

SERMON MATERIAL – PART 2

Numbers 31:37 ... “and the Lord's tribute of the sheep was six hundred and seventy-five.”

In our previous devotional, I spoke about the wealth of teaching material in the Bible. I claimed that in the 32,104 verses in the Bible, there are at least that many sermons, devotionals or Sunday (or Sabbath) school lessons. I say at least, because many verses contain multiple topics or themes. To put my claim to the test, my message today is from the first verse that appeared before my eyes when I opened my Bible this morning.

As I wrote previously, we never study or teach from a single verse in the Bible, even if it contains the principle message we want to deliver. We always study and teach in context. Therefore, when we look at today's verse, we need to read a few verses before and after it to understand the context. God had just led Israel in winning a war against one of their enemies, the Midianites. This was not a small skirmish, but an all-out war that killed five Midian kings and all of their soldiers. They were a very powerful enemy.

At the end of the war, the Israelites gathered the spoils of war, as instructed by God. This included, as seen in verses 32-35: 675,000 sheep, 72,000 cattle, 61,000 donkeys, and 32,000 slaves. In verse 35 we find that the Israelite men who fought in the war, were paid with 337,000 sheep. In today's verse we see they tithed 675 sheep to God (for use in the temple and to feed the priests). They also tithed on the other animals they captured. We also see in verse 49 that Moses received a report from his military leaders saying: “not a man of us is missing.”

So, what is the message of today's verse? First, that the people of Israel obediently worshipped God for their victory by tithing. Second, the Bible is not vague. It inspires us with its great detail. Someone was counting the sheep and cattle and donkeys, to record their numbers so thoroughly. Third, this story was included in God's Word for a purpose. It is not a novel or movie script. It is the accurate fulfillment of God's plan for Israel. We must learn from it the importance of obeying God. Three messages – maybe more – from a single, obscure verse that you may never have read before.

If you are a pastor, priest or teacher, I hope you have found this and the previous devotional helpful. The Bible's 32,104 verses each have meaning and purpose. God is not the author of filler material. Every page of the Bible, and every verse on those pages, has a message for you.

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