.<sup>19</sup>

Finkelstein has yet to answer the mathematical problem with his theory—namely, where does he find the massive influx of population? These hundreds of new settlements were not vacation homes! They were primary living quarters for a very large population. Are we to believe that all these massive people really came from the herders in the lowlands?

Kitchen has put Finkelstein’s number to the test. The numbers show that the population in the highland area increased *five times* in just 50-100 years, depending on the dating (c. 1250-1150 BC). The same dating techniques show that the next 150 years showed a more realistic doubling of the population. Until

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<sup>18</sup> Finkelstein at 107.

<sup>19</sup> Finkelstein at 113ff.

Finkelstein can come up with an adequate explanation for where this massive new number of inhabitants came from, it is Finkelstein who is playing a zero-sum game.

Not surprisingly, archaeologist William Dever considers Finkelstein in the camp of “revisionists” who proffer a “hidden agenda”:

The revisionists, while still a very small minority of biblical scholars, have provoked the present historiographical crisis only by being the most extreme, the most vocal, the best-coordinated strategists, and easily the most effective propagandists. In less than 10 years, the revisionists have created a storm of controversy in the scholarly literature and in national professional meetings, on the Internet, and now even in the media and in popular magazines.<sup>20</sup>

Dever goes on to point out that this controversy is so recent that he is the first archaeologist to respond aggressively in print.

We note that in “telling the whole story” and “considering all the facts, those helpful and those hurtful,” these archaeological discoveries are actually remarkably consistent with the biblical account of Judges. Next lesson, we will probe these consistencies along with other archaeological findings that substantiate the accuracy of the historical record of Judges.

## CONCLUSION

Timing forces a stop at this point of consideration of the evidence. The goal is to use next week’s class both to illustrate different archaeological findings that support and inform on these issues. We will also seek to put together the composite story that makes sense of all the facts.

## POINTS FOR HOME

1. “*And these are the kings of the land whom Joshua and the people of Israel defeated*” (Josh 12:7).

Amazing to think—there were leaders 3,000 years ago whose names are forever linked to fighting against God and his purposes. For all the kings listed, we know they are but a speck of sand compared to the seashores of people rebelling against God. Are you able to determine times where you are more rebellious than others? Is it when tired? When angry? In the solitude of night or the brightness of day? Think about it, and prayerfully make a resolution to seek God’s help at those times.

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<sup>20</sup> Dever at 24.

2. “Behold, I have allotted to you as an inheritance for your tribes those nations that remain” (Josh. 23:4).

I am convinced that there are blessings God has in store for his people that many will not receive because of a failure to walk in his ways. The story of Judges is really a story of man’s unfaithfulness and the pain that comes from disobedience. It is hard to accept, yet nonetheless true, that God’s blessings follow God’s will in our lives. The point for home is simple: identify a challenge in your walk, choose to trust God and follow him in that challenge, and watch the way he blesses your walk. Now the warning here: God does not provide the blessings *we want!* He provides the blessings of his choosing! We do have the assurance, however, that he is able to do far more exceedingly abundant than anything we could ask or think!

3. “Jabin...” (Joshua and Judges).

What are you teaching your offspring (whether genetic or simply friends)? Obedience and disobedience before the Lord, rebellion and submission — these traits are seen and carried on by those who watch and follow us. One generation often follows the prior generation in priorities, actions, and heart. We all leave a legacy, especially in our day-to-day actions. May God make us, and may we strive by his Spirit to be, lights set upon a hill that shine forth in the darkness of our world, letting people see where there is life!

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