

# The Gospel According to Moses

## Introduction

God has a plan for the salvation of a very special creation created in perfection, however, this creation fell victim to the deception of the fallen angel Satan. Sin entered the human race resulting in death that reigned in the hearts of all men from Adam to Moses.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come. (Rom. 5 12-14)

Adam was the pattern of the one to come, says the author of Romans. Hebrews also confirms that Jesus was the new Adam, the head of a new race, not separate from the old one but rather taken from the old race through the means of the new birth. The first Adam was of the earth earthy, but the second Adam was from Heaven. We then who are born into this new race are like the man from Heaven having been given the Spirit of eternal life.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. (2 Cor. 15:45-49)

This is the hope of the ages, that God who loves us will also reveal to us the glory of his person so that we can become like he is in love, character and compassion, showing forth his tender mercy to a world around us.

Adam knew who God was, but sin marred the fellowship he had with him. The revelation of the true nature of God became obscure as a result of sin, and Satan capitalized on the resultant ignorance leading men into all sorts of bazaar ideas about what God is like. Sin in their hearts made corruption of the concept of God easy, so man sought to create a god that suited his fallen nature. Still there was a haunting knowledge that all was not well, so the imaginations of man created god beings that needed to be appeased.

Confusion reigned in the hearts of humans, not being sure about who they were or what God was really like. Sin led to anarchy, men preying upon one another out of greed and lust.

Man desperately needed a revelation of God and God had a plan to give it to him. The foundation of that revelation was first given to a man named Abram, later to be called Abraham. Abram was given a visitation of God that caused him to leave his land of nativity and to travel to a land that God promised he would show him. During the course of travel, God revealed himself

to Abram with a continued promise that he would be the father of many nations. The problem was that Abram had never fathered even one child and he was getting older by the day. Abram believed God despite all circumstances and would later be known as the father of faith. God often spoke to Abram, but he remained the unseen God. Then when all hope seemed to be gone, God gave Abraham and Sarah a son, Isaac.

The story of Abram or Abraham as he was later called, is fundamental to the revelation of God to man. From this man's descendants came the nation of Israel and through their history God has revealed a plan for the salvation of all men.

Initially God gave attention to the family of Abraham that descended from his union with his wife Sarah, because they were the ones chosen to give his revelation to the world. He also bore other children, once by Hagar, Sarah's servant, when in desperation they sought to help God out, and several by Keturah who he married in later life after the death of Sarah.

There was a period of four hundred years between the time this first family became residents of Egypt while Joseph was the second in command of Egypt and the time of Moses. During this time the little nation had become slaves to the nation of Egypt and longed to be free. God then chose to raise up a deliverer named Moses who would not only deliver them from their bondage to Egypt, but would give them a law that would be based on the principles of the coming Christ.

What God did through Moses is vitally important to what would be done through Jesus who would come as the personification of all the law and the prophets. It was preparatory to the coming of Christ just as the formation of a mold is to the creation of an object. In the case of cast iron, a mold is formed into which molten iron is poured; when the mold is removed what remains is what was poured into it. This is what John meant when he said that he, Christ, was the word made flesh and dwelt among us.

In our study of the life and message of Moses, we will be studying the mold as it were, looking for the evidence of what was to come in the life and mission of Jesus.

# Chapter One

## The Problem, Sin

Understanding the problem is always essential to appreciating the answer. Often big problems have easy solutions once you see the truth.

Humanity has a problem called sin. It springs forth bringing all sorts of complications that must be dealt with. Sin is both the cause and the result of the loss of the energy of spiritual life that can only be found in God.

In the beginning of the Biblical story, God created Adam and placed him in a garden with a tree of life from which Adam could eat and receive the nutrients of life. While living in the garden God had prepared for them, Adam and Eve were approached by Satan who came in the form of a talking serpent seducing them into eating forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As a result, God drove Adam out of the garden, blocking the way to the all-important tree, the tree of life. From this we see the main player in the problem, Satan the seducer, and secondly from the history that follows, we learn that sin is a symptom of the condition that resulted from being denied the Spirit of life.

Which comes first, the chicken or the egg? That is a question often bantered about, but in the case of sin or the loss of spiritual life, there is no question. Sin came first. There is no evidence in the story that Adam or Eve lacked any of the energy derived from the tree of life when they sinned.

Their sin was the result of the desire to be something more than God created them to be. It was the same sort of sin that happened when Satan fell in the first place. Sin was not the result of any lack of spiritual energy; it was a choice they made based on faulty information that Satan gave them.

When they sinned they lost access to the Spirit of life. Actually, God is the source of spiritual life. Because man is substance, God made it accessible to man in the form of the tree of life.

Previously in Heaven, Satan had access to God and therefore had the Spirit of life constantly before him. It is my belief that it was his fellowship with God that resulted from his exalted position that gave him an abundance of this energy making him outstanding in every way. The attention he received as a result caused him to desire to be something more than God created him to be; and, evidently, caused him to desire to be God to the host of heaven. This led to his rebellion against God.

It is my personal observation that when the Spirit of life is present it results in manifestations of positive characteristics such as love, joy, peace and contentment. The energy of life or the Spirit of life, does not however, result in the cancellation of the will of man or the willfulness of a heart that wants what is forbidden. The Spirit of life gives advantage to those who possess it in that they have it as an enabling force, or power, to help them make and maintain right decisions. When the Spirit of life is not present, there is no power source to keep them from the manifestations of their fallen natures leaving them vulnerable to the desires of that nature. Humans without the energy of life are victims of the whims and plots of their own sinful hearts being played to by the seductions of Satan and his demonic helpers.

When the Spirit of life is not present the only hope for civility among humans is law. Humanity lost the Spirit of life when Adam and Eve were driven from the garden; however, the ability to choose to do what was right was still present. It was still possible to love as a choice, or to hate at will. Without law anarchy is the result, because without the Spirit of life there is little if any motivation or desire to do good.

It was the loving heart of God that gave Israel a leader through whom he could give the law. The perfect answer was the restoration of the Spirit of life, but that was not possible at the time of Moses. First the stage had to be set for the redemptive work of Jesus and his death on the cross to pay the penalty for the sins of humanity.

The law had two purposes. One was the preservation of civility among this nation of fallen men, and secondly through it to give a revelation of the plan of redemption.

God gave the law as a masterful answer to both purposes. In the law are the necessary restraints to contain the fallen nature along with a portrait of the character and plan of God to redeem us so that we can once more be partakers of his divine nature.

God lives by the rules of righteousness and justice. Because justice demands a payment for sins, God could not restore to us the Spirit of life without first providing the redemptive answer.

Justice and righteousness are positives and all positives emanate exclusively from God. Where positives exist outside fellowship with God, they are in a state of fading reality. He alone is the source and sustainer of all positives. After the penalty of sin had been successfully paid satisfying the demands of righteous judgment, God was able to give us the Spirit of life through faith in the one who paid the price. This is why there is no other name named whereby men can be saved. No one else is qualified to be a sin sacrifice for the sins of the world except the sinless Son of God, Jesus. No one else will ever be able to do it, because it took God's Son to bring us the Spirit of life. God alone is the source of the Spirit of life.

# Chapter Two

## God Selects Moses as the Deliverer of Israel

### Exodus 3

The family of Jacob, some four hundred years before Moses, had fallen on difficult times as a result of a famine in the land of Israel. Earlier they sold their brother Joseph to a caravan of traders who took him to Egypt and sold him to a high-ranking man named Potiphar. He was put into prison as a result of false charges and later released by Pharaoh who made him second in command of all Egypt. He had prophesied a famine and prepared Egypt for it. Due to the famine that was also in Israel, the brothers of Joseph went to Egypt in search of food. They later moved there to be cared for by their brother Joseph. They were given the best section of Egypt to live in and over the next four hundred years had grown in numbers until they were a large population in Egypt. The Pharaohs that followed the time of Joseph made slaves of the Israelites causing both mental and physical suffering.

Finally at the time of Moses the nation was languishing in agony of spirit as a result of their bondage, and desired to be a free nation. God heard the cries of the people and arranged for a deliverer named Moses. He was born an Israelite, but was raised as an Egyptian in the house of Pharaoh. When Moses grew to manhood he became aware of the suffering of his countrymen and was concerned with their welfare. This led him to visit them and seeing an Egyptian slave master abusing an Israelite took vengeance upon the Egyptian and killed him. He then buried him in the sand, but someone, perhaps the man he had saved, observed the act and made it known. The news caused problems for Moses in the house of Pharaoh, so he fled Egypt to save his life. He eventually arrived in the Sinai desert where he met a family and got married. He lived there for about 40 years herding sheep when one day God called to him from a burning bush and commissioned him to go back to Egypt and deliver the nation of Israel from their bondage.

It's interesting that from the time God heard the cry of the people for deliverance until the time he actually delivered them was at least 80 years! During that time there was no indication whatsoever that God had heard their prayers and that he had a plan that would result not only in their deliverance but also set the pattern for the deliverance of the whole world from the grip of Satan.

One day as Moses was tending his sheep on the mountainside near where he lived; he saw a bush burning. Perhaps he had seen bushes burn before in this barren land, but this one was different because it wasn't being consumed. Moses then went closer to investigate this unusual sight. When he was getting near the bush, God spoke to him instructing him to stay back and to remove his sandals because; the ground he was now standing on was holy ground!

Moses did what God said and stood there barefooted as God proceeded to tell him the reason why he was talking to him in this manner. God spoke to Moses about the conditions in Egypt and the suffering of the people. He told him that he not only heard them crying to him, but that he cared about their plight. God cares when his people suffer and wants to set them free.

The difference between the Israelites and the Egyptians and other nations like them was that they had the knowledge of God and served him. All nations had the knowledge of God at one

time, but because they had hard and sinful hearts, they rejected the true knowledge about God and concocted ideas about what God was like to suit their sinful hearts.

There is a popular notion today among so called scholars that the knowledge of God was an evolutionary process springing from man's desire to know God. They view the Hebrews as a nation that was evolving faster but which was borrowing knowledge from the nations around them. Such is not the case. They didn't borrow the pure knowledge of God; it came to them by revelation. God and Israel constantly struggled against the natural inclination in man to wander away from God's care. Wandering away resulted in losses of pure knowledge of God and themselves. God had to constantly remind them of who he was by sending them prophets to correct their thinking and to draw them back to fellowship with him.

The theory of evolution which some have credited to the increase of knowledge, is unworkable because it requires that processes work contrary to the laws of nature. The only element of workability in the case of natural life has to do with natural selection but that has not been shown to be effective in the creation of any new species.

In the case of energy, all energy flows from positive to negative, not from negative to positive. Whenever there is an energy exchange, the positive energy pool is always diminished by the amount of energy that has flowed from it. The only time an energy source is replenished is when some outside source replenishes it.

There is evidence that species become extinct, but where new species have their origin is unknown outside the Biblical account. Similarities between species has been pointed to as some sort of evidence of an evolutionary process, but the more accurate deduction is that the same mind created all species and that the laws of natural life demand similar systems. The same mind that designed one life form also designed all life forms, thus the similarity between species.

Just as energy sources require input from an outside source if they are to be perpetually sustained, so the knowledge of God comes from an outside source, God. Without divine input, what man knows about God is contaminated and diminished with time. God, therefore, gives continual impute into the heart of man by the power of his Spirit who indwells believers.

Egypt at one time had the knowledge of God because Joseph had been the second ruler in the nation during his lifetime. Egypt also, like all nations, had a common origin, as they were all descendants of Noah.

The nations that inhabited the lands of Egypt and Palestine were believed to have descended from Ham, one of the sons of Noah who had been cursed because he had taken advantage of Noah while he was under the influence of too much wine. These nations that descended from Ham, like all other nations, had the same knowledge of God in the beginning. They however, chose to walk away from the knowledge of the Lord.

One of the descendants of Ham that was noteworthy was a man named Nimrod. The Bible says he was a great hunter in the earth and built several cities in the region of what is now Iraq. There are several legends that have been traced to this man in ancient history. The jest of what they are about seems to be that; he was a man who was a sort of liberationist. After the flood of Noah's day, great fear was upon the people that they would offend the Lord. It was as though the fear of heaven hung over the inhabitants of earth leaving them very little room in which to live without fear of offending God. One such legend suggests that Nimrod made space by living defiantly and recklessly with no negative response from God, thus lifting the fear of heaven off the people.

This spirit of rebellion against God was the source of separation from the knowledge of the Lord that led to all sorts of religious fallacies. The farther people got from God the more

outrageous their imaginations about God became. By the time Moses appeared, the people of heathen nations were worshipping all sorts of imaginary gods. In Egypt they were worshipping such things as frogs. Actually, when men reject the Lord, Satan and his horde of demonic helpers fill the void that is left with vain imaginations about God.

The same is happening in our world today. The more our society embraces a generic concept of God, the more demonic their ideas become. The lines between God and Satan become blurred in the minds of many and unwittingly the end result is the pure knowledge of Lord is lost. In the beginning of the history of the United States of America, the general population understood the righteous requirements of the Lord and that salvation was by the blood and name of Jesus. Fear of offending the Lord also hung over the people. In our day today, people like Nimrod are living defiantly against the knowledge of the Lord and are trying to create space for people to live in sin without the fear of God. Many strange concepts of God are taking over the thinking of people, and the true knowledge of God is being ridiculed.

When God began to speak to Moses, he had to establish a pure concept once more in the minds of Moses and his countrymen. He did this first by establishing a pure concept concerning his name to Moses.

Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name? Then what shall I tell them?'"

God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'

God also said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers — the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob — has sent me to you. This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.' (see Gen. 3:13-15)

First God spoke to Moses about his sovereignty by saying "I AM WHO I AM." That statement carries in it the thought that God is a totally independent being who is able to declare himself. God is not the product of the vain imaginations of man, he is who he is, and what we think about him has no bearing upon him whatsoever.

Secondly, God connected what was happening to Moses with the God of his forefathers. This was not a new God appearing on the world scene, he was historically the same one that had been from the beginning.

It was also important to establish a proper relationship between Moses and the LORD. He was thus commanded to remove his sandals from his feet and not to come any closer.

God is God and man is man that is important to remember. We are not little gods running about, able to defy God or to command him.

Removing his sandals was symbolic of humility before God. It has been said that slaves go barefooted, and that in removing his sandals he was identifying himself with slaves. Jesus too, taught that if we are to be great we must likewise identify ourselves as slaves. This slavery is different from slaves of the world who have no choice in the matter; our slavery to God is voluntary, but mandatory if we wish to excel in his kingdom.

Then there was the bush. The bush was a thorny bush and was similar to the bramble bush of Judges Chapter nine. The common denominator with these two bushes was that they both were thorn bushes. This ultimately connects to the crown of thorns that was placed on the Lord at crucifixion.

The message of the thorn bush is expounded in the passage in Judges 9:8-15 where in parable, the trees of the forest were seeking a king. They went to various trees seeking a king. They went to the olive tree, the fig tree and the vine, and asked each of them if they would become king of the forest. Each replied in the negative because they recognized that they were not suitable for kingship as created. Kings must be wise and powerful, able to rule with strength because people are rebellious by nature and must be ruled forcefully. For any of these three trees to become king would require change, and they were not capable of that sort of change.

Then the trees went to the thornbush asking him if he would become their king. His response was a different one. He would not change in order to become king, but rather they must come and put their trust in his shadow. His willingness was dependent upon their willingness to change rather than his. Since a king is above those he serves, the trees of the forest would have to bow low into the shade of his shadow. In other words, they would have to willingly humble themselves to his standard if he is to be their king. Otherwise, judgment would come from the thornbush and consume them.

The message of the thornbush is the central concept upon which the Kingdom of Heaven is based. God was identifying himself with the thornbush here at this meeting with Moses though the thought was yet undeveloped in revelation form.

The message expounded in Judges was also the same as that evidenced in the life of Jesus as he came in a different spirit from all the other kings of the earth. All other kings have come like the first candidates for king in the story in Judges. Jesus came in sharp contrast as the humble man of Galilee. In his life he always avoided the techniques of leadership power, teaching those who would come after him that they must submit to his authority voluntarily. The crown of thorns that was placed on him was no accident. It was symbolic of the spirit of his kingdom.

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters." The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill." (Psalms 2:1-6)

The coronation of Jesus was real. He became King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The Jews and Romans thought they mocked him but in reality it was his coronation day. The events in Pilots court were followed by the placing of the sign above him as he was being crucified,

**"THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS."** (Matt. 27:37)

Moses was evidently quite overwhelmed as God talked to him about what he wanted him to do. How a man sees himself is vital to the role he plays in life. Early in the life of Moses, he saw himself as a man of power that led him to slay an Egyptian slave master. That was forty years previous and since then all such thoughts had dissipated. He was eighty years old now, and his vocabulary and wit were not what he felt he needed; surely God could find a more suitable person for the task.

Human strength, wit or vocabulary, are not prerequisites to God's call; humility is a cherished quality, however. Though a great quality, humility by itself is like a one legged person. The one leg may be ever so healthy, but without a second leg walking is difficult. The second leg that is needed in a man of God is faith in God.



Moses believed in God all right, but his faith did not connect himself to God's actions. He failed to see that God could work through him. It's one thing to believe in the sovereignty of God's actions independent of our involvement, but it is quite another to believe that God wants to use us as a vessel through which he actually works. Herein was the breakdown that kindled the anger of the Lord toward Moses. The Lord wanted Moses to submit himself to becoming a vessel of use. Moses apparently thought that he was being called upon to do God's work.

True humility is seeing both our human inadequacy and God's ability to override it. Moses was a humble man by this time in his life, but he was to become the most humble man ever. Lots of people are humble, but to have the quality of humility that puts a person in total dependency upon God and the willingness to walk as his representative is quite remarkable. This was the outcome of this meeting with God. Never again would Moses depend upon his human cunning though he did battle with his human irritability.

God seeing his need for an aid in the task had already called Aaron his brother to be his helper. They met at the mountain after having been separated for forty years, and together returned to Egypt to challenge Pharaoh.

# Chapter Three

## Let My People Go

Exodus 4-11

Moses went from the mountain and returned to Jethro his father-in-law telling him of his plan to return to Egypt. Jethro gave his blessing and Moses took his wife and children and began their journey.

A problem soon arose because Moses apparently hadn't insisted upon following the ways of his people in the rite of circumcision. Circumcising the males was a sign of the covenant between God and Abraham. Worshipers of God from other nations weren't required to do this; it was exclusively required of Israelites. Moses had become a part of the house of Jethro who was a priest of God, but he didn't practice circumcision. Zipporah, Moses wife evidently didn't wish to have her sons circumcised and since Jethro was a priest of God and didn't require it, perhaps Moses reasoned that it must not be that important.

Moses, however, was a man of destiny in the story of the nation of Israel. What was required of Jethro didn't apply to him. Moses must identify with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in their covenant relationship to God. It was for this reason the angel of the Lord confronted him and was about to kill him. Moses must align himself with the requirements of God upon his people. Zipporah realized what was happening and went to her sons and circumcised them, and then took the foreskins and threw them at Moses feet and told him he was a bloody husband to her. From this we can surmise that there had been a discussion about it previously and that Zipporah had prevailed. Now she saw that she must comply or lose her husband. All was now in order, Moses could continue his journey into God's hall of fame.

In preparation for the mission that God had called Moses to, he had revealed a principle to him about what was going to take place. God called Israel his first-born son. This seems to be an unusual way of referring to a nation, but it calls for understanding of Biblical thought. From the beginning, after the fall of Adam and Eve, God had promised that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. Now this too was a strange reference because, the man was the one who produced the seed, semen. The seed of the woman was not semen but rather "promise". God had determined that a woman would conceive and bear a Son who would be Emanuel, God with us.

The nation of Israel carried this holy seed "promise" that was first manifest in the birth of Isaac and continued from generation to generation, and the sign of circumcision confirmed the covenant of God and Abraham.

God told Moses to tell Pharaoh to let his firstborn go ("Jesus" was what was referred to though he was merely in the form of promise.) or he would kill his firstborn son, symbolic of Satan's claim to the souls of men. The first-born sons were the primary heirs of a family's inheritance. Slaves were part of that inheritance. Perhaps this was a legal ground for release of the slaves in that all the firstborn of Egypt died the night of release indicating that the legal claim was no longer in effect.

This all looked forward to the night that Jesus took the sins of the world upon himself, that is, the sins of Adam and his descendants. In the spiritual sense, Adam and his descendants had

become Satan's slaves as a result of the fall. Because Adam had also received a sin nature at the fall, in a sense he was also Satan's first son. Jesus taking Adam's place at the cross died, thus canceling the legal claim of Satan! (In the Biblical sense, everyone descending from Adam is included in the sacrifice of Jesus, just as all were affected by the fall.) This was what was happening that night in Egypt; all those who identified with that transaction by claiming the blood were free to leave the bondage of Egypt! Every blood sacrifice in the Bible was looking forward to the sacrifice of Jesus though man did not understand it, yet it was what God was doing all the while. It is true today that all claiming the sacrifice of Jesus as theirs are freed of the burden of the slavery to the sin nature that once dominated their lives.

Now Moses must go to Pharaoh and confront him with God's message. Pharaoh would not be easy to convince, however, just as Satan is not easy to convince. God must move against him in power if deliverance would become a reality.

Moses and his brother Aaron, his wife Zipporah and his two sons returned to Egypt to confront Pharaoh. (At a time and place undisclosed, however, Zipporah and her sons returned to Jethro in the desert.) Before Moses could confront Pharaoh, however, the Israelites themselves must be convinced.

Upon arriving in the land, Moses and Aaron met with the men of Israel telling them all that God had said, showing them the signs that God had given Moses. Hope of deliverance from bondage was then birthed in their hearts. Having received the blessing of the men of Israel, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh.

Pharaoh listened to the message of Moses and Aaron. He then informed them that this God they spoke of was unknown to him, and complained that they were taking the men of Israel away from their work. He then gave instructions that the Israelites be given more work to do concluding that they had become lazy. This resulted in an increased burden upon the Israelites who, taking matters into their own hands, appealed to Pharaoh themselves but were turned away and rebuked for their laziness. As they left Pharaoh, they found Moses and Aaron and complained to them about their increased burden, that things were getting worse instead of better, blaming them.

Like the bondage the Israelites experienced, we have an adversary, Satan, who is a slave master. Like Pharaoh, as long as people are safely under his power, he has little interest in them. When they become aware of their bondage and desire to be free, his attention is drawn to them. When they begin to seek the Lord for deliverance, they become a threat! Satan hates to lose control of even one lost soul. Every person he can keep under his control is one he is able to keep from the joy of knowing the Lord!

The reason Satan is so successful in maintaining bondage upon people is that he has learned how to create bondage without making it seem like bondage. Satan is a master of intrigue. He tries to create the illusion that bondage is good. Satan often allows a tradeoff of pleasure for bondage, thus bondage is not seen as bondage until the web of sin becomes an unbearable burden.

Once bondage is seen as bondage, Satan's power is threatened. In our world today, we see Satan doing a very clever thing, he is providing relief to people, trading one form of bondage for another. People today are learning that the problems we have need spiritual solutions, so, instead of Jesus being the answer they seek; Satan is allowing them to explore cults, teachings, techniques, and even the occult, anything but Jesus the only real source of salvation. These individuals find relief from their bondage not realizing that they are now fully indentured children of hell. They seem to have life, but in reality they have found a deeper form of death.

Moses came with a message of deliverance to the Israelites threatening the power of Pharaoh over them but Pharaoh still believed his gods were the true Gods, at least for him. Religious beliefs are very powerful forms of bondage, and Pharaoh had a hard lesson to learn in his life. He would ultimately yield to God's plan, but not until all hope of winning in this battle was finally lost. If there ever was hope for Pharaoh and his people to be delivered from the centuries of bondage to lies about God, they must see the true and living God as the only God worthy of being served. The ineptitude of false gods must be manifest, thus God demonstrated his mighty power as supreme above all powers to both the Israelites and the Egyptians.

Whether Pharaoh ever got the point on a personal level or not only eternity will reveal, but history does not bear out that any great change ever took place within the national conscience of the people. Even the Israelites themselves only had a vague faith in God, and repeatedly challenged his purposes. They even came to the point of desiring their bondage back as being more pleasurable than liberty.

This human drama is played out over and over in the lives of many people. Liberty requires vigilance and effort, and Satan offers bondage without effort. It's easy to become a slave to sin, but when the taskmaster requires his due, pain reminds the victim of the joy of liberty.

Time and again Moses and Pharaoh met in confrontation. Nothing Pharaoh or his advisors could do would prevent the inevitable. God would win in this struggle, but would the victory last? It did over Pharaoh and his army, but the struggle for the hearts and minds of the people was not as easy.

Nationally, the nation of Israel was being carried along on a course of action predetermined by the faith of Abraham, but individually they must choose the God they would believe in and serve. Many of them failed in this test. Their dead bodies were left in the desert testifying to their personal lack of commitment to God. They left Egypt dedicated to an ideal of liberty, but their hearts were not committed to a reverent worship of the God who delivered them. God knew their motives were political, based on suffering, and that worship was only a means to an end; thus, he had to challenge them by allowing them to thirst, hunger and face enemies.

This struggle is just as real today as it has ever been. People often turn to God in times of need only to forget about him when things go well for them again. They like Israel, seek him for reasons relating to the pain of bondage rather than out of recognition of his sovereign right to worship. When people seek the Lord out of recognition of who he is, and out of a desire to please him, deliverance from bondage is a welcome byproduct of their faith. Those who serve God because they love him enjoy their liberty, and never even want to return to the land of bondage. They are the elect, the chosen ones, the apple of his eye, his bride, his body, the church.

# Chapter Four

## Set Free At Last

Exodus 12-14

Finally after many dealings of God with Pharaoh and the nation of Egypt, God was ready to deliver Israel from their slave-masters.

Moses was instructed to give orders to the people to make preparations for a meal that was to become an annual day of commemoration called Passover.

The beginning of the month was to be the first month of their calendar year and on the tenth day of the month they were to select a lamb and set it apart to be the sacrifice lamb. They were to slay it at twilight, its blood was to be applied to the doorpost and lintel. They were to roast it over an open fire, and eat in haste.

When the designated night arrived, the angel of the Lord went throughout the land of Egypt slaying all the firstborn of the land. Only those in the houses with the blood on the door were spared.

The spiritual lesson of what happened that night is well known and understood. The lamb that was slain for each household represented Jesus. Whether they understood it or not, it was looking forward to the day when Jesus would be crucified for the sins of the world. The lamb was set aside four days before the event, which could represent the approximate four thousand years of Jewish history from the fall of man to Jesus. It was at the point of the fall that Jesus became committed to the redemptive plan of God. Pharaoh represents Satan the taskmaster of sin. The Israelites who obeyed the command of Moses represent those who accept Jesus as Savior, and the death angel represents the judgment upon those who reject the message of salvation by faith.

All people need Jesus. No one is exempt. There is no other name that is named whereby men must be saved. God made one provision for the salvation of humanity. There is one road to heaven and it is Jesus. Before he came the road was called Judaism.

The purpose of Judaism was to bring Jesus to the world and to bring those who receive him back to the Father. Within the natural descendants of Abraham were individuals who would be identified later as carriers of the holy seed that was the lineage of Christ.

At this point in time the focal point of their faith was upon obeying the command to prepare the meal and to eat it according to the instructions of Moses. They also went to the Egyptians and borrowed many things that would be useful for their journey.

Having fulfilled all that was commanded of them by Moses and Aaron, while eating the lamb inside the houses protected by the blood, the death angel past throughout the land of Egypt and the firstborn child and first born of the animals of every unprotected house died.

The picture of the people eating the lamb inside the protected houses has special spiritual significance. When we are born again, we are identified as being in Christ, a title applied first to Jesus and then to all collectively who are found in him. We live in a protected dwelling place as a result of our faith in the shed blood of Jesus. Just as the Israelites put blood on the door of their dwelling, so we by faith in his blood apply it to the door of the dwellings of our hearts.

Inside we feast upon the meat of the word, the teaching of Jesus and all that went before him. Jesus got even more personal than that, however; he taught that we were to eat his flesh and drink his blood. The connection of a believer to Christ is more than an abstract concept; it is to be taken in the most literal way possible without confusing the material physics of the matter with the spiritual. Jesus was not teaching cannibalism or any such idea when he spoke of eating his flesh and drinking his blood. After saying that his body was meat indeed and that his blood was drink indeed, he went on to say that it was his words, and it was the spirit of which he spoke.

When Jesus was crucified a historic change took place. What was done at the Passover, eating unleavened bread and drinking wine along with other commemorative customs, was being changed to the actual event that was being foreshadowed. Even now what is done in churches at what is called mass or communion depending on the tradition of a church is symbolic, but the real thing is the happening of the heart.

Jesus told his disciples that his words were spirit, and that the flesh counts for nothing, meaning; when he spoke of eating his flesh and drinking his blood he was speaking of what people were to do in the future in partaking of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the means of partaking of the true bread that comes to us from heaven above and that is done through our participation in praise, worship, study of the Bible, witnessing, and any and all such activities that are Holy Spirit inspired event in our lives. As we participate with the Holy Spirit, energy called the Spirit of life or eternal life is flowing into our spirit being.

This energy is also called power from on high because it is a supernatural enabling. It is by this energy that we are enabled to live an overcoming life, display evidences of the supernatural, and experience internal transformation.

After the angel of death went through the land, Pharaoh and all the Egyptians were ready to let the Israelites go. This event is what I have smilingly called the greatest miracle of the Bible. In the middle of the night an entire nation of people, variously estimated from hundreds of thousands to as many as three million people, left their homes and all that was familiar, women, children, and elderly, none left behind, fled the country of their birth to go to a land they had only heard about.

Had God allowed Pharaoh to let them go sooner, one can only wonder how many of them would have opted to stay behind, but at this point in time everyone was ready, Israelites and Egyptians. Not only did those who were Israelites by birth flee, but also some joined them who were of other races, perhaps other slaves called a mixed multitude.

Off they went into the night, together, optimistically following Moses and Aaron. Soon however, reality began to set in. Pharaoh had second thoughts and deployed his army in full battle strength and left in hot pursuit. The Israelites realizing the predicament they were in began to panic. What would become of them? Moses did the right thing; he went to prayer.

Moses was commanded to march the people to the edge of the sea after which the cloud of the presence of the Lord moved to the rear of the Israelite camp standing between them and the Egyptians. The cloud was darkness to the Egyptians and light to the Israelites all night.

God then instructed Moses to raise his staff over the sea to divide it. All night long a strong wind blew opening a path through the sea so they could pass over on dry land. The Israelites then went through the sea, all the way to the other side.

When the Egyptians followed them into the sea, the chariots wheels began to come off so they were unable to pursue the Israelites. The Army was already well within the sea when God lifted his hand drowning the entire army in the sea.

On the shore opposite Egypt a triumphant band of former slaves rejoiced, danced and sang praises to the Lord. That was a wonderful day and great optimism filled their hearts and minds. They were free at last.

New Testament writers would one day reflect on this event and relate it to baptism, the Christian ordinance that declares victory over the slave master sin. The waters in baptism relate to the experience of the death of Jesus when he paid the penalty of our sins. We claim our salvation by faith in the fact that he died for us. In the biblical sense, we died when he died, thus our slave master has no claim to us. It was the flesh that the slave masters owned, and thus it is the flesh nature in us that we must declare dead by faith. When we come out of the water of baptism, we are free. Just as the Israelites stood on the bank of the sea free men, so we are now free.

This nation of people were free in the physical sense, but were they really free of Egypt? As the days would stretch to years the memories of the way it was would return. Memories do strange things, however. In the beginning of their journey, memories of the pain of abuse were heavy on their minds, but all was not bad in Egypt.

They had known some good times in Egypt as well. After a day of labor they could return to their houses, prepare meals, wash their cloths or whatever else was normal to a life in Egypt. When they got hungry it was the food that they remembered first, then came a nagging longing to be back home. Egypt was familiar to them; they had all been born there. As they continued their journey they were free from the bondage of Egypt, but Egypt was still alive in their hearts!

Isn't it strange how this plays out in so many lives? We want the Lord; we want freedom from sinful habits; but are we willing to travel through a wilderness, with only a hope of a better life in heaven before us? If it hadn't been for the sea between them and Egypt, many would no doubt have opted to return.

In our lives today, the path is often an easy one to return over. Old friend eagerly urge us to leave our new found faith with its view of eternal values. They all live in the now, and for them eternal values seem far away and unfamiliar.

Living to the world is to enjoy life, pursue pleasure, work hard gathering goods, and if possible get enough so you can give some back, thus making yourself feel good about the life you have lived.

The only religion that the world sanctions is a religion of forms and rituals; never mind a religion of the heart that changes values, affections, goals, and morals. If religion makes you feel good about yourself, then in the mind of the world, it has done its job.

God had a different kind of liberty in mind for the nation of Israel. He wanted them to be really free. To accomplish this God would have to initiate a plan of action that would be just as profound as the actions he took against Pharaoh.

Changing human hearts is not an easy task. It is easier to get people to embrace a philosophical salvation, one that releases them from the guilt of sin, and gives them the hope of eternal life, than to actually transition into a life lived in harmony with the purposes of God.

The nation of Israel was being called to transition into the people of God. This was not simply God claiming them; they would also be called upon to claim God.

# Chapter Five

## God Reveals Himself to Israel

Exodus 15

Having crossed the Red Sea and seeing the army of Egypt destroyed; the Israelites sang and danced. Then they began their journey as the people of God. They had seen God demonstrate his power over their great and powerful enemy Egypt, but did they understand that he was also interested in them and their daily needs? Obviously not. Water was scarce and they soon became thirsty. Their rejoicing turned to grumbling at the first challenge in their new relationship. They soon found water, but they found themselves unable to drink it because of the bitterness of the water.

This pool of water had a chemical in it that made it taste bitter. I am told that there is a pool of such water there to this day and that if you take a stick and stir it somehow it separates the chemical away so that the water can be drunk. Regardless of the how of the matter, the story still remains as it is, that Moses, not the people of Israel, called on God and Moses was instructed to put a tree or stick into the water and when he did the Israelites were able to drink it.

This pool has a symbolic spiritual value that is worthy of notice.

First we take note of the bitterness. The Israelites had been slaves and as a result had suffered causing bitterness of heart. Bad experiences leave wounds in the heart that do not heal on their own. Slaves that have been beaten may submit to the wishes of the master who beat them, but anger and hate find a ready home in their heart. Thoughts of revenge become welcome guests and murderous desires become pleasurable fantasies. None of this is acceptable in the heart of a person of God, however.

It's no different today; bad experiences wound us too. Many people carry deep wounds in their spirit today as a result of abuses that have happened in their lives. Children suffer from abuses that have resulted from alcoholic or drug addicted parents. For some it was neglect, while others were beaten. Some experienced rejection and others were sexually abused. Dysfunctional homes produce dysfunctional children who grow up to be dysfunctional adults. All of this has one common cause, sin. Still others had a good childhood and good parents, but once exposed to the world were easy targets for abuse. Cunning sinners spot innocent people and seek to exploit them for whatever advantage they can derive. Once disillusionment enters, innocence is spoiled and that is a wound that may never fully heal.

The pool of bitter water symbolizes a problem we have as people. When we come to the water of life with sin-darkened souls, we are unable to drink. The sin may take the form of self-loathing that manifests in feelings of unworthiness to partake of such love as God is giving, while in others it may be that the known requirement of repentance from dead works prevents partaking. Still others, have an internal sense of worth that is never fully validated causing bitter feelings to taint relationships when ever someone says something negative about us or what we have done.

The knowledge that sinful desires and feelings harbored in the heart are unworthy of the high calling of a child of God may also prevent coming to him. Still others have not only been



victims but also victimizers. Not only do they carry the bitterness of sins against them, but have also sinned against others. Guilt makes the water of life unbearable to drink.

There is only one solution to the problem of bitterness, forgiveness based upon the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross. Forgiveness alone may bring peace of mind, but only forgiveness based on the shed blood of Jesus allows one to drink of the water of life.

There are three kinds of forgiveness needed in our hearts, forgiveness of others who have wronged us, forgiveness of ourselves for what we have done against others or God, and forgiveness of God for the wrongs we feel he has done against us. (Of course, God hasn't actually wronged anyone; that is only our perception of it). The result internally of something seen as a wrong against us is the same whether actual or not. These wrongs are not always actual wrongs, but if they are perceived as wrongs, the result is the same.

The forgiveness of which I speak is a heart condition. Forgiveness is where we release all ill will, blame and regrets, with the accompanying anger, hate and bitterness we feel as a result. It is taking a different view of things based on the eternal values we now hold.

This forgiveness is not to be confused with the kind of forgiveness that is negotiated between individuals who have once been at odds with each other and are seeking reinstatement of some area of interaction. We must have forgiveness in our hearts for all offenders if we are to have peace of mind, heart and soul; but to grant someone restoration is a two party transaction. In many cases restoration is not possible due to circumstances relating to changing relationships, death, or the attitude of the other party. Where restoration is possible, it should be looked after as quickly as possible. Fellowship with one another is vital in the body of Christ.

When Moses was commanded to fell a tree into the water, or cast a piece of wood into it whichever the case may have been, it symbolized the cross of Christ, but how so?

The cross of Jesus is an interesting study. Not only was it the place of redemption, but there was also an attitude of heart that caused him to willingly go there. Jesus spoke of the cross, as being something his followers were to take up and carry. Nowhere do we get the idea that the disciples carried an actual wooden cross around nor did anyone take it to mean that they should.

Jesus carried an attitude of heart at all times that resulted in his going to the place of crucifixion. Jesus expressed one part in the garden when he prayed "Not my will, but your will be done." It was his attitude of surrender to the divine purposes of God at any cost even to death. I call that the vertical dimension of the cross, and the second expression relating to the attitude of the cross was when he said, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Forgiveness of others then is the horizontal dimension of the cross.

This is without a doubt what Jesus was speaking of when he told his disciples to take up their crosses. Living in the pursuit of the will of God with forgiveness of those who wrong us constantly in our hearts is the true meaning of the cross. There are no places for grudges in the kingdom of God.

When we cast the principle of the cross into our hearts (pictured by the pool of water,) we are enabled to drink freely from the well of salvation. The water of life is sweet to the taste, and joy is abundant.

# Chapter Six

## “I Am the Lord Who Heals You”

Exodus 15

It was at the waters of Marah after Moses had cast the stick into the waters that God spoke to the people concerning his healing power.

Prior to this time the only mention of disease in the Bible was in connection with judgment on Egypt when Abraham went there during a famine and Pharaoh wanted to marry Sarah. Abraham had lied about her saying that she was his sister. (She actually was his half sister, but his intention was to deceive.) The Egyptians were plagued with diseases as a result of the king's intentions against Sarah. Whether there were diseases prior to this is unknown from the Biblical account but at the time of the slavery of the Israelites, they were afflicted with diseases.

God spoke to tell the Israelites, "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you." (Exodus 15:26) In this passage we learn the origin of diseases, the reason for their existence—judgment for disobedience, and the source of healing. It was God who brought the diseases upon the Egyptians. The reason was sin. It was also God who was the healer.

The Israelites were now the people of God, and so God is giving them a promise of health dependent upon their obedience to what he was about to tell them. This nation of people were entering into a relationship with God that was going to result in full provision of substances needed, and divine protection from diseases and plagues brought on by disobedience.

There is a place of protection for God's people who enter into the kind of relationship with God that involves obedience to commands given, and total faith in the provisions, love and all the benefits of the redemptive work of God. It is appropriate to believe that God is our healer, provider, and protector.

There are, without a doubt, mysteries concerning the subject of divine healing, but it is appropriate to say that health is a reasonable expectation for the people of God. I for one, recognize that matters of struggles with health are sometimes allowed to exist for reasons known to the mind of God.

The question is never will God heal, but rather when will he heal us. Some hold to the belief that healing is always instantly available and that it is either sin or unbelief that holds it back, where others believe that God allows time to elapse during which, for reasons of his sovereign will, struggle is used in the growth process.

One should never glorify pain, suffering, or sickness, but rather seek to pass through the dealings of God that lead us into the fullness of his boundless provisions.

Giving the Israelites instructions at the pool of Marah concerning healing connects it to the concepts the pool itself teaches concerning the application of the principles of the cross already discussed. When the heart of man is cleansed of soul sickening sins such as bitterness, anger, hate and such like; the physical body functions without interference from these negatives.

There are those who recoil at the notion that God created disease, yet this is, in fact, what God said. There are some diseases that connect very directly to sinful behaviors. The only way

a person is at risk of catching a venereal disease, for example, is to be in intimate contact with an infected person. Catching such a disease is not a risk whatsoever to those who live by the standards set forth in God's word. Other diseases are not as closely connected but are linked in the sense that they set up conditions that are environmentally conducive to the onset of diseases. Still other diseases have no connection whatsoever to a direct sin of the individual, but rather are parts of the general condition within the human race as a result of the fall.

No matter the origin of sickness or disease, God is more than able to provide us with healing help. Healing comes to us through learning the secrets of good health, or by direct intervention of God's healing power. I have partaken of both.

For the Israelites, God was ready to provide them with supernatural manifestations of health and provision of every necessity of life. All that was required of them was that they live in obedience to the commands of God. These commands were not difficult; they should be the normal lifestyle of any healthy nation of people.

Whenever a nation adopts God's laws as the standard of behavior they do well and prosper. When a nation becomes lax and views God's laws as irrelevant, problems begin to compound.

To illustrate the point, the United States of America has become lax and for evidence of the result one only has to turn on the evening news; for example, just yesterday another disgruntled youth walked into a school and shot students indiscriminately. Some people are saying, "it is because guns are too easy to get," perhaps, but in this nation we have always had guns.

I can remember when it was not at all unusual for youths to possess their own personal gun. The difference is not that they are more available and begging to be used, it is the violence in the hearts of people. Others say it is some mental disorder and of course indeed it is, but why are we plagued with this sort of problem?

It seems that it is further evidence that God has given this nation over to a reprobate mind as an act of judgment, because; we have turned away from the Lord who has blessed and prospered this wonderful nation. The further we push God out of our societal consciousness the worse things become. Sin is still a reproach to any people. (See Romans 1:18-32)

The solution to the problems of a society gone amuck is very simple, but difficult. Return to the Lord and repent is the answer, but it is difficult because people love their sins. Whenever a nation or an individual has had enough of sin, help is at hand. The Lord stands ready with the redemptive work of the cross and all the benefits of the spirit of holiness and life. Obedience to God is a reasonable request.

God would lead this nation of people to Mt. Sinai soon, and there he would give them his laws. The people would see his power in manifestation upon the mountain and hear him speak his words to them. How they would respond to this display of power would depend on the condition of their hearts.

As people we have a decision to make about how we respond to God. The way we view him will determine whether he is our friend or foe. How he deals with us will either be accepted with joy in the knowledge that he is good and always works to good ends, or we will become bitter or resent anything that is not to our liking.

God said to the Israelites, "I am the Lord who heals you." (Ex. 15:26) God didn't say he was going to inflict new bondage upon them; he wanted them to know in advance that his intentions were to heal them, not hurt them. God's restraints are for our good, not his pleasure.

I cannot over stress this point concerning God's intention. This is so fundamental we could easily pass over it with only slight notice. God didn't call Israel out of Egypt only to enslave them to a ridiculous life style that would make religious freaks of them. There was nothing in

God's intentions for Israel that had anything to do with bondage; it was all for healing, health, and prosperity.

Sometimes the scriptures that refer to healing are viewed in such a narrow frame of reference that we miss the intended meaning. Healing for Israel was more than being healed of a toothache or some other physical disorder, though that was definitely part of it. It was a whole plan of God for a nation of former slaves. Healing was a new lifestyle that was intended to take them away from all the pains that had been inflicted upon them as a result of the fall and their bondage to Egypt.

Freemen not only live free of the domination of other human beings, but also live free of the complications and destructive results of living in a wrong way. Satan is the taskmaster of sinners and the results are destructive behaviors.

God was about to give Israel the most advanced code of life to live by that the world had ever known. Had they understood, appreciated and embraced it as a precious gem, they would have been blessed above all people on earth. It's still the same today, only now the Lord has taken what was revealed in the law and lifted it into a higher realm because of his redemptive work; the realm of the Spirit. Healing now is more spiritual than physical though physical healing is still a part of the gospel message.

# Chapter Seven

## Hunger

Exodus 16

As the nation of Israel began their journey into the desert, food supplies soon ran out and the people were getting hungry. Food was never a problem in Egypt, but now things were different for them. Where would they find food for so many people?

Food is necessary to life, and deserts are not places where there is an abundance of food. In fact, deserts usually are inhabited by very small groups of people who can live on minimal food supplies. This was now a very large group of people and food supplies were dwindling if not gone altogether.

What were they to do? They did what fallen men usually do, grumble and blame. They blamed Moses and Aaron accusing them of bringing them into the desert to die.

How quickly fallen men forget the mighty acts that God has done! Its easy to think that God is only interested in the spectacular, that he does his great deeds and then vanishes and goes back to more pressing or interesting tasks somewhere else. Now what do we do? All the excitement and hype of the glory of the deliverance in over and where is God now when we're hungry? Plagues on Egypt, crossing seas, even sweetening the water of Marah, all that is wonderful and fine, but where is the food?

Food is real substance; it grows from the ground that has been cultivated, fertilized, planted and watered, but this is the desert of Sin, meaning clay, put desert and clay together and you have barrenness. What had God ever done that would cause these people to believe that he could give them bread in the desert? (We may look at this and wonder if this is an intentional play on words since sin causes hardness of heart, and clay soil is very hard. Since this was written in Hebrew, the play probably wasn't there as it is in English, but it is a good point.)

Moses was a man of faith by this time in his life. Moses didn't look at hard soil or lack of water for cultivation, he prayed and believed that whatever God said, he would do.

The people directed their complaint against Moses and Aaron, but it was properly discerned that it was not really them but God who was to blame. People who complain against one another because of issues that relate to their walk with God are looking in the wrong direction. Their case for blame is never against one another; it is between them and God. Once we have accepted Christ as our personal Savior and been born again, we are on a journey from the land of bondage to the taskmaster of sin, to the Promised Land of total victory and peace in Christ. Whatever happens along the road will either enable us to walk more closely to Christ or we will chose to separate ourselves from him.

In a previous writing I described the three stages of water baptism, submersion into the water, under the water, and coming back out of the water. In that description I talked about how crossing the Red Sea was symbolic of the first stage of baptism, that time in the desert was the second stage, and that crossing the Jordan was the third stage. The symbolism of the Red Sea was our deliverance from the control of sin and Satan. The desert experience is the period when the love of Egypt and all the associated dependencies fade and die, and dependency upon God is

cultivated into a mature love/faith relationship. The Jordan River crossing is symbolic of our deliverance into the life in the Spirit, or to use another expression, being in Christ. The battles that ensued in the land are symbolic of our daily struggle against the present world and how it is that we must maintain the life of faith that we learned in the desert.

The nation of Israel had only begun on this journey; now it was time to learn that God cares about every detail of life (not just the big crisis). Their faith had not grown much yet, but the time would come when as a people they would lineup against a raging river and start marching because God said it; it was his command.

For now, God would answer Moses' faith and prayer, and supply them bread and meat to eat, but not without dealing with lust and greed.

Because we are fallen creatures, lust is a constant battle. Lust and greed are very closely connected in the psychic of humanity. The fall left us insecure and unsure of ourselves. It is from this sense of insecurity that lust and greed flows. When a person grasps for everything in sight, it is because subconsciously he feels there might not be enough if he misses some of what is currently available. Insecure people need constant reassurance. Thus, we have the basic psychology that drives lust and greed. These people had been slaves and had not learned that God's supply is sufficient for every actual need, nor had they learned the difference between want and need.

It is entirely possible that if a true survey had been taken of the resources in every household, that some likely had a considerable stash of grain still remaining. I don't say this from anything in the story or any other source other than a common knowledge of human nature. I have noticed that some people will declare themselves destitute while still having considerable wealth at their disposal. When others say they are destitute, they mean they have nothing. Since this observation has nothing to do with the story at hand, we will continue with the story.

Lust finds many forms of expression, it is sometimes sexual, but equally as often it is lust for food, raiment, and power. Lust and greed are so alike one can almost use them interchangeably.

The Israelites needed food, but lusted for the food common to Egypt. They needed sustenance for the journey, but coveted meat. God heard their complaint and granted them meat in abundance. Quail flew into the camp in overwhelming abundance and the Israelites killed and cooked and ate until they loathed the sight of them. Their lust and greed caused them to abandon good judgment and overindulge in what was available. All they needed was a little meat to flavor the manna that God was giving them on a daily basis, but fear caused them to want to eat all they could for fear it might not happen again.

Overindulgence is often driven by deep-rooted fear that what is currently available might not last. "Get while the getting is good," is the saying of the world. What Israel hadn't learned is that God is able to take care of their every day needs as they come, and only occasionally will call for preparations for a future need. The instructions given concerning the gathering of manna was that everyone was to gather daily and those who gathered much would give the surplus to those who gathered little, thus everyone would have sufficient for the day. There were those, however, who would not listen and obey and they gathered greedily, hoarding their surpluses. The next day what they saved was full of maggots and stank with decay.

There were instructions concerning the Sabbath also that required extra gathering on the previous day. This was prudent planning for the future. This was not lust driven; it was using knowledge of upcoming need in a legitimate way.

God is not against planning for the future. Savings accounts, financial planning, retirement accounts are all part of legitimate future planning. These are not to be viewed as security,

however. Jesus taught us to lay up treasures in Heaven where moths, rust or thieves cannot destroy. We are to always remember that what is of the earth is temporal and subject to lose, and that it is still God who is the source of our supply. There is no system on earth that is not vulnerable to disruption, lose or destruction.

When the Israelites awoke on the Sabbath morning, having followed the instructions of Moses and Aaron, they found the manna they stored was as fresh and good as it was the previous day. Obedience was the secret to success in this matter of sufficient provision.

Today we are instructed concerning paying of tithe. It is fear and unbelief that hinders people from paying tithe. They look at their paycheck and look at their living expenses and determine whether or not they can do it. Faith doesn't look at the need; it looks at the supply, or more correctly, at the supplier. Our concept of the size and ability of our supplier determines the size of our faith. If our supplier is our employer, then our faith is limited to what he can supply. If our supplier is God and our concept of him is love and power, then our faith will be strong seeing God as having unlimited ability and resources.

An interesting side issue has come before me as I type concerning faith, and that is that frequently I find myself inadvertently typing faint, rather than faith. Repeatedly I have noticed this knowing it is just a typing fluke, but seeing a truth each time come into view. This is, after all, the constant struggle we all have with faith, fainting. Fainting is caused by weakness and in the issue of faith; it is weakness in our concepts of God, his ability to supply, and or his caring about us as an individual or group.

Again, it is our insecurity caused by the fall that has left us in a weakened condition. God's intention for us is heavily slanted toward restoration of our personal sense of value based on relationship to him. Trust in God and lust, greed and all such like, are as alien to each other as anything can possibly be.

The Bible teaches prudence without fear and to always practice what is prudent. Take your vitamins, exercise, eat your vegetables, get sufficient rest, but believe God for your good health. Pay your tithe, put money in a savings account, invest in whatever is your interest, but believe in God as the source of security. The government may fail, storms come, and earthquakes happen, but God is always able to meet our every need.

It looked hopeless to the Israelites; where in the world would they get enough food to feed so many people in the middle of a desert? Their questions were based on the direction of their view! They were looking at the desert and failed to see the storehouse in Heaven beginning to overflow! God had heavenly food for these people, rich in every nutrient their bodies needed. No one would get sick or die from want of nutrition. Those who died in the desert died for other reasons. God's supply didn't always satisfy the cravings of their flesh, but it was always there to meet their actual need.

# Chapter Eight

## Thirsty Again

Exodus 17:1-7

As the Israelites continued their journey through the desert, they stopped for a while at a place where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, then entered the desert again whereupon they became hungry. After God feed them with manna and quail, they continued on but soon needed water to drink. True to the previous pattern of behavior, they grumbled and complained to Moses.

How hard it is to learn to trust God! In the morning they would get up and gather manna to eat but when their water ran out they couldn't imagine how they could possibly survive. I have to wonder, what was their problem anyway? Didn't they know by now that God was more than able to meet their every need? Was water beyond the ability of God to supply? How long does it take for us humans to realize that there really is a God in heaven that cares about us? These people complained to Moses and Moses pointed them to God, telling them that they were testing him.

Finally they got so upset at Moses that they were about to stone him! He responded by going to the Lord asking what to do.

Isn't it always the leadership's fault when things are going badly in a church? Isn't it because the pastor isn't praying enough or his preaching is less than it should be? Maybe he should tell more stories, everyone likes good stories. If he would stir emotions maybe things would start happening in the services.

Another complaint I hear is that the pastor is quenching the Spirit. That's a real stretch if the pastor is asking for the Lord's presence in a service. Different traditions have different formats, but it's very hard for a pastor to stop God from healing someone in their seat, or convicting a sinner of his sins, if he wishes to do so.

I heard that a great healing evangelist of recent times was pastoring her church when all at once God began healing people while she was ministering the word. It would be hard for any pastor to ignore such a demonstration of love from the Father to his people.

I was pastoring a small church once, when on a Sunday morning I was struggling terribly trying to deliver a message to the congregation. No one seemed interested in the message, and then all at once a man walk in that even though he was quite late, was evidently hungry to hear God's word ministered. As soon as he entered the church the anointing of the Spirit came upon me and I was able to finish the message with the flow of the Spirit upon me.

I am firmly convinced that God allowed that experience to teach me an important lesson concerning how things happen in the life of a church. When people come to church with the attitude that it is up to the pastor to provide the spiritual meal and the spiritual water for them, it is a wonder that God allows anything of significance to even happen.

I visited a church on an occasion on a Sunday morning and was impressed about how lacking the service was of the moving of God's Spirit. I went to the pastor and told him about what I felt and he replied that it was because of sin in the church. I told him that sin is the symptom of the lack of the moving of God's Spirit and in this case, it should begin with him. Evidently he was allowing this condition to block his faith. That night I returned to the church for the evening



service and sat in the congregation entering into every aspect of the service with faith and enthusiasm. As the service proceeded the Spirit began to move in the service and soon the pastor invited those needing prayer to come forward. Many responded with a strong presence of the Lord at the pray service. The pastor then ministered the word with an obvious anointing upon his message. After the service I went with some of the people of the church for refreshments and was told that that was the best service they had had in that church in years.

What happened? Simply, they were stimulated to believe God could help them, and he was ready to do it.

Had the elders of Israel gone to Moses and asked him to pray with them about the lack of water and what ought to be done about it, Moses and God would both have been pleased.

Despite their failure, God listened to Moses, instructing him to go to a rock that he would show him and to strike it, and that water would come out for the people to drink.

In this part of the desert there are places, I am told, that water is held in reservoirs in the rocks. They are filled when the rains fall in the rainy season and that the shepherds will go to places where there are mineral deposits that have formed over openings in the rocks. By breaking up the mineral deposit blocking the flow of water, water will then flow out. Though that is known now, there is no indication it was known then, but God knew. Moses obeyed the Lord and water came from the rock.

Big problems often have very simple solutions, but if our minds are clouded by sinful attitudes, we may not see the solution or we may be too proud to accept it. When the Holy Spirit is moving in our hearts, we are easily led to solutions that are inspired. God knows where every mineral deposit is, every job needing an employee, every willing lender, or client. We never have a need that is beyond his ability to supply. Always what is needed is communication with heaven and obedience to his instructions.

Hungering and thirsting are good. It is that condition in us that is the catalyst that causes us to seek out our daily bread and the sustaining water of life. This is true both naturally and spiritually. There was nothing wrong with the Israelites becoming concerned about their need for food and water in the desert. It was only unbelief and the accompanying lust for more than what was needed that presented a problem. God had ready solutions for their needs, but unbelief separated them from peace in their hearts.

Later in the New Testament we are told that the rock was Christ and now we know that striking the rock was symbolic of Jesus being smitten for the sins of the world. Later in the journey of the nation while still in the desert a similar situation would arise. This time Moses became angry and contrary to the instructions of the Lord to go and speak to the rock; Moses struck it again. This was a serious violation of the prophetic nature of the lesson and Moses was severely reprimanded for it.

The lesson being that Jesus would suffer once for the sins of the world, and that from that point onward, speaking to him (praying) is all that is needed. These were not lessons in biology or geology; they were messages of the gospel as presented to us through Moses and the nation of Israel.

# Chapter Nine

## Fighting the Enemies of God

Exodus 17:8-16

Amalek king of the Amalekites learned that the nation of Israel was traveling in the desert near territory he occupied. This caused him concern; thus he came out with his army to attack the Israelites.

Moses responded to the challenge by instructing Joshua to select some of the Israelite men and go out and fight against them.

While the battle was being fought, Moses went to a hilltop and held his rod out over the battlefield. As long as he held out his hand, the battle went in favor of the Israelites, but when he lowered his hand the Amalekites began to win.

Seeing the importance of keeping Moses hands up, Aaron and Hur who had accompanied Moses to the hilltop, held his hands up, one on each side; this went on until sunset. Joshua was able by God's help to win the battle against the Amalekites.

When the battle had ended, Moses built an altar to the Lord and called it Jehovah Nissi that is translated, "The Lord is my Banner." It was on this occasion that this compound name of God was first introduced.

Amalek had evidently heard about what had happened to Egypt, and believed somehow that he would be able to fight these people and win. Why he wanted to engage them in battle is not revealed, but by the response of God, it is a fair assumption that the attack was against the Lord. Perhaps he thought that his god's were stronger than the Lord God and therefore he lifted his hand against the Lord God by attacking his people. God's response was that Amalek would be wiped off the face of the earth and that even his remembrance would be lost except in the recordings of the Bible. God instructed Moses to be sure to make Joshua fully aware of what was going on because he would wipe this nation off the face of the earth.

It is a fearful thing when a person lifts his hand against God! As we read stories like this we reflect upon the ways we have of lifting our hand against God, or ways others around us lift their hand against him. What I speak of is not always a gesture or an action as was the case with Amalek. Whenever we ignore God's dealings in our lives, or resist his will for us, we, in a sense, are lifting our hand against him!

Are we on the Lord's side in all matters of life? Self-evaluation is good so long as it is not being done from a self-abasement perspective. In other words, there are some individuals who read something like this and because they tend to self-condemnation will immediately begin to feel condemned. That is not the purpose here.

What God wants of us is unwavering loyalty, and it is only when we deliberately and knowingly go against what we know God wants of us that we lift our hand against him.

Many people struggle with many things, struggles, and even falls into the sin that so easily besets, do not necessarily place us in the category of being against God. Many people struggle on a daily basis with issues in their lives that they have not yet overcome, but neither are they totally overcome by them either. The battle in their spirit against evil is very present; they just haven't found the secret of their personal victory yet. They are a part of the camp of Israel doing

battle against the enemy of God within; this we call spiritual warfare. It is when we give up, or give in to what Satan is saying is inevitable, and stop fighting, giving in to defeat that we are in deep trouble.

The scene in the story is one of well-defined differences between what is the enemy and what is not the enemy. The Amalekites were identified as the enemy and the camp of Israel was identified as God's people.

The method of battle is also equally as interesting. Joshua was authorized to lead the people of God, and Moses was the intercessor. It was the job of Moses to involve the spiritual forces of the heavenly army while Joshua was doing the physical fighting. Joshua and his valiant men were engaging the enemy with the power of the sword, but it was the army of heaven that was insuring the success. Since we can't see the heavenly army at work, we aren't always aware of what they are doing.

What is noted in this story is the link between what Moses was doing and what Joshua was doing. What made this an important link is not revealed, but the recorder of the event made a point of telling about it. Moses' authority over the activity on the battlefield was evidently vital to the involvement of the heavenly host. This seems to indicate that the army of God respects the authority of designated leadership. This is true in the life of a church as well as it was in the story of Israel and Amalek.

When a church is functioning properly, each designated participant represents the authority of the church.

If a pastor places an individual in charge of an activity, all participants are accountable to that individual regardless of how qualified or unqualified that person may be.

When individuals challenge the appointed person in a spirit of criticism or rebellion, they are out of order. If the situation doesn't seem appropriate for some reason, an appeal to the right authority is in order. The final decision by those authorized must be respected; otherwise a breach of unity and blessing occurs.

It is a beautiful thing to behold when people are seen cooperating with one another, even when the person in charge is under-qualified and those giving assistance are over-qualified. God seems to be more concerned with the maintenance of love and unity, than he is in the physical outcome of a project.

The holding of the hands of Moses has also been given a great deal of attention in the church world. This is viewed as representing the supportive ministry of intercessors lifting the hands of the leadership of those engaging the enemy, the forces of Satan. It has been observed that when intercessors are faithful to their task, spiritual victories are gained. When intercessors slack in their task, Satan is more effective in making inroads into the minds and hearts of the weak.

I have witnessed an area of battle in the life of churches. It occurs when an individual is sensitive in an area of life. One such situation occurred where a person of considerable musical talent was placed in charge of arranging special singing assignments for our soloist musicians. Because this person has struggled in a matter of life, others resented her being in any position of authority. Any suggestions given by her were deeply resented and rejected and any decisions she made were viewed with suspicion and sometimes resulted in rebellious attitudes.

Musical talent is a wonderful thing but musicians typically are very sensitive and often self-driven individuals. Musical talent when harnessed by the Holy Spirit is an extraordinary mode of worship. Nothing incites deep feelings and worship like singing or playing under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason that Satan plays heavily upon any opportunity to cause division among the musicians of a church.

Having had some family farm experience, I am reminded of what happens to chickens when one of the flock is wounded in some way and blood appears. If the chicken isn't removed, the others will kill it by pecking on the wound. We're not supposed to be a flock of chickens; we're supposed to be praying, interceding, loving and encouraging Christians.

Satan is always lurking nearby all Christian churches but especially those that are poised and ready to engage him in real spiritual warfare. He will attack every area of weakness that is available to him. Every church has within its ranks individuals who are vulnerable to attack due to lack of spiritual growth or persistent blindness to their own spiritual needs. These are the ones who are the target of Satan because he is able to play upon their weakness and they will be unaware that they are either in the wrong or being used. These individuals are usually so enamored by their personal sense of rightness that anyone who doesn't accept their point of view is automatically considered wrong.

Struggles against the unseen realm of dark spirits are very real. There are, however, rules of battle. Satan is not permitted access to just anyone he wishes to attack. There is a place of safety that is available to all Christians; it is called living "in Christ" or "in the Spirit". This place is entered into as we submit ourselves to Christ and all the accompanying thoughts, actions and attitudes that are appropriate for a Christian. Once entrance is made into this realm, remaining and maintaining is a matter of continued submission to him. The plot of Satan against Christians is to seduce us away from the place of safety.

Moses and the Israelite nation were given an opportunity to see how God honors those who are willing to fight against the enemy in the approved manner.

A precedent had been set and all spiritual battles are won when the rules of battle are adhered to.

The rules we see here are first, obedience to the directions of leadership; secondly, we see leadership still engaged in what was transpiring even though from a distant point of observation; and thirdly, we see that support was given to the leader so he could fulfill his role.

When the body of believers works together great accomplishments will occur with pastors, intercessors, counselor, teacher, and all lay members working in the spirit of cooperation, love and unity. When disunity is allowed, there is a danger of destruction to the purposes of God.

# Chapter Ten

## Organization

Exodus 18

The Lord led the nation of Israel on to a location called Rephidim, near Mt. Sinai where Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came to meet him with Moses' wife and two sons. The meeting of the men was in the customary manner of the east, with hugs and kisses and a time of visiting, catching each other up on the events that had transpired since they had parted.

Nothing is said about how Moses received his wife and sons, but we can assume that it was cordial as well. Somewhere along the journey toward Egypt, Moses had sent his wife and sons back to Jethro where they had been living while all the events of Egypt were taking place. The details of their parting were not told, but the last mention of Zipporah was when Moses was required to have his sons circumcised causing an expression of displeasure from Zipporah. Little is known about the relationship of Moses and Zipporah or how old his sons were at the time of their separation. His sons could have been in their thirties by this time. Nor is it known whether Zipporah remained with Moses upon his return or returned with Jethro.

At another point, Moses is said to have had a Cushite wife, (Numbers 12:1). It is not revealed if this was a previous marriage while Moses was a young man in Egypt, or whether he married her later. In the writings of Josephus a Jewish historian of renown, it is reported that Moses, while still in Egypt married an Ethiopian woman. He was at war with the Ethiopians when a woman of that country saw him leading the army and fell deeply in love with him. He was approached by her advocates and Moses agreed to marry her if he was successful in the battle. He was, and he quickly consummated the marriage. Whether this was the Cushite woman or not is not known for a certainty, but having more than one wife was acceptable in those days and apparently Moses had at least two wives.

This is all that is known of Moses' immediate family, and I don't have any knowledge of descendants beyond the two sons mentioned. One minister said that he had noted that Moses had been slow to accept the challenge of the Lord, and that he felt that for this reason he had been denied an inheritance in Israel. His descendants are not mentioned as having any inheritance in Israel.

While Jethro was with Moses in the camp of Israel, he noticed how busy Moses was, spending long hours listening to the problems of the people as the sole authority within the camp of Israel. Jethro looked at the situation and concluded that Moses needed to organize the people into an order of assigned authority so he would be able to maintain leadership among the people. He came to Moses with a proposed plan that was welcomed by Moses. Since the nation was a large one numbering into the hundreds of thousands and perhaps into the millions, it was obvious something needed to be done.

Organization is a necessary function in any orderly society. In the cases of churches, organization is also a necessity. Assigned responsibilities assure the flow of an orderly functioning of the church. The lack of organization results in chaotic manifestations of the responsibilities of a church. Where there is no organization, one does not know what is expected or what the outcome will be. Those who resist organization resist God because God is a God of order; however, organization for the sake of organization can be detrimental as well as liberating.

Proper organization allows spontaneity, giving it constructive expression and limiting chaos. Good organization also avoids repetition of fruitless endeavors that only drain the intellectual, physical and emotional energy from the legitimate functions of the church. Good organization encourages fruit producing growth, love and unity, and enables the body as a whole to fulfill its calling of evangelism in the world.

The nation of Israel was being formed into the people of God to be a special and unique people on earth, an example to the nations of how people are to relate to God. They should have been a nation to be emulated by all others, set in such contrast so as to demand emulation of all beholding them. It was God's purpose for them to be the head and not the tail, so the speak.

Did Israel ever fulfill its mission? I think the answer is a resounding no. The closest they ever came to it was under the leadership of Solomon, but that became flawed by the very man who was leading them as he legitimized idolatry within the nation, thus insuring the future demise of the nation. Instead of Israel following God with enthusiasm and dedication to his revealed will, they looked to the failed religions of their neighbors and tried to emulate them, thus bringing the judgment of God upon Israel.

The nation of Israel always seemed to carry a sense of embarrassment concerning their God, a sense of inferiority, as though all others had some sort of truth they were deprived of. They seemed to be ashamed of worshipping the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It seems that one of Satan's most effective ploys against the people of God has been his ability to demonize the very religion that is the only hope of a lost world. He likes to cast a sense of inferiority upon all pursuing God and portray them as the deprived. He has enabled the enemies of God to be cast as having some sort of liberty and to see laws, rules and organization as restrictive, binding and repressive. Satan has worked overtime to cast God as the bad guy, one who is against everything people like to do and therefore one to be avoided.

God is love. All that he has ever done has been to enable man to experience maximum joy resulting from fellowship with him.

All the commands are for the purpose of restricting those parts of human behavior that are violations of the behaviors that bring about happiness for all.

God's laws are directed toward protecting the innocent, weak or elderly and to keep people from violating the rights of others. Some aspects of the law were for the purpose of preserving the personhood of the individual in integrity thus avoiding the pitfalls that result from a sickened soul. Obedience to God's laws always brought an outpouring of blessing upon the nation.

Jethro was a priest of God as well as Moses' father-in-law. When he came to Moses with the proposal of organization, it was as one who could see the need and one who had the answer. Moses understood the message and responded to it by implementing it in its entirety.

# Chapter Eleven

## Prepare to Meet God

Exodus 19

Three months after the Israelites left Egypt, they arrived at the foot of Mt. Sinai in the desert. This is where Moses herded his sheep when he was called to a burning bush where God spoke to him the first time. This is where he received his call to go to Egypt to deliver the nation. His return marked the fulfillment of the first phase of his mission.

Once more God began to speak to Moses, but this time it was not from a burning bush. Moses went up upon the mountain where God spoke to him giving instructions about how the Israelites were to prepare themselves to hear from God. They were about to hear God's voice upon the mountain, and it was important that they be adequately prepared for it. Moses was to remind them of how God had brought them to this point and then to allow them to understand his purpose for doing so.

God informed Moses of a truth that is so fundamental that it hardly even needs to be spoken, yet humanity needs to be reminded of it again and again, "The whole earth is mine." (Ex. 19:5) It doesn't matter what people think about God, whether they acknowledge him or not, the truth still remains, all belongs to God. Judgment will not be based on what one thinks about God, but rather, what is the truth and were you willing to accept it?

After stating the obvious, God then gave Moses the reason why they had come to the mountain; they were to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." This nation was to be God's people and in order for that to happen he had to give them a very unique culture, religion, and government. God wanted them to stand out from all other nations like a gleaming gem, as a special demonstration of devotion and blessings resulting from righteousness.

The people didn't know how to please God, but God was now ready to explain it to them. One of the reasons for God giving the law was to define sin and show what is expected of man. Sin needed to be defined because every man had his own idea about what was right or wrong. Righteousness also needed to be revealed and that would come in its time.

This must have been an awe inspiring day for the Israelites, seeing Moses go up the mountain for God to speak to him and then returning with a message of hope and promise of a great future. They responded to what was being said to them in a positive and enthusiastic way, promising that they would fully obey the Lord.

How like us they were. When God comes to us with a positive supernatural experience promising us his blessings, we respond, "Oh yes, whatever it is you want, we will do it." They meant it I am sure, but what they didn't understand about God is that he is never in a hurry. For now at least, all was well and Moses returned to God with their positive commitment.

God wanted to do something more for the nation of Israel than just talk to Moses and have him repeat his words to them, he wanted them to hear him speak to Moses, so that they would not think he was making all this up.

What was happening here was an event that would affect all humanity. In the days to come God was going to give words and instructions that would be carved in stone tablets and etched

into the consciences of the people of all nations. The words that God was about to give would appear in print, be carved into stone walls of buildings dedicated to justice and would serve as a standard upon which all human behavior must be judged.

To the Israelites this was simply another development on a journey they didn't understand. In their minds they were simply journeying from Egypt where they had been slaves to the Promised Land where they would be free men having their own homes and farms. They had a limited understanding of the God who delivered them or the challenges along the way. They definitely didn't understand that what was happening to them was for the benefit of all humanity for all time. Their sense of history was limited to obtaining their necessary food, water and whatever else was essential to survival.

Like Jesus who tried to explain his mission and his up coming death to his disciples, God tried to prepare these people for their role in history, but the mind of man is dense when it comes to such momentous ideas. The disciples of Jesus couldn't understand what was happening until later when the Holy Spirit removed the veil of darkness from their minds and granted them the ability to comprehend. It doesn't seem that these Israelites ever fully understood what God was doing, nor do we in our daily lives as we live out his plan in our lives.

I wonder if we can comprehend that the daily issues of our lives and how we respond to them is charting a course that will affect future history? Each one of us is the product of what has gone before us. We are all parts of the ebbs and flows of the ocean of human experience. What happens to us is determined largely by forces we have no or limited control over, yet how we respond can determine the course of some segment of that ebb and flow for all time to come.

For example, a girl gets pregnant and walks into an abortion clinic to abort her conception not knowing whether the child is a girl or a boy. She doesn't know whether it will be mentally retarded or a genius. Nor does she know whether if the child lived it would be the one person who would have the ability to contribute some bit of information or inspiration that would change all future life on this planet. All she thinks about is her immediate predicament and how she might correct a mistake she has made.

From time to time along the course of life, pondering the implications of our lives is a good thing to do. We may seem like an insignificant speck on this planet, and well it may be, but where God is involved, nothing is insignificant.

Moses and the nation of Israel were at the foot of the mountain and it was time for God to give the world the Ten Commandments. Preparations needed to be made for such an important event.

God didn't want to treat the moment like it was some passing fancy, like we might say, "Oh, by the way, here are some suggestions you might consider implementing into the culture of your young nation. If you consider them worthy maybe you could use them on a trial basis, and if they prove to be good, write them into your laws."

No, God is the sovereign authority over the whole world. He already knows what is good and what works. He has every right to demand that we live within boundaries he establishes.

It was for this reason that he instructed Moses to tell the Israelites that today and tomorrow they were to wash their clothes and prepare themselves abstaining from sexual relations and on the third day God would come down on Mt. Sinai in the sight of the nation. At that time he would speak to Moses from a dense cloud so that all of them would be able to hear it. Then they would know that Moses was indeed God's appointed leader. This would give special credence to whatever he had to say to them.



Shortly after, God called Moses up to his presence and he was gone for forty days from their sight. During this time they needed to know that God was their God too. Time can be testing for people.

It isn't always easy to rest and wait. The Israelites had been under the whip for a long time, and actions were constantly being demanded of them. Action oriented people soon weary of inactivity. They would be tested in many ways in the days to come, but for now, it was time to prepare to hear the voice of God.

The Israelites had only known Moses as their leader for a short time. He had appeared seemingly out of nowhere and all the things that had happened in Egypt seemed a little surreal to them.

They had been with him now for three months and had seen things that boggled the mind. This latest display of power on the mountain had scarred them almost to death and now where was he?

Just as quickly as he had appeared he had disappeared up the side of the mountain. Where was he now? Had he died up there? Did he slip down the other side and leave the area? It had been over a month since they saw him last, and talk was now abundant. The people were getting restless. Sooner or later the inevitable time comes when we must say— "Okay, now what." If you're one of the elders what are you going to do? "We can't just stay here in this desert and wait for this guy Moses, who knows what happened to him! You saw the mountain quake and smoke and all that good stuff; God probably killed him. What about it Aaron, you were up there for a while, what do we do?" is a likely scenario.

They had heard the voice of God giving them the commandments; that was Moses' God, but they didn't know who they were. They went to Aaron and asked him to do something about their situation. "You were a part of this whole thing, he was your brother, you better think of something, and it better be good," is likely what they said.

This story is found in chapter thirty-two of Exodus. The account of Aaron's response to the situation and how he created a golden calf to represent God is given.

The Israelites upon hearing that this was now their God began to engage in revelry and as was the custom of the heathen, began to commit fornication. It isn't stated here but in 1Cor. 10:7-8. Paul said that as a result twenty-three thousand of them died.

God is not mocked and just because he can't be seen or because he takes longer in giving answers to prayers than we think he should, it doesn't mean that its okay to sin.

# Chapter Twelve

## The Ten Commandments

Exodus 20

### **You Shall Have No Other Gods before Me**

The Israelites obediently, and enthusiastically, made preparations for the promised event and true to the promise God made to Moses, the cloud of God's presence appeared on the mountain and God began to speak to Moses in the hearing of all the people.

When God began to speak he said,

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.” (Ex. 20:2-7)

The first command has to do with honoring the Lord God, and forbidding the acknowledgment of any other God. God did not want the Israelites to have any idols or images that would represent him or any other deity. The nations around them all had their gods represented in various forms. There were all sorts of perverse ideas about what the gods wanted of humans. God wanted to set the issue straight from the start. Let there be no question about it, the heathen nations had nothing that these people needed or should want. They had the true and the living God, creator and maintainer of all that exists. All notions about what God looked like were woefully inadequate, and not to be entertained.

In the New Testament, we are told that God is Spirit. That places him in a realm of the intangible where our senses of touch, taste, smell, sight and sounds do not perceive him. That does not mean that he is any less real, or that he is intangible to those who are in that realm. I like to describe that realm as being a realm where the laws of physics are different but real.

We live in a realm where molecular structures and laws permit us to interact with what is also of this same realm. When the realm of spirit comes into play, we are unable to perceive it through our natural senses because it lacks the same substances and energies that we are equipped to react too. We can, however, observe this realm as we see the effect of its presence about us. It is for this reason that heaven is not a distant location, but rather merely in a different realm of reality. It needn't be in some other location, but it could be.

Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about this the night he came to Jesus, and the discussion went to the reality of the spiritual. Jesus said concerning spirit that we cannot see the wind, but yet we know it exists by observation of the results of it, in like manner we cannot see spirit, but we do see and observe the results. There are many spirit beings, but we as people are not to fear any of

them, or give acknowledgment to them, but rather to serve the Lord God with all our hearts, minds, bodies, and strength.

### **You Shall Not Make For Yourself an Idol**

The nation of Israel would have close neighbors who would be idol worshippers. The Israelites would eventually become curious about the strange practices of the heathen. Some aspects of these forbidden religions would seem to make sense in some way; therefore, they would be tempted to explore them and to engage in some forms of idol worship. God wanted to set the matter straight from the start. No idols. God is the only God, and besides him there is no other. All other gods are figments of imaginations or fallen angels posing as God. It matters not how good a religion may seem, if it does not follow this simple rule; it is false.

Satan has worked long and hard to confuse the issue concerning God. He has challenged the right to an exclusive claim to Godhood. The reason being, he wants to be the god people serve and acknowledge. If he can't have them acknowledge him openly, he will settle for serving him subtly, but he prefers overt acknowledgment. There aren't a lot of people who will serve Satan openly and knowingly, so he must trick them into serving him. False religions serve his purpose well; therefore, they seem to prosper. Those who serve Satan are free to believe anything they want to believe, act anyway they want to act, be as religious as they wish to be, but just don't turn to Jesus with their whole heart. Jesus is the enemy of Satan. That is why it has become politically incorrect to acknowledge Jesus as God. It is okay to use the name of Jesus as a curse word or to speak disrespectfully of him, but don't suggest that we should believe in him or pray to him. It is his claim to exclusive rights to Godhood that makes Christianity a threatening religion.

At the time of Moses, God was not known by the name Jesus, nor was the revelation concerning the trinity understood. The LORD was their God or YHWH was their Elohim, using the Hebrew words. The name that is YHWH in the Hebrew language is unpronounceable in its original form so to make it pronounceable; some have added the vowels from the name Adonai making it in English Jehovah or Yahweh.

The seeds of thought concerning the trinity were well established, though not comprehended by the Jews until Jesus made it manifest. The name Elohim that is translated God, is a plural form. And then there were also references in the plural, namely let "us" make. Even in the statement that the Lord is one God, contains the possibility of the trinity, because the word used to designate one is the word used when one is a plurality, such as, one family, one sack of corn, or one nation. It is a closed unit but the unit contains a plurality, thus God though Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is a closed and exclusive unit, one God.

This concept of God is a basic fundamental understanding of the New Testament and is in no way a violation of the command of God because Jesus is God made flesh that dwelt among us. He came for the expressed purpose of dying for the sins of the world. It was his claim to being the Son of God that caused the high priest to call for his crucifixion. If he had not been the Son of God, then he would not have been a worthy sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Honoring and respecting God is so vital to the story of Moses and the Israelites that this command is the first one God gives them.

Those who fail to respect God lack the very foundation upon which their life should be built. It is our concept of God that is the most important concept in the formation of our personalities, character, goals, and our senses of personhood. Our attention to matters of religion and behavior

are influenced by how we see God. If we see him as irrelevant then our behavior will reflect that idea. We may become careless in our conduct of life, living for what we see as bringing us the greatest sense of pleasure or fulfillment.

Commandments are not important to people who do not see God as either real or relevant. Thus, they become a sort of god to themselves, making judgments about life, love, goals and conduct based upon what they judge to be most meaningful.

This is humanistic thinking in its highest form. God, if there is one, is subservient to the determinations of the wisdom of man. All morality is judged by what they see as the common good. Society is elevated in importance above the individual and moral codes are deemed meaningless unless they promote the common good.

If we see God as disinterested in us, we will be disinterested in him. The less interest we have in God, the more self-centered we will become. The more we see God as relevant, loving and caring, the more we will want to please him. This is vital to the development of a good conscience. Knowing that God is always monitoring our thoughts and intents, not because he is seeking to find an occasion to condemn us, but rather looking for righteousness to put his blessing upon.

Even Christians, I am afraid, have a concept of God that is faulty. Many, it seems, see God as looking for a cause to condemn them. This may be due to early training by parents who used God as a sort of cop, teaching their children that he is always watching them. It's the no, no, thing rather than the love, love, thing. Its time we begin to see that commands are for our good and that they were not meant to be against us. Against us they were, however, not because of any flaw in them, but rather because of the flaw in us that causes us to want what is forbidden.

### **Use God's Name with Honor**

Using the name of God as a common word is so habitual with many people that they are hardly aware of even doing it. It has become an expression of surprise, horror, anger or an emphatic. God is a being, one to be honored and revered. Using his name in a casual manner is to desecrate the holy name of God.

To protect the name of someone is to protect his or her reputation. What's in a name? Isn't it the way we identify who we are speaking of? Without a name references are often vague, indefinite or confusing. We may engage in a conversation assuming that the listener understands who it is we are speaking of, but without a name the listener may apply the conversation to someone other than who is intended.

We have all had the experience of wanting to speak of someone and not being able to recall their name. In such a case conversation becomes difficult. In the absence of a name, we can only hope that our listener is thinking of the same person we are. We will then describe the person, speaking of some characteristic that our listener will hopefully recognize and perhaps be able to supply the missing name. Once the name has been properly assigned to the person who is the subject of conversation, confusion is gone bring a sense of relief.

Being able to say the correct name is not always a guarantee that the listener is thinking of the same person. There may be more than one person with the same name or a similar name. Memories sometimes fade, so other descriptive words may be needed to insure that the person being spoken of is the same person being thought of in the mind of the listener. We may at that point speak of some visual characteristic to remind the listener of the correct person of whom we are speaking.

The heathen nations had their concept of God conceptualized into physical forms and images depicted what their god looked like. God did not want this sort of visualization. He wanted to be known by his name, and his character. Images tend to take the attention away from the one who is being represented and to put it upon the image itself. Not only are images the result of someone's imagination, but when seen tend to form impressions of God that result in a concept of what he is like.

God was careful to instruct the Israelites in how they were to depict him. God wanted them to call him by name and to think of him in terms of highest honor.

When a person fails to use a name they may settle for some verbal description, such as the tall one, short one or the one who sits with his legs crossed and a fat belly. Always images are shortcuts in thought and communication that don't do justice to the one of whom we are speaking.

God doesn't want to be thought of as the great one, or any other characterization other than references to his character; high, holy, compassionate, yet a God of justice. Even in mention of his justice, he wanted them to see a contrast between how he blesses and how he judges. He blesses to a thousand generations, but judges to only three or four.

You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name." (Ex. 20:5-7)

Any effort to lessen the effect of this knowledge of God is a desecration of his name. Satan started on a crusade to tear God down in the eyes of humanity from the very beginning of our history. He did so by using a serpent in the garden and speaking deceitfully to Eve. He wasted no time getting to the point, challenging the intentions and character of God. Satan hates God because God didn't allow him to take over his throne and become the object of worship. From that day onward the evidence speaks of an effective effort to strip God of the honor he is due. Nation after nation slipped into idolatry as the true image of God became mixed with the vain imaginations of fallen men. The assumption that demonic influences and visions aided these vain imaginations seems justifiable.

No matter what people think, what assumptions about God is embraced, the truth remains the truth; God is who he is, and is what he is. God's position is not determined by how many people love and worship him, how many believe in him, or give him his proper place in their hearts; he is God because he is God and is worthy because he is worthy. Reserving a name for him that is only spoken in love, honor and highest respect is to insure that we never forget the greatness of our God and his love for us.

To speak casually of God, is to lessen the impact of his name upon us. Speaking casually about God doesn't make him any less; it only hurts us because we lose the impact of his name as an abiding influence upon us.

The more God becomes one of us in our thinking, the higher our estimation of ourselves becomes. This exaltation of self is not a good self-image that is based on a healthy understanding of our self-worth; but rather, a self-reliance that reduces our sense of need for a valid reliance upon God. This takes the form of pride and leads to rebellion when one doesn't see his need for a close relationship with God and what God demands seem unreasonable.

God wants us to understand that we are to always honor him, first with his name and then with a correct view of his character. Images are out; they always tend to mislead.

## **Keeping the Sabbath**

What day is the Sabbath? Should it be kept? If so, how should it be kept? For accurate answers to that question we must look to the New Testament, but first we will hear what God said to Israel and how they sought to obey him.

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.” (Ex. 20:8-11)

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. (Gen. 2:1-3)

In giving this command, God reminds Israel of what he did in creation. Up to this point in time, it is not clear whether Sabbaths were recognized or kept. If they were kept, no mention is made of it until the Lord gave the Israelites manna in the wilderness. He then gave them special instructions concerning the Sabbath. What they previously understood about the Sabbath is not revealed, however, we know that God instructed them to honor it at the time of the giving of the manna. No mention is made of anyone ever keeping it previous to this, however; this doesn't mean they didn't keep it, it just wasn't mentioned in the Bible.

After six days of creation, God had himself honored the Sabbath and by example rested on it. No recorded command was given concerning it, however. In Biblical interpretation, what is not stated is as important as what is stated and in Romans 6:13-14 we read, “For before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.”

From this scripture we learn about the fact that death came upon all men as a result of Adam's fall. Adam fell into sin and the penalty was death. Death is the absence of life and as a result of Adam's disobedience the tree of life that was in the garden became inaccessible to humanity. This resulted in the condition of death, therefore; the human race became the living dead so to speak, alive physically for a time, but dead spiritually. This was not due to breaking a command, but rather had to do with the inaccessibility of the source of life.

Since no command had been given concerning keeping of the Sabbath day, it is not known whether any of the men of old kept it. The law of the Sabbath came from God through Moses, and was for the express purpose of teaching humanity about the coming Savior who would be our Sabbath.

The Sabbath, like all the commandments, looked ahead to Christ who would come and be the personification of true righteousness. Adam came and by disobedience brought us toil, struggle, pain, sorrow, death, and every other form of human suffering: Jesus came and by obedience brought us life, joy, peace, love and rest from the struggles that have resulted from the fall.

Since the garden, with the tree of life no longer in existence, there needed to be a new delivery system whereby those who are of Adams race could become recipients of the energy of life. This is accomplished when we come to Jesus by faith in his redemptive work. As we acknowledge our sinfulness and by faith reach for cleansing and pardon, we become recipients of the life of Jesus, which is eternal life, or spiritual life.

When we experience this transformation, we are candidates for a new relationship of faith. The fatherhood of God then becomes a reality in our lives and takes over the responsibility of being our provider, protector, comforter, counselor, and whatever else is needed in our lives as a result of living on this planet.

The only struggle a Christian should have is a struggle against the desires of the fallen nature that he is instructed to consider dead. We are not to live our lives for the fulfillment of sinful desires, but rather to please the Lord. As we do this, we experience the true condition of rest that was foreshadowed by the seventh day Sabbath. It is therefore fitting that Christians would celebrate the day of the resurrection of Jesus, Sunday, in the spirit of the seventh day Sabbath. This was also foreshadowed in the law as the eighth day, which was a celebration of new beginnings when occurring in connection with certain feasts.

When the time came to install the new form of worship, with the Aaronic priesthood, a week of preparations led to the day when God would meet with the Israelites and validate the priesthood of Aaron and his descendants. After atonement was complete, the people were instructed to gather before the Lord and on the eighth day, God validated the new form of worship by consuming the sacrifices they had put before him with fire from heaven.

This marked a new beginning for the nation of Israel. They were now in covenant relationship with God, accountable to keep the law and their form of worship. The eight-day was a day of new beginnings for them just as the day of resurrection was a day of new beginning for the church of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul in writing to the church of Colossi gives us vital instructions concerning the changes that occurred as a result of the resurrection of Jesus.

First he points out that we need to have complete understanding of the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Secondly he tells us that we are to be careful not to pay heed to those who would try to capture us with fine sounding arguments, but rather to live in Christ. We are to be rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith and overflowing with thankfulness.

We are to be careful about hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends upon human traditions and principles of this world rather than on Christ.

We as Christians have the fullness of Deity living in us and as a result of Christ, have power and authority.

We have put off the flesh, the fallen nature, and embraced the character, love, and grace of God through Jesus Christ our lord. Circumcision and baptism symbolized this experience, and we have been forgiven all our sins.

Therefore the written code that was against us has been canceled, and we are to no longer allow anyone to judge us concerning keeping religious festivals, new moon celebrations, or Sabbath days. These are shadows of the thing that were to come, the reality being found in Christ. (See Col. 2:2-17)

The reality of the Sabbath day was that it foreshadowed a time when we would enter into real rest, not just physical, but rather, and especially, spiritual rest as a result of our faith. The Israelites kept the physical Sabbath much of the time but they never really kept it because they

didn't understand that it was more than resting from physical labor; it was fully trusting in the Lord. We have the privilege of really keeping the Sabbath in our lives. Whether we keep a special day or whether we keep every day, keeping the Sabbath is a continual experience, everyday, all day, without ever changing it.

After God created all things during the creation week, he rested on the seventh day. All other days are spoken of as having an evening and a morning, but the Sabbath day didn't have either. Some see this as an indication that it is an eternal day that God interrupted to create this world and having completed it returned to the eternal day of rest. In Hebrews we have the explanation of the Sabbath as a day when we rest from our labors. (See Hebrews 4) What we are to rest from is selfism in all its many faces: greed, lust, envy, hate, murderous desires, covetousness, immorality, idolatry and all such like. In its place we embrace Christ where there is love, joy, peace and a total lack of the spirit of war. Those who are "in Christ" are in the state of rest from all that is evil and therefore, are at rest.

### **Honoring Fathers and Mothers**

"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you." (Ex. 20:12)

This command was given to the Israelites as a vital command to longevity in the land. When children fail to honor their parents, they seldom honor God. When people fail to honor God, sin results. Where sin is, the blessing of God is lifted and the natural course of this world goes unrestrained.

Respect for elders is an attitude that tends toward a law-abiding society. Where honoring is lost, selfism takes over, and where selfism is allowed to exist unrestrained, lawlessness is the result.

Jesus came into this world with an attitude of submission to the will of his Father. He was foreshadowed by Isaac who submitted to the will of Abraham and allowed himself to be bound and placed on the altar his father had built.

This sort of submission is not readily understood in a society such as ours. In our society children are allowed to express themselves, even in descent against the will of their parents. Honor and obedience are no longer looked upon as a necessity, and even the legal system has set itself to undermine the effectiveness of parents in child rearing. Children are allowed to defy the will of parents and even encouraged to do so. Individual rights are viewed as being more important than obedience. Children are taught in the educational system that it is okay to do what they wish to do so long as they don't break certain laws that society chooses to enforce.

This condition of lack of respect for the authority of parents is a condition of decadency that undermines the stability of a well-ordered society. Once respect for the authority of parents is lost, respect for the institution of marriage is also soon lost. Respect for one's person is also subject to loss.

Honor your father and your mother, is the Lord's command. Breaking it is the beginning point of the unraveling of a society.



## **You Shall not Commit Murder**

The King James Version of the Bible cast this command in a little different light that confused the thinking of some people for many years. Using the word kill instead of murder. Which is right? Obviously murder is the correct rendering.

The Israelites were going into a land where war was going to be necessary and killing would be part of the struggle for control of their promised inheritance. Killing people in a war is ugly to contemplate, but it is a part of the history of human struggle.

The subject was not one of how to deal with war situations or the morality of war. These were civil laws that were to govern how these people were to live with one another.

In any well-ordered society there must be a system of boundaries for the society to live within. Every culture that endures has a system of beliefs and laws that govern the behavior of people within the society.

This was a nation emerging into liberty after having been slaves in Egypt. They needed a civil code and moral guidance so that they could have an enduring society. God in his love provided them with laws that were designed to be a standard that all societies could look to as a checkpoint to see if they were living up to the standard and spirit of true righteousness.

Whenever the citizens of any society begin to prey upon other members of that society, it is in danger of destruction from the decadency that comes from within. Under Jewish law, murder was condemned. Capital punishment was not only sanctioned but also prescribed, and war was a reality they must face.

When Jesus came to the nation of Israel, corrections needed to be made. Confusion was in the hearts of people, because they had put all the emphasis of the law upon outward behavior. It was hard for people to understand that they could kill someone in a war, but not kill their neighbor when they had a dispute with them.

Hate and murder were found in the hearts of people who were thought to be righteous because they didn't understand that murder in their heart was as bad in God's eyes as the act itself. Sin in the heart is what cuts off the flow of divine love, and unity of spirit is impossible where there is hate.

The whole concept of the law as understood by the Scribes, Pharisees, and Elders of the people had to do with outward behavior. Sins committed in secret were likely largely ignored. One day the elders of the people brought a woman to Jesus who was accused of committing adultery. These men were about to stone this woman when Jesus asked for a sinless one to cast the first stone. Since these men were themselves guilty of sin, they had no right to cast stones at this obviously guilty woman. It was this sort of lack of understanding of truth that caused Jesus to say that unless the righteousness of his followers exceeded the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they would in no case enter the kingdom of heaven.

## **You Shall Not Commit Adultery**

God allowed the Israelites considerable freedom in the area of sexual expression. They were however restricted from expressions outside the boundaries of marriage. The men of Israel were permitted to have more than one wife, but were not permitted to divorce a woman except for the cause of adultery. If they went to war and they saw a woman among those who had not been destroyed, they were under certain conditions, permitted to marry them. It was because of this liberty that the message of righteousness became clouded.

The idea of heart faithfulness was not understood because marriage was to a great extent a means of gratifying sexual desires.

Jesus addressed the subject of personal righteousness when he taught that if a man looked upon a woman to lust after her, he had committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Jesus affirmed the current one-man/one-woman concept of marriage as the social standard when he stated that in the beginning a man would leave father and mother and be united with his wife. (Matt. 19:4-6) Jesus then took the subject to the highest possible standard by instructing us in the need for singleness of heart and devotion.

It is not enough to simply say one wife, and then allow for wondering eyes and desires. Sexual fantasies are equal to acts of adultery because, they cause sin to grow in the heart.

When people look at one another in sexual ways, unwholesome desires grow that are destructive to pure relationships that are essential in a Christian society. Every Christian woman should feel free within her Christian friendships from being an object of sexual desire by any man, other than her husband. She should always feel at ease and relaxed never feeling that wandering eyes and hearts are lusting after her. We are therefore instructed that the men of our Christian society consider the young women as sisters, and the older women as mothers. This purity of heart and mind allows for a wholesome exchange of conversation and Christian love without sexual overtones.

## **You Shall Not Steal**

It is a very distressing feeling to realize someone has trespassed into an area that contains your personal belongings and taken something that is yours. Break-ins particularly leave a person feeling violated, creating feelings of insecurity that must be dealt with before peace is felt once more.

In the Book of Revelations, in the discussion of the sixth trumpet, four sins are listed that people refused to repent of; murder, sorceries, fornication, and thefts. These sins are connected to the spirit of the age that is being discussed under the sixth trumpet. The fifth trumpet when viewed as a depiction of the drug scene that emerged in the sixties is seen as strikingly similar. Some have seen sorceries as being connected to drugs and use the term interchangeably, though I can't be certain that that is permissible. Sorcery is involvement with demonic worship and often connects to some sort of drug abuse.

In the Bible days most drugs as we know them today were not available, therefore, the subject comes to us in veiled language. Smoking for example is largely a recent problem, unknown in the day of Christ. Had it been something the society was involved with, it seems certain there would be scriptures that would deal with it. Silence on a subject does not imply permission. When the spirit of righteousness is understood, the application of the principles apply to anything we are currently facing. When we understand why God forbid certain activities we are then able to apply the principle of righteousness to other activities and deduct the correctness of the activity.

In the fifth trumpet we see descriptive terms being used to describe something that was to come. Scorpions are spoken of but we are told they are not really scorpions as we know them, because they are not going to eat the green of a plant but rather attack men. The green of a plant is the life expression of the life of the plant. When these scorpions attack men they will attack the life expression as well. The scorpions power is in its tail where there is a stinger that resembles a hypodermic needle. The fact that it is like a needle is suggestive of the use of drugs.

The torment that it causes is like the consuming need for the drug once addiction has been introduced. Withdrawals from drug addiction can also drive the person to wish for death. Crowns of gold are also spoken of; the real reason for the distribution of the drugs being money. Breast plates of iron speak of hardness of heart that associates with addictions. The organization and sound of the scene are described as the sound of horses running to battle, suggestive of the rock beat that associates with the spirit of the drug world.

The sixth seal is also very likely a depiction of a condition that is upon us in this present time. The symbols are in striking contrast to the symbols of the fifth seal.

The first thing that is mentioned is that four kings of the east that have been bound in the river Euphrates have been loosed. It is my belief that this is a reference to the eastern cult religions that for centuries were bound to eastern countries. Very shortly after the release of the drug culture upon the world scene, the eastern religions that had been bound to the east were also released upon the western world. It was an invasion of demonic spirits that flooded into mainstream western society taking captive almost at will. The power they exercised was in the words they spoke and the consequent fascination with their strange beliefs.

The colors of their breastplates suggest the stirring of passions through the teachings of their mystical ways. Their tails being like serpents is reminiscent of Satan and his cunningly devised assault against Eve and all mankind.

The reference to the killing of a third of mankind may not be so much numerical as a reference to the third part of man, his spirit. This assault destroys the very spirit it promises to release through its mystical practices because it satisfies the need that people have to experience the supernatural.

From the time of the release of these two fronts of evil upon humanity nothing has been the same. Sin has run rampant. Drugs have brought sexual sins to the forefront of our society in ways we never dreamed possible.

Along with drugs have come murders, thefts, involvement in the occult, and of course, immorality. It says that the people of the earth are unwilling to repent of these sins. Why? Because they satisfy the fallen sin nature.

Drugs have brought upon us murder and theft, and immorality has brought upon us abortion upon demand, also murder and false religion has brought a false sense of well being. The God of the Bible has become irrelevant in a society that has defiantly embraced evil.

### **You Shall Not Give False Testimony Against Your Neighbor**

We are living in a time when evil is being increasingly tolerated. Wicked men are making our legal system a mockery as they manipulate people and facts, causing evil to prevail, while honest and decent people are unable to find redress for the wrongs committed against them.

I work at a prison as a volunteer pastor. Most of the men who come to our chapel services are in prison because they have committed the crimes of which they were accused. There are occasionally those who claim innocence and are doing what they can to appeal what they claim to be a miscarriage of justice. Assuming their stories are correct, they are in prison because someone has given false testimony against them.

One man came to me one night telling me about what he claimed happened to him resulting in his incarceration. He claimed that he, as a successful builder, had accumulated a good sum of money and that he decided to take a portion of it and invest it in stocks in a young company that today is a corporate giant. Had he, he would have been worth millions today! His wife found

out about it and started doing some things that resulted in her falsely accusing him so that he would be sent to prison. According to his story, she wanted to spend the money and found herself another man. She even enlisted the people of the church they attended to back her story and the result was that he had been falsely convicted and was doing time in prison while his wife was living up the money. True or not? I cannot say for certain, it does sound a little bizarre but people sometimes do bizarre things. This is the reason for the commandment.

People find it easy to lie about someone if they wish to destroy their reputation, and the people hearing the false testimony become convinced it is true thereby effectively eliminating them. Politicians do it, news media people sometimes do it, and spouses in a divorce case often do it. It's so easy, just tell some lie or use a truth out of context, and your enemy is rendered helpless to defend himself.

Many have climbed the ladder of success by eliminating their competition based on lies or misuse of truth. A reputation can be a very fragile thing! Just a few well placed lies or stories and someone's reputation is ruined for life! No wonder God placed this sort of violation in the ten commands! Does it belong in a list along with murder? Oh yes, indeed it does. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, said,

“Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.” (Matt. 5:21-22)

In this passage we have a progression of thought beginning with the command not to murder. When someone is murdered, their physical body is rendered dead, but if they are a child of God, they are with the Lord. This is serious and deserves judgment.

Then the Lord went on to say that anger is also worthy of judgment as well. Anger here represents an attitude of contempt against someone. This anger may not result in outward violence, but it is a psychological contempt that undermines the sense of well being in the person who is the victim.

The progression continues to the next level when Jesus said we should not say ‘Raca’ or as some might render it, ‘empty headed’. Now the victim's personhood is being violated. This brings a different level of judgment, and perhaps intended to be a more serious judgment, being brought before the Sanhedrin. (The Sanhedrin was the top religious authority of that time.)

Then finally the most serious of all, calling the victim a fool. This is to place him in the worst possible light. The progression would then be that the least serious is the destruction of the body, because the person is then with the Lord. The attack upon the peace of a person can be overcome, but when the attack successfully undermines the persons self-esteem all future events are effected even into eternity. When the attack goes to the level of attacking the spirit of the person, it is the most serious of all taking away all hope of recovery. Thus we have the least serious, the destruction of the body, the next most serious, the destruction of the soul or mind, and the very most serious the destruction of the spirit.

This doesn't make any sense to a person who's world view places maximum importance upon the here and now, but to a person who views all events from the eternal perspective, it makes absolute sense. God always sees from the eternal perspective and all his judgments have eternity in view. Life is not given simply for our personal pleasure; it is the threshold of eternity! Everything that happens here now has eternal implications and is therefore very serious.

The command against giving false testimony is therefore very serious, and it has the same characteristics as the subject discussed. The eternal implications for a violation of this kind are staggering and must be avoided at all cost.

## **You Shall Not Covet**

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor." (Ex. 20:17)

Why do people covet? Is it not because they are not satisfied with what they can have legitimately? The secret to happiness is that we have low expectations, high goals and good work ethics. When our lot in life exceeds our expectations, we usually are happy. Unhappy people are those individuals that never can have enough to satisfy them. Whatever they gain, achieve, or receive, is never up to the standard of their expectations.

I once was pondering the subject of inferiority complexes, when the Spirit drew my attention to idolatry and its connection to feelings of inferiority. What I learned was that many people have created what I call an "ego image" of what they think is the perfect them. This ego image may be a composite of many different influences, parents, friends, teachers, sports figure, politicians, entertainers, or just the reflection in the mirror. When the ego image is greater than the ability to attain, suffering can result. In some individuals it is at the level of torment. This can also affect their relationship to friends, spouse, and family. It is also the root cause of covetousness.

I once counseled with a friend who was tormented by a sense of defeat. This man was deeply angry because he always felt that he had been dealt a bad deal in life. I asked him how long he had felt this way and he responded that he always in his memories had felt that way. I concluded that he had been born with a very high sense of self-esteem and that the resentment related to the inability of those around him to give him the satisfaction he desired.

People with this sort of feeling are always looking for someone to reinforce their feeling of self-worth. These people live for the adulation of a crowd, never being satisfied with someone else being the center of attention. We see them in a crowd doing whatever is necessary to gain attention to themselves. It is only when the spotlight is fully upon them that they find a little relief from the nagging feeling that they, after all, are not as great as they desire to be. These individuals can never be successful enough, have enough money, gain enough power, or receive enough love to satisfy the bottomless pit within them.

The way the revelation came to me was that such people have an image in their imagination, like a picture on the wall of their hearts that is the standard by which all things are judged. Whatever that picture is, determines the level of happiness a person experiences. If it is a higher standard than can be comfortably attained, unhappiness is the result no matter what is achieved. The Lord then went on to instruct me concerning the answer to such dilemmas, remove the picture altogether, don't try to change it (the answer of psychology,) but rather replace it with the picture of God's created will for us. This is what is being spoken of when we talk about abandoning the mind of the flesh, or the need to deem the old nature dead. We remove the old taskmaster off the wall of our hearts with all those unreasonable demands and embrace a new Lord—Jesus Christ. When the old taskmaster is gone, so is covetousness.

To be free one must fully embrace the heavenly vision. As long as we are earth-oriented we will find that this problem will continue to dog our path. Falling in love with the Lord Jesus and focusing upon his kingdom will enable us to forsake seeking our own fulfillments.

There is a constant struggle that is entered into once a person accepts the Lord Jesus. The body we currently live in is of the earth. Its very survival depends upon the substances of the earth. Its pleasures are derived from the things of the earth. Even its highest goals pertain to conditions that are of this earth.

When a person is born again a new heavenly life is born. This new life is from the man of heaven, Jesus. The new nature is of heaven and cares little for what the old life once loved. A process of metamorphosis begins in us, that is, a transformation of all that we once were, into what we will ultimately be, once it is complete. This creates a condition of tension between these opposing forces, and we find ourselves constantly being challenged by what is more important. We must go on living in these bodies but instead of this life being what is important; eternal matters are now our new love. Instead of serving the needs of our present life, we use our present life as opportunities to prepare our spiritual man for its eternal destiny. Our bodies become temples of God's presence, and are used to further the cause of proclaiming his message. Once we coveted houses, mates, possessions, positions of power and the acclaim of our peers, but now we are more interested in the success of others and the advancement of the kingdom of the Lord—Jesus Christ, than our own success!

I was once a covetous person. I didn't think so but I was. I didn't lust for the possessions of others; all I wanted was enough money to pay my bills! One day we received a letter in the mail from a dear friend. She sent us a letter containing a prophecy that promised that we would be delivered from want. Since money was what I wanted, I looked for financial relief. None came so I asked the Lord about this. He then spoke very clearly a truth I have embraced as a vital part of my understanding. He said, "Delivering from want is accomplished by delivering from wanting." At first I didn't fully comprehend the truth of what was spoken, but I knew it was the Lord. At that point in my life, because of the pressure of our circumstances all my energies were directed toward survival. God wanted my energies to be directed toward his purposes. What is so ironic is that when we start pursuing the purposes of God with our energies of concern, he takes the concern for survival and starts a process of provision for us. This is true faith in action. True faith has as its goals eternal matters and temporal issues are only temporary inconveniences. When faith is applied to earthly matters it is for the purpose of removing the obstacles in the way of God's purposes.

The mind of the flesh does not comprehend how this works. How can a mighty electrical motor ever run by simply putting the end of its cord into those holes in the wall? Of course we all know how. It is the same way with matters of the Spirit. Jesus said that we must remain in the vine if we are to live by the spirit of the vine! Just throwing the end of the cord over by the outlet does not mean that power will flow through it.

I sometimes work as a carpenter to make a living when ministerial funds are low. As such, I have learned that my power cord must be plugged in if my power tools are going to work. What is frustrating at times is that I will plug the cord into what looks to be a perfectly good outlet but nothing happens! Okay, what is wrong now, is it that the power switch is off? Check it, no it's on. So where is the problem? Does it mean that all I believed about electricity was wrong? No, but the outlet might have corrosion in it, or the prongs may have become bent. The power may be in the outlet, but if good contact is not made, nothing will work until the contact is made.

Yelling at it won't fix it. Getting frustrated about it doesn't solve it. The problem must be detected and repaired. Simple isn't it?

When it comes to matters of the Spirit, letting go of those old troubling ideas of self-sufficiency is not easy. Selfism causes us more pain than can ever be described. Jesus said that we must lay down our life so that we can find it. The mind of the flesh will not transmit the power of the Spirit. It takes a renewed mind, the mind of the Spirit.

When the flow of power is not up to standard, something of the world is interfering. Why is covetousness so important that it is in the Ten Commandments? It is there because it stops the flow of divine energy into the vessels of the Lord. Covetousness is like a short that stops the flow of power! Many people have prayed and not received because it was for the benefit of the fulfillment of covetousness.

But how can it be wrong to want your bills paid? It's not. We are to be diligent in business; the word says so. For the Christian, however, God wants us to seek his kingdom as our first concern. He will add according to his purposes.

# Chapter Thirteen

## Make an Altar of Earth for Me

Make an altar of earth for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, your sheep and goats and your cattle. Wherever I cause my name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you. If you make an altar of stones for me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it. And do not go up to my altar on steps, lest your nakedness be exposed on it. (Ex. 20:24-26)

After God had given the Israelites the famous Ten Commandments, Moses and the people began to discuss what had just happened. The people were seized by fear as they saw the lightning and the mountain smoking, and heard the thunder, the trumpet blasting and then the voice of God. They then requested that Moses speak with God and report his words to them, because they were afraid that God would destroy them if he continued to manifest himself in this way.

Moses explained to them that the reason God had come to them in this manner was so they would fear him and not sin. The law was given to restrain the sinful nature of fallen humanity; however, it was not the answer to the sin problem.

Moses then ascended into the dark cloud and God spoke further to Moses, telling him once more not to make any kind of idol, but rather to make an altar of earth to sacrifice on. He further instructed him not to altar the stones in any way, and not to make steps to ascend upon, lest their nakedness be seen upon it.

I find in these instructions the principles of salvation beautifully symbolized. First, the building of the altar is human endeavor. It thus proceeded from the builder, and was an expression of who he was, each stone representing something of the builder.

I believe we have a picture here of a person building an altar that represents every aspect of his life. In a symbolic sense, he is the altar. Since the altar is built to make sacrifices to God, the stones could and should represent the builder's sins and shortcomings, but should also include his talent, accomplishments, and reputation. All earthiness in him should be represented by one of the stones in his altar. This is why it is an altar of earth because it represents earthiness!

We need to come to God because we are a part of a condemned race that began with Adam and Eve. We come to God seeking forgiveness of sins and restoration of fellowship. To do this we must build an altar consisting of all that pertains to who we are, not leaving anything out. What they did with stones, and an animal sacrifice, foreshadowed our coming to God humbling ourselves in prayer.

Once our altar has been built, we place an offering on it. The offering we need is like the offering Abraham was given when he was about to offer Isaac to God. When we come to God, we need an offering that is worthy so he will honor the altar and the sacrifice.

The story of Abraham is found in the book of Genesis and tells of how God asked Abraham to offer his son Isaac to him in sacrifice.

When Abraham obediently took Isaac to the spot designated and finished building his altar, he placed wood on it, bound Isaac and placed him on the wood. He was about to kill him when God stopped him. It was because Isaac was not an acceptable sacrifice, being himself part of Adam's fallen race.



The offering of Isaac was an expression of his unquestioning faith, but what was needed was a substitute sacrifice because, Isaac was not acceptable for redemptive purposes.

Isaac had come into Abraham's life as a result of his faith, and when he built his altar with stones representing all that he was, it had to include Isaac.

Isaac was a vital part of the expression of Abraham's obedience. God asked Abraham to offer Isaac but he was unacceptable as the offering. It was not his death that God wanted; it was putting even this part of who Abraham was into the building of the altar! Abraham thought that Isaac was the sacrifice, but he was only part of the process of committing all to the God he served. Abraham's faith too, had to be represented in the altar.

Isaac could not be the sacrifice because, he too was a sinner, and thus God would provide the acceptable sacrifice, a redemptive ram, representing Jesus the Lamb of God. This ram taught us the vital lesson of the meaning of a substitutionary sacrifice.

As we build our altars, we cannot leave anything out of its building. Every sinful way and inclination must be included. We then must add all the good deed we have done and even the expressions of our piety. We, like Abraham, would never think, on our own, that Isaac must be placed upon the altar of our worship to God, because; he was the outgrowth of faith, but he too had to be placed there, just as we must put all our accomplishments that have resulted from our faith into the making of the altar. We like Abraham, tend to put them on top of the wood thinking that because they are the products of our relationship with the Lord, they are an acceptable sacrifice. They are not acceptable because, they are a mix of some of us and some of God. What we produce through our faith walk is to some degree the result of something we have done, obedience, prayer, or witnessing. This mix disqualifies it as an acceptable part of the redemptive sacrifice. What we need is Jesus, and only Jesus will do as our sacrifice.

It is for this reason that we accept God's provision of a Lamb of his making as our substitute sacrifice. All we can do is build the altar, provide the wood—our faith, and acknowledge that all we are needs God's sacrifice to cover it. By faith in Jesus we offer his blood as our redemptive sacrifice to God because he alone is worthy. The blood he shed covers the altar running down over the stones, sanctifying and cleansing them.

The altar is not to be exalted; it is not a shrine, nor is it a place to be worshipped; it is a place where the redemptive work due to sin takes place. If we exalt it, we will have to ascend to it on a ladder or stairs, and then it will become a matter of pride, and our flesh is then exposed when we worship at it. Any public display of this sort of worship so that others may see it, is a fleshly manifestation and repulsive to God.

God told Moses not to exalt this altar because our nakedness would be seen when ascending to it. Nakedness in New Testament usage means to have your flesh showing. (In scriptural jargon that means your sin nature is being seen.) We as Christians need a covering, the righteousness of Jesus, to cover our tendency to manifest our fallen natures.

This altar is not a place of beauty, lest sinners go there and leave sinners. The effectiveness of the altar is in the ugliness of it. It is a place of total recognition that all we are is unworthy, thus humility finds expression in the admission of our need.

I wonder if God were to designate one place in town, as the only place where salvation is dispensed, and that place were the skid row mission, how many people would go there to receive salvation? Would it be to humiliating to associate with drunkards, prostitutes and drug addicts for them to bow at the same altar side by side with them? Yet, that is what we must do. We all go to the same place and build the same kinds of altars, if we are to receive eternal life. The place is the cross and we dare not make it to nice. The whole point is that the cross was never

intended to appeal to human pride. Human pride is part of what caused the cross to be necessary. It is part of the problem of sin.

God said, "If we alter the stones we place into the altar we defile them." It is our human natures to want to dress the stones so they will look better. When we sin, it is our nature to try to justify our actions. We do this by offering some plausible explanation, such as, "I do this because I have this unfulfilled need," or "I wanted to get along and be accepted by my peers." We use many such excuses for our wrong behavior, but when we come to God; excuses only defile the altar. Any attempt to make sin seem better or worse than it really is, comes from our sinful natures.

Some people like to embellish their testimonies of saving grace by trying to make their sinful lives seem worse than the reality. They do this for the "wow" affect, but it only defiles the altar they claim to have built. We must never place anything into the altar that is not totally honest. This is the time for honesty, no chiseling the truth! It is better to not give a testimony about your former self, than to chisel the truth concerning it!

There was a time in my life when I thought that I didn't have much of a testimony of saving grace. I never lived a worldly life, having been raised in church and taught the ways of the Lord. The church lifestyle was my cultural orientation, and I tried to live within that structure. I couldn't tell of drunken binges, bar room fights or any such sins. I wasn't a murderer or an adulterer, nor had I robbed anyone. What could I possibly tell that people would want to hear?

One day the Lord began to open my understanding revealing the sin nature that was very active in me, but not expressed in those sorts of actions. I began to understand that the hate I sometimes felt was as bad as an act of violence because, it sprung from my contaminated heart, the sin nature within.

I began to understand that the acting out of negative feelings is not the reason to need cleansing, but rather, the cleansing is needed to prevent the acting out. Sinful deeds spring from a heart that is out of touch with the power of God. It takes God's Holy Spirit to neutralize sinful desires in our hearts. I began to understand that the sin nature in me was capable of every kind of sin, and that I needed cleansing and redemption whether I had committed an act of sin or not.

I do not claim to have never committed any sins, quite the contrary, but I didn't understand that there are not little sins or big sins, but that sin is sin, even if it is only in the heart and mind.

Law deals with sins of actions, but Jesus Christ came teaching us a righteousness of the heart. He said, "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt 5:20)

The righteousness of the Pharisees was a strict outward form of religion. They weren't content with the commands of God; they added more laws increasing the burden upon the people who wished to comply so they might please God. None of these laws did anything to draw the hearts of the adherents closer to God, however.

When individuals find the practice of their religion beyond what is practical, burdensome laws only increase frustration and anger. The heart is left further from God, in a love relationship sense, because, the burden causes hardship, and pleasing God seems beyond them.

Jesus came proclaiming a religion of the heart that sees God as a loving father who always cares about the welfare of his children above all. If obedience to a law is contrary to the well being of the individual involved, then the law is negated by a higher purpose. This is love on God's part and since law proceeds from him, he is at liberty to apply it, or not to apply, it as a matter of his prerogative. Law is a constant that applies indiscriminately in every situation unless, for some exceptional reason, it is negated for a brief time by circumstance where love or

the safety of the community is at stake. The righteous application of love transcends all other laws, but is normally defined by the law.

The illustration I like to give is that the law of gravity is a constant, however; the law of thrust can be greater. When the law of trust is greater than gravity, objects move away from the surface of the earth, but once the law of gravity becomes greater, objects return to the surface of the earth. The law of gravity is always there, it is just transcended briefly by the law of trust.

So it is with all of God's laws. The welfare of man is what determines what is right and wrong and in some isolated cases, some laws may be suspended for a time. Normally, however, because man has a sinful heart he needs guidelines and boundaries so that his behavior is not dependent upon what is right in his own eyes. True righteousness proceeds from God, thus knowing him is vital to pleasing him.

This concept set Jesus at variance with the Pharisees and teachers of the law. They made no exceptions to keeping the law and were constantly watching Jesus for some kind of violation. He was accused of violating the law of the Sabbath when he healed a man on the Sabbath. Likewise, his disciples were accused of working on the Sabbath when they plucked grain because they were hungry. Jesus pointed out their inconsistency by speaking of an ox falling into a pit on the Sabbath. Even a Pharisee would pull him out, never mind the Sabbath! Jesus also explained the purpose of the Sabbath was not to be a burden to people but rather a blessing.

God is interested in true worship of the heart that emanates from love. Building an altar speaks of clearing away the interference with that relationship.

Understanding that God is completely for us is vital to a good love relationship. If we see God as an unbending legalist who is only concerned with our obedience, we are no different from the Pharisees and teachers of the law of Jesus' day.

The altars that God wants built of uncut stones is for the benefit of the builder, so the sacrifice upon it must be the acceptable one, faith in Jesus Christ and what he did for us when he became the Lamb of God, the sin sacrifice for the world. This is the acceptable sacrifice, the only acceptable sacrifice.

# Chapter Fourteen

## Laws Concerning Other Important Matters

### Slaves

Exodus 21:1-9

God gave Moses laws about many things and one of the subjects dealt with had to do with having slaves. This could seem reprehensible to us because we live in a culture that has rejected having slaves as immoral. Yet, God spoke to Moses about slaves immediately after talking to him about building altars of uncut stones.

The idea that an individual might have someone as a possession is repugnant to us, but in the day that God called Israel out of Egypt, free people commonly held slaves. The Israelites themselves had been slaves in Egypt, and evidently didn't find this unusual. They did however, resent bad treatment.

In the culture of that day, being a slave made gainful employment possible for people who would otherwise be unemployed. There were times when the reason people had slaves was the result of a war, and the slaves were the defeated people who were given the privilege of living in exchange for their service. All others were killed in the battle. There were cases where there was a humanitarian element to having slaves, as the owner was responsible to maintain the living of his slaves.

In America, the idea of having slaves is particularly distasteful because we went through an ugly period of history as a result of people having slaves. I don't have direct understanding of the subject as my family never had slaves, none of us were slaves, nor did we know people who had them. It does seem to me that a lot of problems surrounding the whole subject in America had to do with how it was that people were taken into slavery. The slave traffickers that went into communities and took people captive for the express purpose of transporting them to someone as a slave, doesn't fit the subject addressed in the law God gave Moses.

The circumstances that brought people into this sort of life referred to in the law were somewhat different. On occasions, it was because someone had fallen upon hard times and as a result had accumulated debts greater than they were able to pay. Becoming a slave was a way of settling the account. It was for this reason that the practice was not totally condemned, but God established some guidelines that they were to obey. No Hebrew slave was to be held indefinitely, six years was the limit. After a man had served for six years, he was to be released as a free man. Sometimes, during that time period, the slave-master might give the man a wife and they may also have children. If the man upon serving his time as a slave says that he loves his master, wife and children he is then taken to the elders of the people and then his ear is pierced, making the slave the permanent property of his master, being witnessed by the elders. If he wants his freedom he must leave alone without his wife and children, as they are the property of the master.

Later in New Testament writings, the authors of several of the books referred to themselves as servants of Jesus Christ. This relationship was voluntary on the part of the participants, and reflected an attitude of willingness to serve.

There is a more pertinent teaching regarding slavery in the New Testament, however; it is being slaves to sin. Perhaps the reason God didn't condemn the practice in the Old Testament was because; being slaves is part of the condition of the fallen world in which we live.

There are various forms of slavery the Bible talks about besides being a physical slave of someone. One of those is being in debt. When we are in someone's debt we are servants of that person in whatever way they wish to use that advantage over us.

As the Lord's freemen we should be very cautious about allowing ourselves to become indebted to people. The Lord wants his people to be his servants, and if we are the servants of others, we are not totally free to be the Lord's servant. The more divided our loyalties, the less able we are to fulfill them.

One area that is particularly being used by the world system to enslave people is credit. Credit buying is a trap that many people find themselves in. When credit is used in a purchase, the only real benefit is to the lender. The buyer gets what he wants now, but paying later is at a price. Sometimes buying now makes good sense, but most credit buying is an unnecessary expense for the consumer. Cash buying makes much better sense, because the purchaser is able to get more goods and services for less in the long run, thus his standard of living improves as time and diligence pay off.

The most important application of the principle is found in the subject of sin. Those who indulge in sin become slaves to sin. This is true of the use of addictive substances, and it is true of forbidden areas of thought and deed.

Once a sin is committed, the individual is then in a position of either confessing his sin and thus bearing the reproach that comes with that knowledge, or he must try to hide his sin. Many people chose to hide their sin, and thus become the victim of having to live a life of deceit.

Sin has a way of weaving a web that binds the soul of its victims. Once a person yields to the tempter, he is on his way to a life of hell. Every sin is like poison in the soul and often results in sickness of both spirit and body.

Sin brings torment, even to the person who feels they are having fun, or successfully hiding their sin. Peace is the proper condition of the soul for health to be experienced in one's body. Sin is interference because it causes unnecessary stress that leads to anxiety that leads to mental and emotional distress. Every violation of the way of peace is an open invitation to stress. Stress is now considered to be the number one contributor to the conditions that lead to disease.

Jesus came to bring us life. Not natural life, but rather spiritual life. When spiritual life is fully embraced, natural life often is affected in a way that results in health and strength. Always spiritual life results in peace of heart and mind, optimism based on faith in God's love and grace towards us, and happiness and joy based on the knowledge of the presence of the Holy Spirit. At this point, all the hurts and wounds of the past are now a distant memory because we left them at the cross with the load of sin, sinful ideas and attitudes.

We have a new master now, but he is not a slave-master, he is our savior, bridegroom, friend, and Lord. We are slaves to him because it is our choice and love gift to such a wonderful Lord. He does not lord it over us, but we lovingly obey his every wish.

## Multiple Marriages

Exodus 21:10-11

At the time of the writing of the law, multiple marriages were common. Men often had more than one wife, which God allowed. Sometimes these women were slaves or servants and the masters would also be husbands to them. They were regarded as having less privilege than a wife of choice. Men were not permitted to treat any woman badly by abandoning her once this relationship had begun. The man was then responsible for whatever woman he took to himself and was to always give her what was needed in her life. If he married others, she was not to have to live on less.

Again, this seems almost bazaar to our minds in a society that embraces the principle of one wife, one husband. Israel abandoned the practice of polygamy in later years, and most of the world has followed their example and teachings, and indeed the teachings of the New Testament.

In the Old Testament practice we see the bride of Christ foreshadowed where he is the bridegroom of this multiple member bride of Christ called the church. No matter how many are brought into the church, the love he has for each person always remains the same. He never diminishes the love and care of one person as a result of the love he has for others. Every person finds him a constant companion, always there for them whenever they need or want him. Men were limited in their abilities to fulfill the obligatory rights of wives. This limited them in how many they could have because of economic considerations as well as other social limitations. Once a relationship was initiated, a man had a moral responsibility to the woman of his choice. She had an obligation of faithfulness to him. She was not permitted to seek out other lovers. As long as this practice was observed there was no danger of the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Unwanted children were never a problem because in their society the more they had the better. As the earth has become more populated and economic conditions have changed, so have the rules of marriage had to change. What was permitted under law is not practical in a populated world.

When Jesus came to Israel the picture and foreshadowing lessons were complete. Now humanity, instead of approaching the spiritual lessons drawn for the marital union of the bridegroom who was capable of loving multiple wives, now the picture was of a bride devoted to one husband.

We are now in the relationship of single love for one lover, both in the natural and in the spiritual. We embrace one spouse, and one Lord. Any duplicity in either of these relationships is a contamination, and therefore an affront to purity. Those who would be pure in heart and spirit must abide faithful in their relationship of love.

Even unmarried persons should be single in their pursuit of potential married partners. That is to say, date one person, consider whether this is the person you wish to spend the rest of your life with, if not, break it off and then open yourself to another prospective love. Those who do not act in this way but shop around, always looking for a better prospect even while on a date, find this tendency follows into the marriage relationship. Marriage intimacy requires singleness of love and attention.

The age of the law was focused upon God's love for Israel, therefore what was permitted was in the spirit of the bridegroom; the age of the church is the bride era, the rules are bride related. This is of the Lord and we abide in the spirit of this relationship.

The world is tampering with this concept and the result is confusion, hurt, loneliness, abandonment, disease and a host of social and economic complications.

## **Violence and Murder**

Exodus 21:12-27

Anger is a normal emotion, but it can lead to violent actions when allowed to go unchecked. The New Testament scriptures teach us that anger should be dealt with; not allowing it to go beyond one day. We are told that we should not let the sun go down on our wrath. Medical science now knows that anger is a negative emotion that interferes with the healthy functions of our bodies.

As humans live their lives, they are constantly encountering other humans who have desires that sometimes interfere with their desires. As these contrary desires collide, anger is the response normally felt. “Why are you doing that,” or “you can’t do that,” or “that’s mine, leave it alone,” are normal reactions.

Civilized societies have had to establish rules governing how people relate to one another, therefore; God gave instructions to Moses and the people of Israel concerning how they were to conduct themselves in heated situations. People will have different opinions and sometimes these differences will lead to very emotional confrontations.

One point of conflict was in the area of slaves and slave-masters. Slave-masters owned the slave. They were his property. The value of a slave was calculated in the same way one would calculate the value of an animal. The way a slave was treated was much like one would treat an animal, however; slaves weren’t animals. God recognized the condition of slavery, but put limitations on how a slave-master could treat a slave. Although he was allowed to use force against them, as in beatings, he was not allowed to kill a slave. If he did, he was to be punished.

Violence in human relationships is as old as the story of Cain and Able in the book of Genesis. Men are prone to settle differences of opinion in a physical way. Fighting is, therefore; addressed in the law. Fighting is one thing, but doing someone permanent damage is another. Fighting was allowed, but injuries that went beyond what would heal were not allowed. Men were held responsible if the person they were fighting lost any body part as a result of the conflict. They were to pay, eye for an eye, or tooth for a tooth, but as long as the opponent healed, the person who did the damage was not held accountable.

All of this may seem a little too liberal for our liking in the time in which we live. We have laws that protect people and their property, and any form of violence outside a legitimate sports event is considered illegal. In our society we try to control the urges to inflict pain upon one another, but the Bible recognizes that sometimes physical pain is needed to settle differences of opinion.

Parents know that pain is needed in a well-ordered family when children do not wish to do what they are instructed to do. We are learning to use positive reinforcement as an alternative to pain, pain, pain, and this is good, but some pain is still needed in some situations or the child will soon become the authority in the home. Under law, anyone who attacked or cursed his parents was to be put to death!

Kidnapping was also punishable by death.

All these laws that God gave Moses and the Israelites were to control the fallen sin natures and to define what righteousness is like. It is because sinful men take advantage of one another that we need laws to govern. Boundaries must be established and defended if any society is to survive, because, human nature has become self-centered. Sin in the heart of people causes them to want to reach beyond the borders of their proper domain and control what belong to others. Trying to control violence is needed, but the elimination of it altogether probably is not practical. Therefore, God allowed for violence, but within prescribed limits.

As New Testament Christians who are learning to live in the Spirit, we are finding less and less need for violence in any form in our personal life. Christ has come to bring us salvation and most violence occurs as a result of the fallen nature within us.

As Christians, we have been instructed to deem the fallen nature dead, and to live by the Spirit who brings us peaceful natures filling us with the love of God. Jesus taught us to give to those who ask of us, and to go a second mile with those who demand a mile of us. He taught us to forgive, forgive and forgive, to seventy times seven times. These and other such teachings are intended to minimize the need for violence between people. We are taught that, in certain circumstances, we are to turn the other cheek when struck.

There still may be times when violence is needed, but it will not come from our fallen natures. Times of war come and demand that borders be defended, people are sometime attack by muggers or rapists, homes are broken into, and such like, may demand action, sometimes violent actions. These acts are considered self-defense and are both legal and moral.

## **Owners of Bulls**

Exodus 21:28-36

An owner of a bull was responsible for the behavior of his bull. If the bull gored someone and the person died, the bull was to be killed and the meat was not to be eaten. If the bull demonstrated violent traits, and the owner didn't take proper care to insure the safety of people, and the bull killed someone both the bull and the owner were subject to the death penalty. The owner was allowed to offer payment in lieu of his life, and if accepted, just the bull would be killed.

For a lot of people today, the question is not about bulls so much as pets. Keeping violent animals as pets is not a righteous thing to do unless proper precautions are taken to insure the safety of others.

Respect for one another seems to be the spirit of the law. It doesn't matter what the relationship of the injured person is to the owner of the animal, child, slave or friend, the law provided protection from unruly animals as well as people.

God wants people to live well ordered lives and what was true under law is still morally correct even though we don't live under these laws.

## **About Thieves**

Exodus 22:1-9

Stealing someone's property, animals, or failing to look after the goods someone has put in his care could result in serious consequences. If someone was caught breaking into someone's



property, and the owner killed him in the process of defending his property, the owner was not guilty of murder. If it was discovered that someone had stolen an animal, killed it, and sold the meat. He had to pay restitution, five cows for one, or four lambs for one. If he didn't have anything to pay restitution with, he was to be sold as a slave.

God does not want people to take advantage of one another, but rather, to care about each other, and to respect their property and treat it as they would treat their own. They were to keep their flocks off someone else's land, and out of their fields. If their animals got into someone else's field, they were to pay for what they ate. If they started a fire that spread into someone's field, they were to pay for what the fire burned.

Many of our laws today have roots the law that God gave Moses. The Law of Moses, being God inspired, was capable of settling all normal disputes.

If an occasion arose where two individuals both claimed the same property, they were instructed to bring their case before the elders and have the matter judged. The degree to which this system worked well was dependent upon the honesty and integrity of the elders. When those in leadership were corrupt, the poor of the land always were the ones who suffered. God is without a doubt on the side of the weak, the widow, the orphan, and those who cannot speak for themselves. God expects every man to live honorably with his neighbor.

### **Misc. Laws and Decrees**

Exodus 22:10-23:13

The Lord spoke to Moses about various situations in which the Israelites would have to turn to law for answers to their problems. He gave them instructions to settle disputes so they could live peacefully with their neighbors.

Some of these laws had to do with property, and some of them had to do with sexual matters. For example sex with animals was forbidden, a practice of the heathens.

Capital punishment was prescribed for some violations, sorcery, sexual perversion, adultery, murder, and idolatry.

They were not to mistreat aliens or widows. God was always concerned for the weak members of their society.

When someone had to borrow from his neighbor, they were not permitted to charge interest. And if the borrower gave a cloak as a pledge, the lender was to return it by sunset so the borrower would not be cold at night.

Jesus summed up the law by saying that, loving our neighbor as ourselves was the fulfillment of the law.

They were forbidden to blaspheme God or cursed the king.

They were to give to God from their granaries, and to dedicate their first-born sons to the Lord. They were to also give the first-born of their animals to the Lord.

They were not to eat meat of an animal killed by another animal.

They were not to spread false reports, or to help a wicked man by being a malicious witness. They were not to side with a crowd in wrongdoing.

They were not to side with the poor or deny them justice.

If they saw a donkey fall under a load that belonged to someone who hated them, they were to assist the man with the animal.

Every seventh year they were to let their fields lie fallow. And they were to plant and harvest observing the Sabbath day.

# Chapter Fifteen

## Holidays or Feasts

### Exodus 14

As the nation of Israel was receiving their form of government from God, they also were given instructions concerning national holidays called feasts. First was the Feast of Unleavened bread or Passover. The second one was called the Feast of Harvest at the beginning of the harvest season when they would bring the firstfruits of the crops to the Lord' house. Then they would celebrate the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the harvest season.

### Passover

When the Israelites were preparing to leave the nation of Egypt, God instructed Moses to instruct the Israelites about commemorating this great day annually. Every year in the month of Abib beginning with twilight of the fourteenth day and continuing for seven days, they were to celebrate a week of commemoration. During this week the only bread they were to eat was to be unleavened bread.

They were to bring the firstborn of all their animals as well as substitutionary sacrifices of lambs for each first born son. Even male donkeys were not exempt but because they were not acceptable sacrifice animals, a substitute lamb must be brought. If the donkey was not considered worth the lamb, they were to break the donkey's neck, killing it. This was done so they would always remember the mighty way God brought them out of Egypt. This was in honor of the night that all the firstborn in Egypt were killed by the death angel that passed through the land. Only households that had the blood of their sacrifice lamb on the doorposts and lentil would be spared. This was always a major holiday season in the nation of Israel.

During this week they were to observe a sacred assembly on the first day and do no ordinary work, and also on the seventh day. It was a week of commemoration and was followed by a wave offering on the day after the Sabbath signaling the beginning of the harvest of that year. Another special day followed fifty days later the feast of Pentecost that was prophetic of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

These were important days and dates because they were prophetic in nature. The Passover spoke of the crucifixion of Jesus the real Lamb of God. The wave offering of firstfruits spoke of the resurrection of Jesus on the first day of the week, also referred to as the eighth day, and the feast of Pentecost fifty days later, speaking of the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit. All the sacrifices made to God were symbolic of some phase of the sacrifice of Jesus and in fact, of God—that is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who were all involved in some way in the sacrifice of Jesus.

### Day of Atonement

Once a year the Israelites gathered for the Day of Atonement. It was to be observed from the evening of the ninth day of the seventh month until the evening of the tenth day. It was a very special day because on it atonement was made for all Israel.

The blood of the sacrifices played an important role on the Day of Atonement because it was by the blood of the atoning sacrifice that spiritual cleansing took place. Everything the blood touched would become ceremonially clean. Everything that had to do with worship to God had

to be sprinkled with the blood, the altar, the tabernacle, the articles of furniture and even the garments of the priests; all must be cleansed by the blood. The reason for this was that the blood spoke of the coming sacrifice of Jesus, whose blood alone could atone for the sins of humanity.

All of this was being done as a picture of the coming salvation. Jesus was coming to do the ultimate work of redemption and all of the sacrifices, feasts, and special days were looking forward to his coming. The tabernacle that they built with all its furnishings was also symbolic of the person, life and ministry of Jesus.

Before Aaron and his sons could perform their priestly duties in behalf of the people, they had to bring their own offerings for sin so they could be atoned for making them ceremonially clean to do their priestly duties in behalf of the people.

Sin is resident in the hearts of all people as a result of the fall of Adam and Eve. All people lack the spirit of eternal life before they come to Jesus, and therefore they need him to impart life. This life can only be imparted as a result of a connection of faith being established whereby the life of Jesus is able to flow into the needy recipient. Faith is like an extension cord that reaches from our need to the source of life in heaven where Jesus is sitting at the right hand of the Father. The spirit of life flows through the faith connection that exists as a result of the redemptive work he did for us in his death on the cross.

By faith we are sprinkled, as it were, with the blood of Jesus making us ceremonially clean so we can come to the Father to have fellowship with him. We are not clean on our own, because all have sinned and fall short of God's glory. No righteous act on our part has even one ounce of ability to atone for our sins. Only faith in Jesus can bring salvation to us.

In the worship at the tabernacle great emphasis was placed on the blood, everything was cleansed by it, and without it nothing was ceremonially clean. Whenever the priests went before God, they carried the blood of a sacrifice because no priestly duty was acceptable without the blood.

This is important to understand because humanity has this sinful desire to be self-sufficient. We want to do something on our own to make atonement for our sins and therefore there are religions that accommodate that desire. They teach some method of balancing the account so more righteous acts are on credit to them than sins. If they do enough good they think they can afford some sin because they have offsetting righteousness. The Bible teaches us that no amount of offsetting good can atone for even one sin. All men need the perfect sinless sacrifice provided to us by God himself in the person of Jesus Christ to atone for our sins.

The Day of Atonement was to remind the nation of Israel that they had an ongoing need for cleansing. Sin still being resident in their hearts made this necessary.

Despite their faithfulness to the performance of their religion, the nation of Israel failed to understand how dependent they were upon God. Pride flourished in their hearts and the sense of self-reliance was blight on their souls. They failed to understand the symbolism of what they did only seeing the historic aspects of it without considering the prophetic dimension of their religious activity. They seemed to think that the only reason sacrifices were necessary was to appease God, a heathen attitude.

Sacrifices were never to appease God, but rather to enable sinful man to come to a righteous God. The justice of God demands that the soul that sins must die, but God in his love provided the means of reconciliation, first in the sacrifices and then in the permanent sacrifice of Jesus Christ for all lost souls once and for all. Animal sacrifices are no longer necessary because Jesus paid the debt for us all. Now all that is needed is to establish the faith connection with him that appropriates all the benefits his sacrifice provides.

# Chapter Sixteen

## Sacrifices

### Burnt Offerings

Leviticus 1

Israel had several sacrifices that they offered for various reasons. The most important one to God was the burnt offering, because it symbolized the need and desire of the offerer to totally commit himself to God. In this ceremony the entire sacrifice, usually a bull, a lamb or a dove by the poor, was offered to God.

When an offering was brought before God, it was to be presented to him at the entrance to the tabernacle and must be without blemish. The reason the offering was needed was to atone for the offerer and therefore must be the best he could offer. He was to lay his hands on the head of the offering so it would be accepted in his stead. It was to be killed and the blood sprinkled on all sides of the altar and at the entrance to the tabernacle. It was to be skinned and cut into pieces and the inner parts washed with water. They were to arrange wood on the altar and place the entire sacrifice on the wood and burn all of it including the head.

Wherever the head is mentioned it is significant, we are never totally committed unto God until we give him access to our thought processes and surrender our wills to him. In some cases the only mention of the head is in the laying on of hands, which was an act of transfer, once done, the animal represented the person giving the sacrifice. The animal was then standing in the place of the offerer. This was then a substitutionary sacrifice.

Today in the Christian church the picture is reversed. We sometimes lay hands on people for various needs and pray for them. When we do that, standing as a member of the body of Christ, we are in essence giving that person the benefit of the sacrifice offered in their behalf by Jesus. We are in that case participating in the priestly ministry of Jesus, standing in his stead. When this is done with understanding and accompanied with faith, it is a means whereby the needy person can appropriate the power of Christ into the area of need in his/her life. Ignorance of what is being done can lead to a disappointing experience, being only seen as a ritual.

In preparation for a burnt offering the offerer would bring his offering to the tent of the meeting or tabernacle and present it there before the Lord. He would lay his hands on its head making it a representation of him and then he would kill it. The priests would then take the blood and sprinkle it upon all sides of the altar. The bullock would be cut into pieces and the inward parts and the inside of the legs would be washed with water. They would then arrange wood on the fire of the altar, and burn the entire offering to the Lord.

The burnt offering is the offering God respects most because it represents a total commitment of the offerer unto God. The offering could be a bullock, a male lamb, a goat, or a turtledove in the case of the offerer being very poor. All were equally acceptable to God because it was the heart of the offerer that God regarded.

The day would come when God the Father would offer his one and only Son, Jesus, who would be the fulfillment of what the burnt offering represented as he lived his life in a totally committed manner to the will of the Father.

When we approach God, we are first introduced to the sin offering or the guilt offering. Because we are lost in sin, we need the redemptive sacrifices and then progress to the fellowship

sacrifices that enable us to fellowship with the body of Christ and his church. This offering is also a thank offering, and appropriately so, as our sins have been atoned for. Afterward, we need the grain offering that speaks of Jesus our bread of life. Then lastly we come to the burnt offering, but when God presented these offerings to Moses he presented them in the reverse order with the burnt offering being of greatest importance from his point of view, and therefore it was placed first. God always looks at the goal first and then sets out to get us to that point. Paul spoke of the mark of the high calling in Christ Jesus to which he strove. We look at our initial need as being of primary importance, but God looks at the finished product as being of primary importance. If we were to list the sacrifices, we would of necessity reverse the order to the way that God presented them!

## **Grain Offerings**

### Leviticus 2

Christ Jesus, God made flesh and dwelt among us, declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35)

The grain offering was an offering that looked forward to the coming of Christ Jesus speaking of his life as the bread of life to all who receive him. The Israelites brought their grain from their fields to God and presented it to him in offering. The priests would offer a part of it to God and the rest was to be eaten by the priests.

There was a practical dimension to the sacrifice as it was part of God's provision for the priests and their families, but there was a spiritual dimension as well. They were to take a portion of their grain offering and grind it into fine flour, put oil on it and add incense to it, thus preparing it to be burned on the altar.

Jesus came as the bread of life, and the word made flesh and dwelling among us. His words and the stories of his deeds are food for our souls. We come to him to be nurtured by his words, but more importantly, we receive his words as one receives his necessary food.

When the Israelites came to God with their grain offering, it was in recognition of God who gave them the harvest. It was part of their worship to God and it was part of God's provision for the priests. Those who labor at the altar are permitted to eat from the altar so long as they remain ceremonially clean. What was brought to the altar was sanctified by the blood of the sacrifices, and was in certain specified cases, given partly to God on the altar and partly to the priests for their food portion.

We see this today in Christian churches in the form of offerings brought to the various ministries. Some of the tithe and offerings go the maintenance of the ministry in the payment of expenses, and part goes to the salaries of those who labor in the ministry. Those who labor in the ministry are sanctified to receive their livings from the altar, but abusing that privilege results in judgment.

In the church world, we have seen some ministers going beyond a reasonable standard of living and have immersed themselves in luxuries that were received from the sacrificial giving of God's people. Whereas, God blesses the giver who gives to the Lord sacrificially, the minister who abuses the gift places him self in jeopardy of being judged.

Some justify their actions thinking they are doing God a service by receiving the gifts because, this enables God to bless the giver, which it does, but the receiver will be judged on the basis of stewardship of what was entrusted to him. God is not frugal, but neither does he justify

wantonness. I believe that God is more than generous with those he loves, but greed is always condemned.

It is our fallen nature that builds Babylons. In the book of Revelations chapter eighteen is a description of a city named Babylon. As is the case with much of what is revealed in Revelations, there is a lot of symbolism in the description. Those reading this passage about all its luxuries have wondered which city this could be? New York? London? Rome?

Chapter seventeen is believed by some to be Rome, but is this the same city in chapter eighteen? Both are called Babylon, yet they seem to be different.

As is the case throughout the book, God is seen judging two areas, apostate religion, and apostate government. Both flow from the fallen nature of humanity. Chapter seventeen seems to be dealing with apostate religion, whereas chapter eighteen is a picture of the more secular side of the fallen nature.

In the description in chapter eighteen, we see the habitation of demons, and we see fowl and unclean birds. It is the fallen nature of man that provides a natural habitat for demons, and the unclean birds are symbolic of the lofty but unclean thoughts that fly through the mind of carnal man.

What he enjoys, lusts after, and if possible, amasses are seen in the rest of the description. It is the fallen nature that is polluted by every kind of uncleanness, and it is the fallen nature that builds Babylons. Wherever the wealth is available and the political climate will allow, man will build his Babylon. Some of these are quite elaborate, and others are more modest but all flow from the heart of one that is self-seeking and loves this present world.

It is interesting to me that when we read the description of Babylon and then the description of the heavenly city Jerusalem, that some of the same materials appear in both descriptions. We find gold and precious stones in both, but in Babylon they are wealth, and in Jerusalem they are building materials. In Babylon gold is in the pockets or worn as ornaments, but in Jerusalem gold is what the streets are paved with.

In other words, in Jerusalem gold is under the feet of the overcomer, not in his bank account or in his money clip. I'm afraid that if the occupants of Babylon were to ever get into Jerusalem they would dig up all the streets and pull all the stones out of the foundations! Greed is that way; it wants to hoard to itself, but the nature that comes from God uses wealth to build the city of God.

When we bring our offerings to God, we are expressing our submission of heart to the principle of stewardship seeing what we have as first being God's and then ours by his permission. It is important to all Christians to recognize God's claim to wealth, thereby keeping our hearts right, and free of covetousness and possessiveness. Wealth and power corrupt the hearts of men, but submission to God brings healing and deliverance.

Looking at the offering as it is described in Leviticus chapter two, we see some interesting characteristics that speak to us of Christ the one to whom the grain offering pointed. First we see that when the grain offering was prepared into edible form, it was to be ground into fine flour, and have oil poured over it, and was to be prepared without yeast. All grain offerings prepared to be eaten were to have salt added to them.

Now let's look at what we have here, the grinding of the grain speaks of the sufferings of Christ. The breaking or grinding is a necessary part of the preparation of a man of God, whether Jesus or his ministers. In the case of Jesus it was not something that he personally needed, but rather it was the result of his answer to the call to be the sin sacrifice for the world. It was the very nature of the role into which he came that demanded his participation in the affairs of

humanity, but due to the very wickedness he came to atone for, contact with it resulted in grief, sorrow and pain. How often it is the case, not only for Jesus, but anyone who sets out to help others, that the very ones they try to help turn on them inflicting pain or bringing great disappointment as they fail to appropriate the blessings offered to them.

Then there was the oil that was poured over the sacrifice, symbolic of the Holy Spirit who comes to the man of God making what is being prepared ready for consumption. It took the oil to make the fine flour into an edible form, just as it takes the Holy Spirit to make the word of God spiritually understandable and applicable. Jesus was the Word or Logos made into fleshly form, but it took his living, teachings and deeds to make it understandable. He came in answer to all the prophecies of the Old Testament, but they were not understood until the Holy Spirit made the applications known to the disciples after the day of Pentecost. He came as the Teacher who would lead into all truth.

Next we see the incense that was also brought as a part of the grain offering. Incense stands for the prayers of the people. When the offering was brought, a portion of it was to be burned and the rest was for the consumption of the priests. The incense however, was only added to the part that was to be burned. All the incense was then added to the offering to be put on the fire of the altar because prayers go exclusively to God, not man. This is a lesson that should be taught to all that pray to saints, Mary or any other person living or dead. We are taught to pray to the Father in the name of Jesus who alone is our mediator and advocate. All the incense is for God alone and is identified as being prayers in Revelations 5:8, "Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."

The nation of Israel often sinned in later years in offering incense to idols and using it in other improper ways, bringing judgment upon them. We are to put our trust in God and express that trust in prayer, this is pleasing to God.

## **Fellowship Offering**

### Leviticus 3

The next offering presented to Moses was the fellowship offering. It was what its name implies. In the fellowship offering we find a part that is for the Lord and the rest is for the priests and anyone who is ceremonially clean. This offering was an animal without defect and could be combined with the grain offering and the drink offering rounding out a holy meal in the presence of the Lord. To be ceremonially clean there was of necessity a sprinkling of the blood making the participants ceremonially clean. In the case of the offering being a thank offering there was also along with the cakes of fine flour made without yeast, some that contained yeast. Yeast symbolized sin, and therefore was made without yeast when offered as a grain offering to the Lord, but since the people were not yet free of sin, the yeast was also a part of the thank offering. (Lev. 11:7-15)

Always the part that represented the coming Lord Jesus and the ministry of the Holy Spirit was to be free of yeast, or as the KJV put it, leaven. What represents Jesus must be holy, because he is holy. Holy in this sense means without a trace of sin. In the thank offering, the grain represented the blessings the Lord had bestowed upon the people and was the produce of their fields. Since it was representative of their wealth, it was to be made with yeast.

Fellowship is a wonderful thing, and especially when it is around the table of the Lord. Christians have a very special form of fellowship because it is pure when sanctified by the blood

of Jesus. When the fellowship offering was being made, the priests had to apply the blood of the sacrifice they were making, to the circumstance of the fellowship offering. What keeps fellowship pure is the presence of the Lord!

When the Holy Spirit ordains a circumstance, it will always be pure. The Holy Spirit never initiates wrong relationships. Even if a relationship begins with the Holy Spirit, and later some other spirit gets involved, as in a wrong sexual connotation, the participants changed from yielding to the Holy Spirit, and a different spirit entered to picture. Since the sin nature is always present, it is important to always sanctify every form of relationship with the consciousness of the blood of Jesus and a conscious effort to act, think, and be in the Spirit of Holiness. (Especially where it involves people of the opposite sex, and especially if the individuals are of similar age and/or have a history of promiscuous behavior.)

Circumstances of life vary and opportunities for wrong relationships abound. Whether we are talking about some church event or any event of life, we should always protect every encounter by bringing the Holy Spirit into the conversation as quickly as possible by speaking of Jesus, church or some other identifying subject that precludes any wrong impressions. Nipping bad thoughts at the start is the best way to deal with any potential temptation.

## **Guilt or Sin Offerings**

### Leviticus 4

Burnt, grain, and drink offerings were a vital part of the worship of the nation of Israel. Sometimes they were offered in special days of dedication, ordination, or at other times when there was a national crisis or personal need. Once a year they brought their sin offering on the Day of Atonement when the priests offered an offering in behalf of all the people. There were also those occasions when people sinned unintentionally; therefore, they brought special sin offerings to the Lord. In other words temptation overtook them in some matter and they fell into sin, but it was not the thing they wanted in their lives, so they brought a sin offering to clear the matter before the Lord.

Sin is a condition of heart when our attitude and actions have gone from what is righteous to what is unrighteous. We all have appetites and desires and these are mostly God given and are meant to enrich our lives.

As God's created children, we are able to do interesting and challenging things and to learn and apply knowledge in a variety of ways. It is the business of Satan to pervert the flow of energy from positive endeavors to negative and destructive endeavors.

Temptation is the condition when the positive energy that God has given in an area of life is being misdirected by some idea or object that is forbidden either by commandment or by common knowledge.

Regardless of environmental influences, sin is still sin even if it is only a feeling of wanting to be independent of divine controls. The nation of Israel had left Egypt and entered a wilderness that was pure environmentally of objects or influences that could distract them from serving the Lord. They were, however, drawn into evil by their desires and memories, tempting them to desire what they had experienced in Egypt. The only temptations that were visually or tangibly present were in the areas of contact with one another.

In other words, there were no pubs to go to, no porn shops, no dope pushers, none of the types of temptations we think of today. What there was, however, was a condition of hearts that caused them to lust, covet, sneak, steal, or deceive for personal gain.



I think of the story of Jacob's son's who were out in the fields watching their father's flocks when Joseph witnessed them doing something that was wrong. We are not told what it was that they were doing, but since drugs or tobacco weren't a part of their environment, and since they weren't around other people, what could it have been?

I once knew a lady who had been a part of the world of mysticism and she told us that some people look at the clouds in the sky to get direction from the spirit world, different formations meaning different things. Some people look at tea leaves or invent other means of trying to tap into the realm of mystical powers.

I am convinced that one could be sitting all alone on the top of Mt. Everest and commit a sin. How could this be? Doesn't sin involve someone or something else? We may be all alone, in an environment that is sterile of external temptations, but we still have minds and hearts that either flow in submissive love for God, or in self-will and rebellious independence. Anytime a person is in a rebellious selfish frame of mind; he is outside fellowship with God. It is this arena of selfism that is the soil of sin. Satan loves to sow the weeds of sinful fantasies into vulnerable minds and lead them down the path to sinful behaviors. Whenever possible he will use others to exploit the vulnerabilities of the weak.

Gambling is a current issue in many states in the USA today. Here in California at the time of this writing, there is a ballot issue that if past will allow Native American Indians to have casinos on their tribal lands. We are being inundated with ads on television about all the benefits it will bring to the tribes because the revenues can be used to improve the life styles of the Indians. Lost in the discussion is the fact that the reason gambling is so lucrative is that it exploits the greed and vulnerability in people that are sinful. It's a sin to exploit the weaknesses of vulnerable people especially for gain.

Sinful hearts are hearts full of destructive desires, modes, attitudes and thoughts. God calls these into account by the dealings of the Holy Spirit as the light of truth shines upon the deeds that are evil. Conviction of sin comes from God, and the realization of the need for a redemptive sacrifice comes upon us.

God's answer to Israel's need for redemption was the sin sacrifice. Because the work of Satan is so subtle, God provided a sacrifice for unintentional sins. Sinning unintentionally has to do with being overcome with temptation in a way that is not our accepted lifestyle.

Sin is a serious matter with God. Sin has caused a breach in our relationship with God. God being a holy God cannot allow for disobedience. Disobedience is a sin and the soul that sins must die.

The sin sacrifice was a temporary fix in the relationship of an individual and the nation. The blood of bulls, goats, lambs or turtledoves could not atone for sin. God accepted them temporarily however, until Jesus came and made the all-sufficient sacrifice of his life by his shed blood, atoning for all who were obedient in the making of sacrifices, and all who would believe on him in the future.

It's interesting that the nation of Israel ceased to make sacrifices shortly after Jesus was crucified. They have never resumed the practice though they rejected Jesus and his blood; they no longer see any value in sacrifices. To me, this is further evidence of the reality of what we speak.

God was active in the calling of people to make sacrifices because they spoke of the coming death of his son. Once he had died for the sins of the world, sacrifices were no longer valid, thus, the heart of the people to continue the practice changed even though they were in unbelief regarding Jesus.

Daniel the prophet prophesied concerning this event when he said that in the middle of the week he would cause sacrifices and oblations to cease. When Jesus was cut off in death, (the messiah) the need for sacrifices ceased and they were discontinued shortly after this event.

## **Guilt Offering**

Leviticus 5:14-6:7

Guilty, the feeling you have when all at once you realize you were supposed to be at church an hour ago and here you are still in bed. You didn't mean to over sleep, but you didn't wake up and now you can't make it. You feel so guilty because you know you let the Lord down. What can you do about it now?

Sins of omission are just as serious with the Lord as sins of commission. Israel was given a means of dealing with sins of omission, and in some cases, sins of commission that were from fraudulent dealings with one another.

Have you ever done something that at the time seemed all right to do and then felt guilty about it later? When we neglect doing what we know is right, thinking what is known to be wrong is right in our case, and justifying our actions, not dealing with it or letting it slide; we are hardening our heart and turning a deaf ear to our conscience. This is the beginning of what is called backsliding.

Neglecting our walk with God is so serious God deals with it in much the same manner as an out and out sin. Shading the truth, ignoring our responsibilities, finding a technical loophole to justify what we know is wrong, creating a false truth by doing such things as going outside so someone can say your not present; that sort of thing is serious in the sight of God because it is a sin against our consciences. When we deal deceitfully with our consciences we are hardening our hearts.

I have a testimony written by a man who was a minister but is now in prison for murdering his wife. This man is very repentant and is serving the Lord with his whole heart, but now he knows what a little sin left undealt with can lead to.

After he had completed his training for the ministry, he began to see conditions in the Christian world that were disillusioning. Bitterness suppressed his zeal and his heart began to cool toward the Lord. He didn't stop being a Christian or being involved in the ministry, but he allowed other things to fill his heart. He became successful in some business matters while also being successful in areas of ministry. Feeling self-satisfied he let his guard down and one day he met a lady that appealed to his nature who was not his wife. A friendship developed that soon took on the characteristics of an affair. Though he never sinned with her in the physical sense, he did sin in his heart. Guilt feelings began to surface and he finally decided to confess to his wife. She became very upset and left the room going into the garage of their home. After some time he followed her and a fight resulted. Just what happened at this point isn't fully known as his memory of it is blurred and he only knows what investigators reported. He was convicted of murder and knows that he did kill her, even though he has no memory of the actual event. It is not unusual for a person to experience this kind of memory lose when events become too horrific to deal with. What started out as a little bitterness of spirit led down a path to a terrible crime. A little bitterness, a little pride, some lust of the flesh and you have a recipe for disaster.

We are told in the Songs of Solomon 2:15, "Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards." meaning that it's the "little" sins in our hearts that lead to disastrous results.

God's concern over sins of omission in reference to the practice of religion is equal to his concern for sins against one's neighbor.

It's a serious matter to tamper with the ability to discern between right and wrong. A sociopath is an individual who has so hardened his conscience that he no longer knows the difference between right and wrong in dealings with others. Sometimes individuals have become sociopaths because they hold to wrong values they have allowed in their hearts. Such ideas as "the end justifies the means" or "it's for a greater good" have caused them to override their consciences and sooner or later their consciences become dormant. That is a truly sad condition; a condition God did not want for Israel.

God made a special provision of a sacrifice to demonstrate his concern for this kind of violence to one's conscience. It was called a guilt offering. The offering was a sin offering but the occasion of it was because something had happened that brought guilt upon them. There are several scenarios listed in Leviticus 5 and part of 6 that could cause this, but the result was the same, guilt that needed a sin offering.

It is a loving heavenly Father who cares enough about us to forgive all our sins, including the ones we do simply because we neglect some important part of the practice of our faith. Justification is the term used in the New Testament.

Justification is when Jesus equalizes all the events of our life's shortcomings with the righteousness of his life. In justification we are forgiven all our offenses and are credited with his righteousness for our shortcomings. What a loving God it is that has provided us with a guilt offering. How undeserving we are of such grace, but God is Love. Justification is the addition of Jesus to all that is deficient in our lives.

### **One All Sufficient Sacrifice**

Jesus came into this world, God made flesh and dwelling among us, preparing himself to redeem humanity from the curse of sin. His enemy is sin, not Satan in the sense that Satan is only the instigator of evil; the personification of evil, the tempter, but it is sin in the hearts of humans that is God's concern.

Satan will be disposed of in due time, and so will the flesh (sin natures) of fallen men who accept the sacrifice he has made for them. Jesus has triumphed over all wickedness at the cross and manifests that victory in the life of every person who will accept him.

When Jesus died all the elements of the sacrifices were gathered together into one all sufficient sacrifice. Each of the sacrifices listed in Leviticus spotlighted an element of need in fallen man and showed how a sacrifice for that need was provided. Jesus is the guilt offering of the guilty, the sin offering of the sinner, the fellowship offering of the one entering into the body of Christ, the grain offering for the hungry, and the burnt offering for the worshipper who is committing himself wholly unto the Lord.

He was also the drink offering being poured out for us, of which we participate when we pour out our life in service to him. The drink offering speaks of the anointing of the Holy Spirit that associates with all the acts of worship, and also speaks of the service of the offerer. The apostle Paul spoke of being poured out as a drink offering to the Lord. (Phil. 2:17, II Tim. 4:6) It is directly addressed as a separate sacrifice, but was a part of the offering of the sacrifices, just as the Holy Spirit is not an offering but rather an enabler of the offerings.

We come to Jesus who is the all-inclusive sacrifice, and find completeness and fulfillment in him. It is by faith we come, and are acquitted, sanctified, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son Jesus, in whom we have redemption, and renewal, and are complete in him.

# Chapter Seventeen

## Building the Tabernacle

Exodus 35

When Moses came down from the mountain where he met with God, he had specific instructions to build a portable tabernacle that they could carry with them on their journey to the Promised Land. They needed materials to build with, and so they took an offering from the people.

When they left Egypt they had asked the Egyptians for things that they took with them on their journey and now some of these items were going to be used in the construction of their new place of worship.

God knew what was going to be needed and I am sure oversaw the gathering of materials. When Moses asked for an offering of the people, they gave without pressure freely giving all that was needed.

God never wills without also making provision for the fulfillment of his will. They had what was needed and God gave them a heart to give. God also gave some of them useful abilities in weaving and engraving for the delicate tasks of building the furniture and curtains. They needed to cast pots, shovels and all sorts of items. They needed carpenters to build furniture and metal workers to overlay it with gold. The gold was gathered from the people as they gave of their personal jewelry. People gave of their time and resources as a freewill offering to the Lord. Moses didn't have to tax them, all he had to do was give them an opportunity to give or serve and they did it willingly and enthusiastically.

Some of the people with special gifts were called upon by God to oversee certain phases and some were called to assist. When everyone works within his or her call, harmony results. Construction projects can either be a time of great stress or great blessing. When a project is ordered of the Lord, blessing is the result. When human ambition is the motivating force in a project, often confusion and strife are the result.

The craftsmen were not at liberty to do as they pleased in the construction of either the furniture or the design of the tent. God had given very exacting specifications of what he wanted.

The tabernacle as well as the form of worship they had received was filled with instructive symbolism. The beauty was incidental to the symbolism. The symbols, in fact, were the beauty. Only God could create such a masterpiece of design. When completed, it was a portrait of matters eternal in nature. It spoke of Christ and what he was doing in his great redemptive work.

The purpose of the tabernacle was not to give them an object to worship, but rather, an instrument to facilitate their worship. Likewise the sacrifices and offerings were not the worship, but rather, were the expressions of the worship.

Worship is what we do in our hearts. It is an action of love. When the object becomes the recipient of worship, idolatry is the result.

God never intended these items or the rituals to be regarded as sacred, as recipients of worship. They were sanctified and therefore holy, but not sacred in the sense of being an object that has become divine. God always wanted heart worship, not objects.

By the time Isaiah came into his ministry, if there ever was understanding of why they did what they did, it had been lost. They thought that God wanted the slaughter of animals and rigid rule keeping, thus appeasing him. They seemed to think that the more they gave to God, the better he liked it, not realizing it is not the quantity of gifts, but the heart that gives them that God blesses.

## **Making the Curtains of the Tabernacle**

Exodus 36

When the work was ready to go forward, Bezaleel meaning “in the shadow (i.e. protection) of God” and Aholiab meaning “Father’s tent” were summoned to oversee the work of constructing the tabernacle and its furnishings. God gifted these two men for the purpose of creating this work.

They got together with the other men of Israel who were also gifted in the kind of work that needed to be done and began making curtains that would be the first layer of the tent or tabernacle. It was made of fine linen and had cherubims woven into the fabric. Cherubims were portraits of angelic beings.

They used fibers of blue, scarlet, and purple to make the curtains skillfully weaving them in the manner shown to Moses. They made them in the exact dimensions Moses was given which were filled with symbolism. Five was a number that was used singly and in multiples.

When God changed the name of Abram to Abraham, he inserted the fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet into his name and made it AbraHam.

Four is also a number that is frequently seen in the tabernacle, it is the number for created things that govern.

Six also is seen in the tabernacle. Six, six, six is the number of man we are told in Revelations and man was created on the sixth day. Six and multiples of six are indicative of man when seen in a symbolic setting.

In the construction of the tabernacle, curtains were woven four cubits wide and thirty cubits long. We thus see four the number of government as one dimension and six man’s number times five the number of grace. These were joined one to another five in one set and six in another making eleven in all.

There were two curtains used one was the entry into the tent the other separated the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, the two interior rooms. There were ten curtains in all, five joined to make one partition and five for the other. These were four cubits wide and twenty-eight cubits long. Twenty-eight is seven times four. Seven is the number of completion.

Order is seen in all that God does. The tabernacle was a small wonder of the world. Everything was done symmetrically, artfully, and skillfully. The wonder of the heavenly kingdom was woven into every fabric as reminders. The mathematics was also symbolic reminders of the need for the redemptive work of Jesus.

In the New Testament we are taught that the Temple of God is our body, individually and also collectively. The curtains that hung overhead and down the sides spoke of the future body of believers who were represented by these curtains being four cubits wide and thirty cubits long. All were joined together into one single tabernacle covering.

As pointed out, four is the number of governing things as God created the sun, moon, and stars on the fourth day to govern over the day and night. Every individual fabric was stamped

with the pattern of government that is man's destiny of ruling and reigning with Christ and man made complete by grace. Without grace, nothing fits. Woven into the fabric were cherubims indicating the constant involvement of the heavenly beings in the life of the Church.

The two curtains that were made to be entries into, first the Holy Place and second the Holy of Holies were made with a slightly different mathematical arrangement. Grace was not in the dimensions of the fabric, as the fabric represented Christ! They were four cubits wide, and twenty-eight cubits long. Twenty-eight is four times seven, seven the number of completion. Because he is the sinless one he needs no grace. He is the giver of grace, therefore the curtains do not carry the number five but rather the arrangement of the segments of the curtains carries the number! The tabernacle was twenty cubits wide or, four cubits times five segments.

Whenever a priest entered into the tabernacle he had to pass through this curtain that spoke of government completed in Christ Jesus who is the giver of grace. One cannot enter the presence of God who is in rebellion against Jesus the supreme authority over all humankind, nor can he enter without grace because grace is the point of entry.

Everyone who is a part of the temple of God or a part of the administration of its functions must be in proper relationship to Christ and to one another. All the segments were joined together each in its proper place and in the proper way indicating that each person in the kingdom of God is dependent upon the whole. Each segment was a completed unit but was not a temple without the whole.

### **The Colors and Metal of the Tabernacle**

The temple of God is made up of many members fitly joined together into one body, the body of Christ. This is why it is so important that all Christians recognize each other as vital parts of themselves. In our present world we are divided up among many denominations, ethnic and cultural groups, and geographical divisions, making it easy to lose sight of the fact that all blood bought Christians are a part of the same whole. Whatever separates us here should not interfere with the spirit of unity we find in our common bond to Jesus. If we are a part of him, we are a part of one another.

There were three colors used in the tabernacle, blue, purple, and scarlet. Their significance is not clearly evident, but blue is the color of the sky suggesting heavenly things, and scarlet suggests blood, significant of redemption. Purple is a color associated with royalty, suggesting the kingship of Jesus, though the exact meanings of each of these colors don't seem to be ridged.

Purple or perhaps crimson, at least in later times and likely then as well, came from the shell of a shellfish that lived in the Mediterranean Sea. They would gather the shells and extract dye from them to dye kings' robes in. It became known as royal purple. This was likely the color of the robe placed on Jesus on the day of his crucifixion. It is likely that this was the source of the purple dye that was used in the tabernacle as Egypt is on the edge of the Mediterranean Sea.

There is a significant lesson to be learned from the royal purple dye. One day the Lord was inspiring me in study to investigate shellfish. I went to a local bookstore and asked the proprietor if he had any books on shellfish. He went back somewhere in the store and found a copy of a National Geographic magazine that had an article on shellfish. The article described the shellfish as an organism with no distinguishing characteristics except for an organ called its mantle. It is from this mantle that it secretes fluids that harden into its shell. It went on to describe the wonder of the shells and their unique characteristics.

Having read the Biblical story of Elijah the prophet and the cloak he carried with him called in the King James Version his mantle; I connected the two thoughts and readily saw a connection. The mantle Elijah carried was a symbol of his prophetic ministry. He used it on occasions as a touch point from which God's power evidently flowed. I feel it was a symbol of the anointing of the Holy Spirit expressed in the miracles that he did as a prophet.

Elisha inherited the mantle of Elijah and the anointing it represented continuing the miracle ministry of Elijah.

What the mantle was to Elijah, the mantle is to the shellfish in the sense that through it flowed that special something that created a lasting monument to the glory of God. Long after Elijah and Elisha and their mantle have past from us, the stories of the wonder of God's power remain as reminders of what God's power working through a human life accomplishes.

Long after the shellfish died, his shell remains as a reminder of the wonder that a little organism known as a shellfish produced it. His mantle is the means he has of leaving a monument to the wonder of the creator who gave him a little organ called a mantle that through it a wonder of the world might be created.

Men don't always appreciate the wonder in its natural state, but rather see how some characteristic can be exploited to enrich him. So it was that these shells were gathered and only appreciated for their color, which upon crushing, could be made into dye to color clothes for kings to wear. They thus became a symbol of the lives of righteous men who would serve their king, Jesus.

The presence of the Holy Spirit upon the lives of godly men is not always appreciated in this world. Wicked men crush the reputations of righteous men, martyr them, or render them ineffective and in this way exploit them for their own wicked purposes.

When, in Pilate's court, they put a purple or scarlet robe on Jesus thinking they mocked him, they were really supplying a lesson in type of a robe he would one day wear upon returning to this world riding on a white horse and wearing a robe dipped or dyed in blood. I contend that that robe was not dyed in his own blood or in the blood of those who he was judging, but rather in the blood of those who were his faithful servants who had given their lives for him. It was their sacrifice that was authorizing his coming to bring justice upon wicked men and their schemes.

The color purple was used also by placing a purple cloth over the brazen altar when it was in transit. (Num. 4:13) This was the article that was most familiar to the people in their acts of worship because it was to this altar they brought their sacrificial animals and gave them to God as a sacrifice for redemption because of their sins. This altar was the place where the blood of redemption was shed and the sacrifices were consumed. Covering it with a purple cloth was to testify to the fact that this was speaking of the King who would come, qualifying himself to be king by providing the redemptive work for humanity that was symbolized here.

The color blue suggests heavenly things. It was used in conjunction with purple and scarlet in all the curtains but it was used separately as cords or connecting loops and in special clothes used during transport of the tabernacle. When used separately as loops in the tabernacle it was for the purpose of holding things together. It was used as cords in the attire of the high priest and again was used to tie parts together.

Humans need constant reminders that it is our heavenly destiny that is of vital importance. Using blue at the connecting points suggests that it is the heavenly purpose of all of this that holds it all together and gives it meaning as a unit.

The purpose of worship and a relationship with God goes beyond the temporal into the eternal. Without the eternal perspective one might lose appreciation for why sacrifices and offerings are given to God. If the purpose of religion were simply to enhance our life on earth, then the eternal reasons would be void. Since salvation primarily pertains to eternal considerations, and is the primary focus of all activity at the tabernacle, constant reminders are needed.

All too often the focus drifted from needed salvation to some means of securing a temporal reward. It was this error of thought that led the Israelites to abandon their faith in God and pursue heathen gods because it sometimes seemed to them that the idols gave more temporal blessings than the Lord God. This of course was only true when they were wandering from their pure faith and were living in disobedience to God that he lifted his blessings and left them feeling abandoned. They weren't abandoned, however; because, it was they who did the abandoning.

Scarlet is a color that was also used as a covering in transit. Isaiah spoke of our sins being like scarlet yet they are cleansed until they are white as snow. Scarlet wool was used in certain cleansing rites (Lev. 14) and was also used in the offering of a red heifer. (Num. 19:6) In the cleansing rite it was dipped in the blood of a turtledove with pure water, and which was then sprinkled on the person or object being cleansed. These purposes were because of the sins of the people and were part of the redemptive work. Scarlet could then be viewed as a symbol of redemptive blood and also a symbol of sin, the reason for the need for redemption.

I suppose we could place too much emphasis upon the meaning of individual colors, as their use, as reported in the scriptures, was not always consistent with a point of view. They do, however, tend to teach us lessons as we observe their use in the tabernacle and in the functions of it.

These same colors were used for non-religious purposes as well. They were used for personal beautification and were also used in connection with sin and idolatry. Typically Satan has sought to pervert that which God uses for his glory. These colors in use were blended or used to create patterns in the weaving of the various pieces of cloth. They were found all through the tabernacle along with gold. They were also used in the robes of the priests. They were for beauty as well as the lessons they taught them.

Gold was used freely in the tabernacle, covering all the wood and being cut into strips so it could be woven into the fabrics as well. Gold is the only metal used that is also found in the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. Outside the tabernacle tent, bronze and silver were used along with some wood but inside all the furnishings were either pure gold or wood overlaid with gold. This wasn't gold alloy as we know in the west, but pure gold as one finds in eastern countries. When I went to India I saw the difference, as the gold there was 22K gold.

The significance of the gold is probably a combination of characteristics: durability, value, beauty and practicality. It was the best they had to offer and was worthy of the dwelling place for God.

I think that people ought to give God the very best gifts. What we give God, and how we give it, speaks volumes about what sort of individuals we are. The Israelites gave freely to the construction of the tabernacle, so much so they had to tell them to stop giving!

Whenever the subject of gold arises, I note that its purpose was both practical and for beauty. Gold was used to overlay wood or to make delicate parts for beautification.

In the New Jerusalem gold is everywhere. It is even placed under foot, in streets of gold. The city itself is made of gold.



Evil hearted men use gold as a measure of wealth, but God uses it as a material to pave streets. It's the asphalt of heaven! Real values are the people who occupy the kingdom. Gold represents the result of hard trials upon people that purify and purge them; in fact, the gold in the heavenly city is so pure it is transparent! Likewise precious stones beautify the city of God they too are symbolic of the residents of the city. The precious stones are memorials to the sufferings in the process of purification and training each of the occupants have undergone while on earth.

The methods by which these precious metals and stones are formed in this present world, has to do with the pressures of the earth's crust and the resultant fracturing. This causes compounds in the rocks to leach into the water under the surface of the earth and when it comes into contact with other rock formations results in the formation of these unique gems and metals.

In like manner, it is the pressure and resultant fracturing in the spirit of man that is the fertile condition to develop the greatest spiritual gifts. Many ministries that exist in the church are the direct result of painful experiences in the lives of individuals. When God selected Israel to be his unique people, that choice was either going to be their greatest blessing or worst curse. What it turned out to be was a matter of choice and obedience. Their bad choices resulted in untold suffering but that suffering is memorialized as pearl in the gates of the city, New Jerusalem. Each of the twelve gates bears the name of a tribe of Israel.

Each gate is a single pearl. Pearl is a gem known historically as the gem of suffering. The pearl itself is formed from a grain of sand under the shell of the oyster that causes irritation, and the pearl is formed from the bodily secretions that are emitted to encase it forming a protection for the oyster. It was called the gem of suffering because, the very best ones come from very deep water. Before the days of modern scientific methods, divers would dive into very deep waters to capture oysters and bring them to the surface. Some would pay with their lives from the resultant "bends" but the value of the pearls recovered from the oysters drove them to seek them.

The call of God upon the nation of Israel has resulted in many irritations, as they have been a hated people on the face of the earth. God has memorialized this suffering as gates of pearl.

## **The Tabernacle and Its Courtyard**

The tabernacle was laid out with the same mathematical numbers as the curtains. The basic numbers used were three, four, five and six, either in singles, multiples or fractions. Whether these have specific symbolic value or whether it was simply practical is largely for the beholder to determine. We know that God is a God of order and the number four is a base number we see pertaining to government. The Bible identifies six specifically as the number of man and some scholars have determined five to pertain to grace. Three is identified with deity and so when we see these numbers in various combinations, being used in symbolic settings, we find it an easy conclusion that symbolism is present.

The tabernacle was a tent with two rooms, the Holy of Holies, and the Holy Place. It had a courtyard that was enclosed with a curtain fence. Each area had one opening into them and each opening was a curtain. The openings were symbolically speaking of Christ and also had the number five as a dominant number in usage, suggesting Christ and his grace as the point of entry into any part of the tabernacle.

The tabernacle was supported by frames and crossbars mounted on silver bases. They had silver rings to hold the frames and brass clasps to hold the curtains together. The tabernacle had three layers of material over it; the interior layer was the one woven with the three colors, purple,

blue and crimson. The second layer was made of goatskins dyed red, and the third or outer layer was made of hides of an animal (dugongs), possibly a sea mammal similar to a dolphin. The tabernacle had to be of sufficient strength to hold all the fabric and skins in proper position.

The tabernacle had to be portable because they moved about. The tabernacle was the central feature of the camp and all activity centered around it. Each tribe had a designated location for their camp that was determined by proximity to the tabernacle.

## **The Furniture of the Tabernacle**

### Exodus 37

They made furniture to go in the tabernacle, appropriate for their worship of God. The most important was the Ark of the Covenant. It spoke of Jesus the coming Messiah into whom was committed the law (the tables of stone), the symbol of divine authority through his designated representatives (Aaron's rod that had budded), and the manna that sustains (a bowl of manna). It was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. It was about 45 inches long and 27 inches wide.

Over the ark was a cover of pure gold with two cherubim made of hammered gold, located near each end of the lid facing each other. Their wings were pointed toward the center of the lid called the mercy seat. This is where the presence of God dwelt in the tabernacle. It was to this location that the priests came seeking pardon and mercy for the camp of Israel. Mercy was available here, because, the ark upon which the mercy seat rested was God's commitment to the redemptive work of the cross. A curtain, with the likeness of cherubims woven into the fabric, formed the entry to the room in which it was sitting.

Man had been driven out of the Garden of Eden because of sin, so God placed a cherub with a flaming sword to block the entrance of the garden so he couldn't return to eat of the tree of life. Eternal life is now available to humanity through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and once again the tree will be available as John saw it as recorded in the last chapter of Revelations in the city of God. In this most holy place, was a mercy seat upon the ark and again we see the cherubims watching over it.

The room separated from the Holiest Place had three articles of furniture in it. There was an altar of incense, a lampstand, and a table where the bread of the Presence was placed. The table was made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold, the lampstand was made of solid hammered gold and the altar of incense was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold.

This room called the Holy Place was separated from the outer court by a curtain held up by five pillars. The five pillars of grace are, repentance, faith, forgiveness, reconciliation and favor restored. All this is possible because out in the outer court were the brazen altar and the laver or bowl of water. These spoke of the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross and the cleansing of the Word. (See Eph. 5:25-27)

## **Making Robes for the Priests**

### Exodus 39

The robe of the High Priest was made of finely woven linen, embroidered with strands of gold and threads of blue, purple and scarlet. It was decorated with stones on the shoulders; emeralds set in gold filigree and engraved like a signet ring with the names of the twelve sons of Israel as a memorial. The garment had specially designed shoulder pieces and waistband.

They also made a breastpiece with twelve stones mounted in rows on it, each with a name of a son of Israel and their respective tribe on them. The breastpiece was hung from the shoulder pieces with gold rings and chain, and the bottom was fastened to the waistband with rings and a blue cord.

They made pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen around the hem of the robe. They made bells of pure gold and attached them around the hem between the pomegranates. Thus, there was both sound and fruit as a result of the walk of the priest. God ordained that they must be in perfect balance, fruit and sound, or in other words, the fruit of their walk should be equal to their talk.

For Aaron and his sons, they made tunics of fine linen—the work of a weaver—turban of fine linen, linen headbands and undergarments of finely twisted linen. The sash was of finely twisted linen with blue, purple and scarlet yarn—the work of an embroiderer—as the LORD commanded Moses.

They made the plate, the sacred diadem, out of pure gold and engraved on it, like an inscription on a seal: HOLY TO THE LORD. Then they fastened a blue cord to it to attach it to the turban.

All this was done according to the command of the Lord and was accomplished by the faithful efforts of those assigned to the task.

## **Dedication**

The dedication and sanctification of the Tabernacle, the altar, and all the furniture and utensils was accomplished according to the commands of Moses.

In the first seven chapters of the book of Leviticus, instructions were given concerning different kinds of sacrifices that would be offered at the altar before the Lord.

The eighth chapter tells us about the dedication of Aaron and his sons. They were washed with water, dressed in the garments of their priesthood and then Moses anointed the tabernacle, the altar and everything that pertained to it with the holy anointing oil.

Aaron was also anointed with oil. Aaron and his sons, with the camp of Israel in attendance, offered a bull as a sin offering to make atonement for them. They offered other sacrifices and sprinkled blood on everything that was being used in the performance of their worship.

The sanctification and dedication of the Tabernacle and the priesthood took seven days to accomplish. All this concluded with the Day of Atonement for the Israelites as a nation. They now had a place of worship, priesthood, laws and ordinances, and a new national identity. They were ready to move on.

## **Putting it into Perspective**

When the priests served at the tabernacle they received the animals, grain, oil, wine and incense, from the people and offered them to God. They killed and prepared the animals as offerings, poured out drink offerings, presented meal offerings and took the blood and bread through the curtain into the holy place. They placed the bread of the Presence on the table made for it, put oil in the lamps and burned incense on the altar made for it. All of this was done ceremonially but it spoke of what is now being experienced by believers everywhere.

It is not possible for man in his fallen state to please the Lord, because even his works of righteousness are being performed from a cursed life. All have sinned and therefore stand guilty before God. The curse of sin is upon all mankind and no amount of good works, religious

activities, humanitarian efforts, or righteous deeds can rise to the standard of purity because the vessel from which it comes is unclean.

When Moses went up the second time onto the mountain where he first received the commandments, he was instructed to take the new stones and place them into the Ark of the Covenant. This was showing that the hope of mankind was in the coming Savior of which the ark spoke. The mercy seat rested upon the ark (Christ.) It was the promise of his coming as God's offering for the sins of mankind that provided the basis of mercy. The mercy seat had to rest on him to be valid. Had Jesus failed in his work of redemption, all mercy would have been voided and those who had placed their faith in God and lived obediently would have had to be condemned because it wasn't possible for the blood of bulls and goats to atone for sin. (See Heb. 10:1-10)

God is a good God, a giving God, but a righteous and holy God. Man in his fallen state is selfish, self-centered, and often very evil. It is easy for man to fall into ritualistic, self-serving religious attitudes and practices. In fact, I suspect that most of what is done in the name of religion or salvation, is self-serving and ritualistic. It seems that because God is good and giving, he is often used by the selfish and self-seeking.

God covenanted with the nation of Israel that if they obeyed him he would bless them, so, realizing this and wanting to be blessed they obeyed him not realizing that their motive for doing so was impure being selfish.

These people had been slaves and when you are a slave you do what you're told to do hoping the slave-master will see and reward you. These people though not slaves of Egypt any longer, saw themselves as slaves of God. It was as though God had captured them and now he was their new slave-master.

God does not want to be seen as a slave-master, however; he wants to be the God of our hearts. That is to say, he is seeking a love relationship with us. He wants to be seen as the pursuing lover who has many gifts to give the bride of his desires and he wants to be the object of the love and affection of the bride even if gifts are not immediately given.

Ideally, God is seeking the quality of love that doesn't even see the need for gifts only the relationship of being in the presence of the lover. Israel missed this point in much of its history. They saw God as austere, one to be served when you need a favor, a sort of national business partner, and one that if you paid tribute to would provide protection for you from your enemies. God had all the power, Israel had all the needs and obedience seemed to be the medium by which his favor would be bestowed. So they seemed to reason, if he wanted the blood of bulls and goats give them to him, but now having done that, where are the blessings?

God's purpose in giving Israel the tabernacle and their form of worship was not so they could become religious, but rather to give them a means by which they could enact faith and receive pardon for their sins. God intended this to be the prerequisite of a life of worship. Worship was not the giving of sacrifices, but rather a life lived in relationship to his love. Relatively few ever seemed to understand this point about God.

God is a lover, yet he is a God who always moves within the boundaries of righteousness. A barrier called sin separates us from him. Adam sold us to a slave-master, Satan. Satan's claim has to do with the natural nature of man that was altered as a result of the fall. Satan infected this nature with his nature, making that nature sinful having desires that are selfish and self-centered. Since Satan's domain is the temporal/physical and God's is heavenly and eternal, God had to have a means of redeeming us from a condemned life to a spiritual life.

God is Spirit and we must forsake the temporal affections, desires, goals and lusts, so that from our hearts we can embrace the eternal Spirit, the Holy Spirit, of a righteous God. All the sacrifices of Israel looked forward to this transaction that is accomplished when we come to Christ Jesus our Savior, and place our faith in his all-sufficient sacrifice for us.

Once all the work of building and assembling the Tabernacle was completed, the Israelites were ready to move on.

# Chapter Eighteen

## God's Covenant with Israel

When God met Moses at the burning bush, he spoke to him about his intentions concerning delivering the Israelites from bondage and how he was going to give them the land that he had sworn to give Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses did what the Lord commanded him to do and returned to Egypt where he met with the Israelites and reported to the elders what God had said to him. He then went to Pharaoh and said what God had commanded him to say to him. Pharaoh's response was hardness of heart and an increase in the cruelties of their bondage. When Moses went to the Lord in prayer concerning what was happening the Lord said,

Therefore, say to the Israelites: "I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD." (Ex. 5:6-8)

This constitutes a covenant promise that God was obligating himself to fulfill. He had already made promises to their forefathers but now he was making them concerning this point in time. As is so often the case when dealing with God, we don't see the big picture. God gives a promise we take to be a promise of immediate action, but from the perspective of God, it may take years to work through all the ramifications of what God has said. To say that he was going to deliver them from bondage sounded much simpler than it really was.

Two major things would have to happen. One was that all the people of the nation of Israel would have to be in unanimous agreement to leave the land upon command together. The other was that the Egyptians would have to be in agreement to let them go. This was no small feat to accomplish; yet, God accomplished this in a very short period of time.

God's harsh treatment of the Egyptians caused them to retaliate against the Israelite slaves with increased cruelty, increasing their desire to be free of the yoke of bondage all the more. By the time the night of deliverance came, both the Israelites and the Egyptians were ready for whatever God said.

It is often much harder for God to prepare us for a miracle than it is to perform the actual miracle. After the Israelites were safely on the other side of the Red Sea, God had another great miracle to perform, delivering them into the land of promise. Once more God saw the many problems that had to be worked through to get these people ready to enter the land.

How many times we say, "Yes Lord" only to find that our response is too quick, that we really aren't as ready to obey as we thought. The fleshly nature does not die easily. The Israelites soon found that they not only had bad memories of Egypt, but they also had some good ones as well. God would have to deal with the subtle affections of their hearts before real deliverance would finally be accomplished. Delivering them from the bondage of Egypt was much easier than to deliver them from the Egypt in their hearts.

When the Israelites finished the work of constructing and dedicating the tabernacle, and ordaining the priesthood, it seemed that they were now ready to enter the Promised Land; but were they?

Joyfully they marched north to the border of the land, all in their proper order, the priest and Levites leading the way, following the pillar of fire, with the ark of God and the tabernacle ready to be assembled wherever God would indicate.

As they were traveling along the way approaching the Promised Land, Miriam and Aaron began to complain about a wife of Moses who was of Cushite ancestry. In those days men often had more than one wife and Moses was no exception. He had evidently married this woman, perhaps before he fled from Pharaoh and left her behind when he fled. During his years in the desert he married Zipporah of Midianite ancestry, and had two boys by her.

Little is said in the Biblical account about the Cushite woman, and had this story not been included, we wouldn't even know about her. We are left to wonder, who was she, and when did he marry her? According to the Jewish historian Josephus, he married a woman of Ethiopia after a battle against a city where she lived. She saw him and fell in love with him as he was leading the Egyptian army against the city. He was approached concerning her and made a deal that after the city was conquered he would marry her. As soon as the battle was over he consummated the marriage and she became his wife. This may have been the woman spoken of, as Cush and Ethiopia are likely the same. It then seems likely that upon his return to the land he was reunited to her as his wife.

The incident only casually mentions the Cushite woman because the focus is upon the wrongful attitude of Aaron and his sister Miriam. It is a fearful thing to criticize God's anointed leaders. Moses was God's anointed leader and a very special one at that. God asked them why they weren't afraid to speak against him when he was special above even other prophets? God would speak to prophets in visions and dreams but Moses saw the form of God while being spoken to directly! If God didn't criticize Moses' conduct, what right did they have in criticizing him? It is a human thing to look at one another and judge matters that aren't ours to judge. (This story is related in Numbers 12)

Then in Numbers Chapter 13, God spoke to Moses and instructed him to select 12 men, one from each of the tribes, and to send them into the land to look at it. God wanted them to know what they were up against and what good things were going to come to them.

When Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said, "Go up through the Negev and on into the hill country. See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwalled or fortified? How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees on it or not? Do your best to bring back some of the fruit of the land." (It was the season for the first ripe grapes.) (Numbers 13:17-20)

They gave Moses this account: "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan."

Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said,

“We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.”

But the men who had gone up with him said, “We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are.” And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, “The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.” (Numbers 13:27-33)

When the spies returned, suddenly reality began to strike them. They wanted to know about the land, what kind of land was it? They wanted to know about the people living in the land, would they welcome three million people into their borders or would they have to fight with them and destroy them in order to live in the land? How strong were these people? Could the Israelites hope to drive them out of the land? These are the questions that natural men ask. The answer is always based on our view of us, and our view of God. How we see others, our God, and ourselves determines our answer to the questions.

The spies told their stories, each in his proper order, but two of the twelve saw the land and the people from a different point of view from the other ten. They saw from the perspective of God’s mighty power!

Here they were, at the border of the land, the cloud of the presence had stopped and waited. God would soon see what sort of heart the people had. What would they do? Would they pray? Or would they counsel with their own understanding?

What do we do when we stand on the border of the land of God’s promise to us? Do we proceed according to the methods of man, or do we seek divine guidance? Are we content to stand firm and wait on the presence of the Lord to move us into what he wants or do we contrive a plan of our own? These were the questions that would soon find answers in the camp of Israel.

The ten spies spoke to the congregation of Israel and gave a report of discouragement to them. Although the land was a good land they said that it devoured its inhabitants! Their report was not a report from the perspective of faith in God but rather from the carnal view of natural man. God was with the nation of Israel, displaying his presence in the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day. Each morning they gathered the manna and drank water from the rock that followed them.

It’s easy to take the provisions of God for granted and to forget how powerful his work in us is. These people saw many mighty displays of God’s presence along the way, but now that it was time to confront the giants and walled cities, their faith was only in themselves.

These were people that God had covenanted to give the land of Israel to, yet they doubted either his ability to do so or they doubted his will to do it. Evidently they thought the only way to gain possession of the land was for them to take it themselves, thus the ten spies circulated a bad report among the people and stood in opposition to the idea of taking the land.

The idea that something might happen that wasn’t the result of their own efforts was beyond them. Could they have forgotten what God did to Pharaoh and the Egyptians? Each circumstance is a challenge of an ongoing faith. God wants his people to believe in him on a constant and consistent basis. Faith should not be something we have to work up; it should be the state of our every breath.

When the spies returned, fear filled their hearts and they in turn influenced the people. This is the power of a negative heart. Sin is like a contagious disease that spreads resulting in



decisions against God. The ten spies who were unable to believe in the delivering power of God had more influence upon the people than the positive voices of the two.

I like to think of the land of promise as being the natural counterpart to the Christians place in Christ where there is love, joy, peace, contentment, faithfulness, freedom from sinful domination and tenderness of heart toward one another. We are invited to dwell in Christ as Christians but it is Satan's business to keep us from enjoying our inheritance.

Entry into the land is achieved by our identification with the cross both in the redemptive sense and our identification with the spirit of the cross. The spirit of the cross was expressed in the words of Jesus, first in the Garden of Gethsemane "not my will but your will be done," and the second "Father forgive them." Each of these parts takes real faith. First the redemptive part takes faith, believing that God would actually forgive us all our sins because Jesus died for us, shedding his blood as our sin sacrifice. And secondly, to be able to willingly embrace life as it comes to us as the playing out of the will of God.

When we come to the Lord and become a part of his body, the presence of God enters the parameters of our life and what happens from that day onward is interplay between our faith, obedience, and God's power working in deliverance, provision, and revelation of his purposes. Just as the nation of Israel stood looking over the border into the land contemplating the value of living in it, so we stand viewing our inheritance. They must have contemplated the reality that an enemy was going to resist their taking it, and whether God would be able to help them sufficiently to conquer the former inhabitants of the land.

It sounds so easy to believe that we can actually enter the Promised Land, but can we? We, like the Israelites, have been indoctrinated into believing that what happens in our life is the total result of our choices. We chose either to embrace a faith that says the only real choice is to believe that God is the author of our circumstances and therefore able to perform in our circumstances, or to believe that it is up to us to be the main player. Then there are those giants, those monstrous emotions of hate, bitterness, unforgiveness, greed, lust, and a general love for the here and now. It is fear that says we can't love our enemies, or that God is too intangible to trust in for what is needed in our lives.

Many times we give up living in the land of our inheritance over some of the smallest and most insignificant things. We worry about earthly things, all the "what ifs". We worry about how we will handle the problems that arise unexpectedly. We worry about what others might do to us. We worry about our own tendencies to failure and in all of this we decide to go back to the land of the familiar.

Israel made that choice on that fateful day, listening to the voices of doubters, they decided to return to Egypt! Fortunately Moses and those who were of like faith were able to give them the word of the Lord. God's word wasn't pleasant to hear at this point, however; his anger had been kindled and judgment must follow. What made God angry? It was their lack of faith! After all he had done for them; they didn't believe he was able to deliver them into the Promised Land!

One day a lady came to me for counsel and as we talked about her circumstances and the complications of her life, I began to describe this wonderful land of promise that is the inheritance of every believer. I told her about how inside this place there is rest from worry, peace with God and those who have wronged us, and joy in knowing how the Lord is now in control of everything in our lives. We talked of how outside "Christ" there is turmoil, pain, hurt, hate, unforgiveness, and how there is no real peace. I asked her if she wanted enter this kind of relationship to Christ and her response was an emotional yes. To enter it required some forgiveness to be acted upon. After leaving she encountered the person most responsible for her

current pain and started to forgive this person. The person was now living for the Lord with a whole heart and was very desirous to do what was needed for full restoration. She started to express her forgiveness, but then stopped commenting that this was harder than she ever imagined it would be. The giants of hate, or bitterness, or self will, or pride, or whatever it was in her case defied her and she retreated to the land of bondage.

I find this a sad story, because pain has been the result of that retreat. I was to her what Joshua and Caleb were to the nation of Israel that day. I told her of the glory of the land, described its fruit and blessing, but the destructive work of Satan overwhelmed her. She had been to collage and had sat at the feet of the scornful whose native land is selfism; those who believe that the only way to live is independently and that reliance upon God is foolhardy. The instructors in worldly wisdom say that those who hurt us will never change and that those who think they will are fooling themselves.

This is true outside of Christ, but when we come to him we come to one who is able to manage the events of our lives.

Concerning those who have hurt us, we can now put them in the hands of the one who they must either serve or be judged by. Their conduct is no longer our concern except where it directly affects us. The Lord may initiate some changes in our life if he sees that remaining in a relationship is either dangerous to us or to our children.

When changes must be made in our lives, as occupants of the land of promise, they should always be positive in nature. Fear must never be the driving force! Hate, bitterness and anger, are all emotions and heart conditions of the land of bondage. If any of these are allowed to govern our choices, the only place we have to go is back to bondage! Doing battle with these hostile emotions doesn't mean we've left the Promised Land. The battle is what happens in the land of promise when the enemy army seeks to take us captive. What we do, what we think, and what we believe determines the outcome. This battle is not a battle we must fight alone, however. Christ is with us with his power to conquer. We must turn to him and allow him to fight with us and for us.

I was once in a Bible study when after opening in prayer I saw restless whispering in the group. I asked what was wrong and someone said that I hadn't bound Satan in my prayer. There was a lot of popular teaching at that time in Christian circles about how to deal with Satan and his demonic helpers which was the source of their restlessness. I then gave some instruction that I have referred back to many times in my life since. I told them that the best way to deal with Satan in circumstances like this is to ignore him! Don't participate. Worship Jesus. Focus upon his love, his keeping power, and his provisions of joy. In focusing upon Jesus and his provision of love we effectively bind Satan, much more than by repeating words in prayer. Don't give Satan any space or recognition. Satan has a clever way of trying to steal the stage from the Lord Jesus!

Satan is always seeking a way to fill our lives with concerns that are negative in nature. We don't have to cooperate by letting him occupy our minds with things that we can neither control nor change. Give such matters to the Lord to deal with. Live in peace. Peace is a decision we make, just as love is a decision, and happiness is a decision. Satan wants to steal these away from us, but the promise is that Christ will deliver us "into the land" that flows with milk and honey.

# Chapter Nineteen

## God Pronounces Judgment

Numbers 14

The Israelites listened to the voices of the ten evil spies that were evil because they failed to see the possibilities in God. Sin is contagious and is well suited to the fallen nature. It's easy to think negatively, but it takes a strong will to believe in God and walk in peace.

The word had spread among the nations about what God had done to the Egyptians, and how he had met with them at Mount Sinai, and how he led them with a pillar of fire at night and a cloud by day. Fear of God filled their hearts, but the Israelites didn't believe. They believed in their inadequacies more than they believed in God! Looking through the eye of flesh, they could only see defeat.

This was a grumbling crowd. They grumbled when they were in Egypt. They grumbled when Moses stirred the wrath of Pharaoh. They grumbled when they got thirsty in the desert. They grumbled because the manna was always the same. In fact, every time anything was not to their immediate liking, they grumbled. That was what they did best! They didn't seem to see that God was the source of all that had happened. They always blamed Moses. They saw themselves as servants of Moses, rather than servants of God.

Isn't this the common plight of humanity, that they only see what is visible in front of them? When they had a problem they grumbled to Moses, and Moses went to God. It never occurred to them that they should believe and ask the Lord for provisions.

I have been in some churches where people are constantly being encouraged to approach the front of the church and to respond to whatever the minister is preaching about in that service. Whereas there is wisdom in this, it also seems to teach people, unwittingly, that this is how we approach God. If you have a need, find someone who is gifted in prayer and faith, and have them pray. People who are constantly going forward for prayer may be individuals who never pray on their own. There comes a time when each person should be able to believe God and pray. There is nothing wrong with going forward for prayer in church, we have a prayer time each Sunday service, but if that takes the place of a personal prayer life, we are failing to see growth on an individual level.

When the ten spies started reporting all the problems and difficulties that could face them, the congregation of Israel should have immediately began imploring God to direct them, save them and strengthen them for what was coming as they entered the land.

Entertaining any thought of going back should have been out of the question. God does not take us back to our old life, ever. Once we start with him on this journey, we either follow him into the Promised Land or we follow him into a wilderness where everything is against us. There is nothing worse than to be disciplined by God. When God is against you everything becomes difficult, the weather, sickness, unplanned events along the way, and untimely death.

This is what the LORD said to the Israelites on that day of rebellion:

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: "How long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites. So tell them, 'As surely as I live, declares the LORD, I will do to you the very things I heard you say: In this desert your bodies will fall—every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against me. Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh

and Joshua son of Nun. As for your children that you said would be taken as plunder, I will bring them in to enjoy the land you have rejected. But you—your bodies will fall in this desert. Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies lies in the desert. For forty years—one year for each of the forty days you explored the land—you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you.’ I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will surely do these things to this whole wicked community, which has banded together against me. They will meet their end in this desert; here they will die.” (Numbers 14:26-35)

Just reading that is enough to send shivers of emotion through our bodies. Think of it, God against us, God causing us to wander aimlessly for forty years, until our bodies fall dead in the wilderness! That was God’s decree against this camp of people that he brought from Egypt and now to the border of the land.

I have to wonder how many among us are parts of a similar group of people who have either heard such a pronouncement or are about to hear it? It’s a fearful thing to stir God to anger! Yes, God is capable of anger, and when he becomes angry, he acts. Like a parent who sends his child to its room to remain while others do fun and wonderful things, so God sent the Israelites to the desert.

As for those men who spoke such words against the plan of God and stirred people to rebel, God smote them with a plague and they fell down dead.

I have watched people who spread dissension and criticism among church members—those who are wise in their own eyes—lacking the wisdom that comes from above—and who lift their voice taking leadership against those who are ordained to lead; I have seen God remove them from the church and send them back to the desert! How hard it is to watch people being dealt with by God in a hard way!

The next morning the Israelites, after mourning bitterly, got up and decided to go on into the land saying, “We have sinned, we will go up to the place the LORD promised.”

But Moses said,

“Why are you disobeying the LORD’s command? This will not succeed! Do not go up, because the LORD is not with you. You will be defeated by your enemies, for the Amalekites and Canaanites will face you there. Because you have turned away from the LORD, he will not be with you and you will fall by the sword.”

“Nevertheless, in their presumption they went up toward the high hill country, though neither Moses nor the ark of the LORD’s covenant moved from the camp.” (Number 14:41-43, emphasis mine)

The actions of the Israelites on this occasion, remind me of a child who has just been told that he is in big trouble and suddenly changes and becomes this angelic being, hoping to change his parents mind about judgment. Where God is concerned, the time to change is before judgment is pronounced! Never wait until God starts speaking, it’s too late then. Never wait until you’re being hauled off to hell to start repenting; today is the day of salvation—this very day.

God pronounced a judgment on the Israelites, forty years of wandering in the wilderness until all those individuals who were a part of the rebellion were buried in the desert. Then God began talking to Moses in Numbers chapter 15 about how the Israelites were to conduct themselves in worship after they get into the land! Forty years of wandering was not the end of God’s plan only a parenthesis—a delay to further prepare his people. He would still accomplish his purpose, only forty years later!

The Israelites were a headstrong crowd who thought they could do what they thought was right. Somehow they seemed to misunderstand the position that Moses and Aaron held among them. They decided to organize an army and invade the country thinking this was what they should have done, but there was one problem, the cloud of the presence of the Lord was not moving in that direction. The cloud stayed over the tabernacle and the people went on ahead into battle. That was a big mistake. After suffering many casualties they returned, but their rebellion did not end.

Soon an uprising began with a Levite named Korah as its leader. Certain Reubenites—Dathan and Abiram, along with 250 well known Israelites all leaders among the people rose up as a group and came to Moses and Aaron and accused them of taking too much upon themselves, as if they were self-appointed.

The kingdom of God is not a democracy! Even today, people in the world of the church seem to feel that the government of the body of Christ is a democracy. People seem to feel that they can challenge and criticize the leadership of a church, use power politics or organize a rebellion, and it's the okay thing to do, but is it?

When the Apostle Paul gave instructions concerning the communion service, he spoke of people who fail to discern the Lord's body, the result being that they were weak and sick and some had even died—apparently prematurely. What did he mean?

How do we discern the Lord's body? I suppose we could take the view that not recognizing what the emblems represent could constitute not discerning the Lord's body, but in the New Testament frame of reference that doesn't seem likely. I think there is a more likely interpretation. I think that what he had in mind concerned not discerning the present body of Christ! I believe that when we come to the Lord's Table, we are not only to remember the sacrificial death of our Lord, his broken body and his shed blood, but also to remember all those who have been redeemed by that blood. Any spiritual, or psychological division is reprehensible and not to be tolerated in the body of Christ. For a Christian to hold a grudge, or to be in rebellion against another part of the body of Christ, is a division that will surely lead to spiritual death.

You may say, but I just can't stand the way that other person acts, or I don't agree with his/her doctrinal stand, or does that mean we can't worship in separate buildings or in denominations?

Some separations, in my judgment are healthy in this present world. We are not all the same. We enjoy and appreciate different styles of worship, and see things from different points of view. We are free to join into worship with a group that best suits us as a person, however; we are not free to hold a sense of spiritual separation from another group or person who is born again and is a part of the universal body of Christ.

Others may ask, but what about those scoundrels who were troublemakers or individuals that broke off from another church taking members with them that were needed in the original church, how can we forgive them and have fellowship with them?

We may not be able to fellowship with each and every part of the body at any given time, however; just because some difference may exist, we are not free to reject them as not being a part of the body of Christ. When we come to the table of the Lord, we must be able to reach out our love to all parts of the body. If there is division that separates us from another part in some irreconcilable way, don't let the division be because there is a lack of willingness to mend the breach from your point of view.

There are some individuals in the body of Christ whose hearts are full of selfish motives, and a love of attention. These may seek fellowship to promote some cause that is not in harmony with what God is doing in a church. As pastor, I may not be willing to open my pulpit to just anyone who wishes to speak in my church, but I must not reject them in my heart as a possible fellow Christian. Whatever difference has caused my decision doesn't mean that I don't accept them in my heart as a member of the body of Christ. When I stand to pray, I must, from my heart, embrace all believers who have the Spirit of life within them. This is a non-judgmental condition of open love. Fellowship on the other hand may have to be selective.

God ordained leadership is a gift from God to the church and once recognized, is not to be taken lightly. God ordained leaders are not exempt from failure, but when the congregation decides to act against them, great care must be taken to be sure that what is being done is truly Spirit led and not being done presumptuously.

Numbers chapter 16 gives us the story about the rebellion of Korah and those who followed him. What they did was a result of self-will and wasn't Spirit led. What was happening was coming from motives that were not pure and therefore were subject to judgment. What they were doing was challenging the position of Moses and Aaron on the grounds that the whole camp of Israel are God's people and therefore one's opinion was as good as another's. In the story Moses seeks the Lord's directions and in the end the whole group of rebels are buried alive as the earth opens up and swallows them. They fell into their grave and the earth then closed back up, no small miracle!

The purpose of the wanderings was to bring to the surface all the beliefs and attitudes that were going to present a problem and prevent entry into the land. When God is preparing to bring a group of people into the land of promise even today, he must first deal with the residue of Egypt that is still in their hearts. That is to say, we must be completely set free from the love of the world. Doing the will of God must become the passion of our being. Entry into the land of promise is only possible when it is by his direction. All endeavors that are carnally motivated will have to cease. God must be in full control in the very real sense of the word.

Even after God caused the earth to open up and swallow the leaders who rebelled, the people complained to Moses that he had killed God's people! The Lord then became very angry with the people and the cloud of his presence moved to the front of the tent. The Lord then told Moses and Aaron to move away from the congregation of Israel because he was going to destroy them all. Suddenly a plague broke out among the people and Moses told Aaron to quickly offer an offering to the Lord and make atonement for the people. He did and the plague stopped but 14,700 people perished in addition to Korah, his family and those who followed him.

In today's world of the church when such uprisings occur in churches, a purging often has to follow just as it did in Israel. The difference sometimes is that instead of a plague wiping out those who are offenders, God often arranges for people to be transferred out of the area, or a new church starts and these individuals go to it for a fresh start. Those starting the new church soon realize that many of the people coming to them come with an agenda for personal gratification rather than a hunger for God. This is not to indict everyone who transfers or changes churches, but on occasions it is evident that God is in the purging business. When an attitude of discontent arises, it is like a deadly disease that can tear a church apart. As pastor, I have seen it all. I have seen God transfer good people for noble purposes that were not of the Korah spirit, and I have seen God purge congregations as well.

It was now time for God to vindicate his appointed leaders, so that all generations to come would know that it was the Lord who had set up the priesthood and not man. God instructed

Moses to have the leaders of the ancestral tribes each bring him a staff. They did and each was appropriately marked. The staff of Levi was marked with Aaron's name on it and Moses took them and laid them before the Lord. The next morning Moses went to get them and when he did he found that Aaron's rod had sprouted, formed leaves and produced almonds! This was more than ample proof of God's choice of Aaron as high priest.

There is no evidence in the text that those who perished in the before mentioned plague were any more guilty than those who survived nor is there evidence that all who perished were necessarily individually guilty. The sin was widespread and effected the whole congregation, and the judgment was also widespread and visited indiscriminantly.

This is sometimes the sad commentary of conditions when for reasons that are not always everyone's fault; God's hand of protection is lifted from families, communities, or nations. The result is that things happen and innocent people suffer with the guilty.

The way to prevent this sort of thing from happening is to align ourselves firmly with those who are God's appointed leaders, support righteous causes only, and always repent quickly when something is revealed to be of evil origin. God will then separate us from those he is dealing with, but the pain of seeing their sorrow will remain.

The guilt of the sin of rebellion meant that those who had been guilty, but for whom atonement had been made, and those who were innocent, all suffered together alike. They all had to go into the wilderness together, and all had to face the same dealings. The difference was that God preserved those who were innocent from suffering loss with the guilty. In the case of Israel, only Joshua and Caleb, Moses and Aaron and their families, were innocent. However, Moses and Aaron were also guilty of other violations that prevented them from ever entering the Promised Land. Moses was the greatest man alive at that time, but God still would not let him go into the land; he was only permitted to see it from afar.

Do we know how important it is to walk humbly before God? Do we understand that the greater the anointing of God that is given to an individual, the greater the responsibility to honor the Lord with that anointing? Do we realize that the anointing doesn't make us great in God's eyes, only the spirit of our conduct before him?

# Chapter Twenty

## Lesson in the Wilderness

The cloud of the presence of the Lord moved from the border of the land of promise and the camp of Israel was commanded to go back toward the Red Sea, back into the wilderness. It was a land of serpents, vipers, poverty and difficulty, a place of breaking where discipline was to be taught through hard dealings. Going back to Egypt was not an option, these people had been redeemed and were God's people to either bless or destroy.

As they journeyed along the road, they became weary of the way they had to live. They then began to grumble and complain about the lack of water and bread and they detested the manna by now. God never intended that manna be their food for so long a time. By now they should have been in the land eating the food of the land, but because of unbelief they had been turned back into the desert. Soon as a result of their grumbling against the Lord and Moses, vipers began to infiltrate the camp. Many were bitten and died of the snakebites, so they repented and went to Moses asking for help. He went to the Lord concerning it and the Lord told him to erect a pole with a bronze snake on it, and that when anyone who was bitten and would look at the pole would be healed of the bite. This was a picture of the coming Christ Jesus who would be crucified on the cross and that anyone who looks to him will be healed of the venom of sin. (The snake was a symbol of sin and Jesus became sin for us! Thus, the snake represented Jesus hanging on the cross paying our penalty, taking our place, paying the price of death for our sins! They need not die, only identify with the bronze serpent to be healed of the bite of serpent, sin.)

For forty years the people of Israel moved from one camp to another. Each time they moved they would have to dismantle all their tents, the tabernacle and all the accompanying articles of life and worship, get into formation and start moving as a nation.

“Whenever the ark set out, Moses said, ‘Rise up, O LORD! May your enemies be scattered; may your foes flee before you.’” (Numbers 19:35)

Time and time again, they had to break camp, move in a direction that had no meaning, some were dying along the way, some of snake bites others from plagues. This went on until everyone 20 years old and older when they left Egypt, who had witnessed the plagues and miracles died, except Joshua and Caleb. Moses himself would have to be replaced by Joshua because he had angered the Lord when the Israelites complained about the lack of water and he and Aaron went to the rock and disobeyed the Lord by striking it twice. (Numbers 20:8-11)

They went from campsite to campsite and each camp was given a name that Moses recalls in Numbers 33. As I read the names it almost seems that I've been there. Perhaps you feel the same. Each person who has walked with the Lord has a story to tell and unless you are unusual, you have done your own wilderness wandering.

It's not unusual to be able to identify with these wandering Israelites because many of us were slaves in Egypt, as it were, and have had our own slave mentality to overcome. Because we were born a slave and our parents were born slaves, it's hard to see that being free and thinking free is possible. Slaves tend to grumble, in fact, it's a way of life. They can't seem to grasp that prayer can help them. They have always had to do the bidding of slave-masters and



what they had was given to them as charity, not earnings. They were never allowed to feel that what they did had any real value. Only free men can have real possessions! Making the transition from slave to free is easier in the physical sense than it is in the spiritual sense.

Is anyone truly free, you may ask? Aren't we all slaves to someone or something? 1 Cor 7:22-24 says,

“For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.

The discussion in the passage is about the situation of some of the early Christians who were literal slaves to slave-masters similar to the situation of the Israelites in the time of Moses, except it was not a whole nation as it was in Moses day. Paul uses the condition of slaves versus freemen to compare our present relationship to Christ and each other.

Rom. 6:18-24 says,

“You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

What is freedom? Is anyone ever really free? Some people say that they are “free spirits” supposedly meaning that they are truly free, but are they? According to the passage just quoted, we are either slaves to sin or slaves to righteousness. The case is being made that being a slave to righteousness is far superior to being a slave to sin because it leads to eternal life.

Again, what is freedom? Is anyone truly free? We supposedly live in a free country, but obviously that doesn't mean that we are free to run red lights, or commit murder. We are guaranteed the right of the pursuit of happiness under the constitution of the United States, yet that pursuit doesn't allow us to commit crimes upon one another.

Freedom, it seems, is a state of life and mind resulting from choices we make. If we wish to do what is right, we are freemen, but if what we wish to do is either against the laws of God or man, then we are not freemen. To illustrate, Christ Jesus set me free and put his Spirit within me. So long as I live in his Spirit, I don't even want to do anything that is wrong. His Spirit is pure, holy, righteous and full of love. My liberty is dependent upon my willingness to live in the Spirit of Christ.

Admittedly, this doesn't mean there is never a temptation to do wrong. It means the discussion is over, the decision has been made, Jesus is Lord of my life and since I deem the old nature dead with its sinful desires, I am now free from the law that pertains to sin and death. The law I live by is the law of my love for the Lord Jesus, my heavenly Father, the Holy Spirit, and those I love in Christ. The law of love is never rude, self-seeking, unrighteous, evil or careless. It desires, first to please God, and secondly to do what is right before men. When we are living

in the law of love, we are free from the laws that pertain to our fallen natures, in that; we don't even want to do what is wrong!

The only decision that has to be made is one of interpretation of what the law of love is saying as opposed to the law of sin. When the difference is not understood, sinful behavior may occur, but it is not a deliberate violation of the principles of the Holy Spirit. When a violation does occur, the Lord chastens us so we will come into a more perfect understanding.

There are times when the flesh that has been faithfully served in our lives can put up quite a fuss, wanting to be recognized. When we were living in the flesh fulfilling its desires, we did some things that were enjoyable to do. The memory of those good times comes back to seduce us into desiring to revisit them again.

The decision to deny our flesh is not a difficult one if our resolve is strongly placed in our desire to please the Lord. The problem arises when we allow Satan access to the internal discussion and listen to his voice that suggests, "Did God really say?" It is that voice that suggests that we can give in a little and its okay, what difference is it going to make after all? That kind of thinking gets us into trouble.

No compromise comes without suffering the loss of some of our joy in the Lord. Each compromise puts distance between us and true fellowship with God. Each time we compromise greater distance comes between the Lord and us. The greater the distance, the harder it is to hear his voice. It is when we are in fellowship with him that we can clearly hear the voice of the Lord. To be close to the Lord means that we must fellowship with his Spirit. His Spirit is always pure; holy; faithful to God and to those to whom we are committed.

The Children of Israel often remembered the good things about Egypt, forgetting the pain resulting from the displeasure of the taskmasters. Satan doesn't want us to think about what will result from harboring sinful desires, or the resultant behavior that will forever alter the course of our lives.

I was at a prison the other night waiting to teach the Bible lesson of the evening, listening to some of the prisoners playing guitars, keyboards, and an organ, and thinking what normal interesting loving men these are, just like the ones outside these walls. A couple of Sundays ago a former inmate visited our church and gave us his testimony concerning why he had been in prison and what was going on in his life. He was neat and clean, dressed in a nice suit and obviously at home in church. One of the brothers at church made the statement later, "he's no inmate" meaning he didn't fit the stereo type prisoner some people think of, you know, the ones who look mean and have tattoos all over themselves.

Actually many of the men and women in prison are there because they had one bad day. Something happened that got out of control and now they're locked up.

The brother who was a former inmate made the statement that you can't imagine what it's like when one day a sheriff comes into your office and says, "put your hands behind you back and puts you in shackles, telling you your under arrest." In his case he had been guilty of being too trusting of a person he thought he could trust, and his love for this, supposed brother, led him to lend him some money from an account that was under his control. The false brother was supposed to return it days later, but instead denied ever receiving it. This left my inmate friend holding the bag, so to speak, and the people whose money he had lent, charged him with embezzlement.

Another inmate I met had been a minister, a college professor, and a Christian school superintendent. He was good-looking, articulate and didn't look the part of a prisoner either. He, however, was guilty of murder. I wondered how could a thing like this happen to a fellow

minister who was basically of my own persuasion. We had an opportunity one-day to talk one on one, so I asked him about it. He then told me his story with permission to tell others.

He told me how he was successful in various endeavors including a business venture. He, in the course of time, went to a seminar for his business and sat next to a rather attractive young woman who was of his nationality. They talked and enjoyed each other's company during the time of the seminar. They were both married, but nothing was done physically that could be termed "sin" in the physical sense. After the seminar was over they continued to write and talk on the phone from time to time. It was obvious that something was going on here more than just friendship, which resulted in my friend feeling guilty. He was not a bad person, but a bad thing had started happening. He then felt he must confess to his wife. He did, and she predictably became very upset. She went into the garage alone and was there for quite some time. He said that he then followed her to see what she was doing and when he went into the garage things got out of control resulting in her death.

Some of the details at this point are hazy, because he claims he doesn't remember this part. The investigating officers had to tell him what happened.

How can a man go from a successful, living life, caring about others, man with a sensitive conscience to a murderer? Compromising in little things is the answer. He has since given me a written copy of his story, stating, "My heart felt concern for the individuals that are hearing or (reading) this testimony is to stop playing with sin, God will not be mocked. He will not be mocked now or tomorrow, there is always going to be a consequence for your sin." The man is now an inmate pastor in one of the California State Prisons.

Yes, it's easy to forget what a little sin can do to ones life. The Israelites sin was lack of faith in God resulting in grumbling and complaining, which resulted in thinking about the good old days back in Egypt. This led to doubting their ability to capture the land of promise and devising schemes about how to return to Egypt. God will not be mocked, as the word of our brother said. We must make a choice, either to believe in God with all our hearts or pay the penalty for our sin of unbelief.

How serious in unbelief? First we should differentiate between ones uncertainty about what we can legitimately believe God for and disbelieving in God's redemptive plan. We can't believe for what we are not permitted to have, and expect God to answer our faith. Obviously, people ask for things that are selfish in nature and God is unresponsive to such requests as a rule. Disbelieving in the matter of God's redemptive plan, on the other hand, is fatal. God has gone to great lengths and pain to provide a remedy for sin and the consequences of sin, therefore, disbelief in this plan is not only serious, it is fatal because it is the only plan in existence. There is no other name given under heaven than the name Jesus or Yeh-ho-shoo'-ua as the name Joshua would appear in the Hebrew tongue. Jesus is the translated form of the Greek name (ee-ay-sooce') that is the translated form of Joshua. Jesus = "Jehovah is salvation" or "Savior". He is not the "Great Spirit," he is Jesus. He is not Mohammed, nor was Mohammed a revisitiation of Jesus.

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

It is a popular belief today that there are many roads to heaven, but does that make it so? Could it be that some people having placed their faith in some other concept of God and salvation are doomed to eternal separation from God? The realization that this is true is not an

invention of some modern zealot or a person who is a supremacist of some kind; it is recorded in the word of God, the Bible. To disbelieve in this is a fatal mistake.

The Israelites were condemned to a life of wandering in the wilderness because they failed to have faith in God. There they would learn the hard lesson of what it is like to have God set against them. Even though they were still receiving the benefit of daily manna, and as Moses pointed out to them, even their clothes didn't wear out during their time in the desert, they still failed to believe in God.

When they became thirsty again and couldn't find water, instead of calling on God repentantly, they grumbled to Moses. This angered Moses and he went to God in their behalf. God then told Moses to go to the rock and speak to it, that water would come from it again. Moses disobeyed the Lord and he and Aaron went to the rock and smote it twice, while rebuking the Israelites. God was angry with Moses for this, partly because he failed to sanctify the Lord before the people, and partly because in doing so he messed up the lesson that the rock, meaning Christ, would only be smitten once. From that time onward, calling on him was all that was necessary to receive the water of life. (Numbers 20:1-13) (1 Cor. 10:1-5)

Moses too, spoke of the Rock as representing God, (see Duet. 32:15, 30-31) as he recounts what the anger of the Lord means against a people who turn from him. He describes the plight of people who anger the Lord by their rejection of salvation.

As I read the following passage I am forced to think of the present condition of the United States of America and the violence, plagues, and natural disasters that are happening to our land. Despite all we are suffering, people seemingly are failing to see that it is judgment.

For a fire has been kindled by my wrath, one that burns to the realm of death below. It will devour the earth and its harvests and set afire the foundations of the mountains. "I will heap calamities upon them and spend my arrows against them. I will send wasting famine against them, consuming pestilence and deadly plague; I will send against them the fangs of wild beasts, the venom of vipers that glide in the dust. In the street the sword will make them childless; in their homes terror will reign. Young men and young women will perish, infants and gray-haired men. I said I would scatter them and blot out their memory from mankind, but I dreaded the taunt of the enemy, lest the adversary misunderstand and say, 'Our hand has triumphed; the LORD has not done all this.'" They are a nation without sense, there is no discernment in them. If only they were wise and would understand this and discern what their end will be! (Duet. 32:22-27)

# Chapter Twenty-one

## One last Test

Numbers 22-25

As the nation of Israel began its approach to the land, they soon came into the region of Moab. It was here that the Midianites began to plot against them.

First they tried to get a prophet named Balaam to utter prophecies against them, but he could not though he desperately wanted to do so. Three times he tried to utter prophecies against them but each time he only blessed them speaking of how God was going to bless them.

This prophet, though apparently a true prophet of God, was also one of the enemies of Israel. His natural instincts were to be set against these people, but the God he served was with them. The resultant duplicity caused him to do some unwise things. Even though he was warned by God not to go with the men sent to him, he persisted, and was then allowed to go.

As he traveled along the road an angel of the Lord resisted him, causing his donkey to misbehave. This angered the prophet who beat his donkey and after repeated incidences the donkey was given language so it could talk to Balaam. Even though he now knew that an angel of the Lord wanted to kill him for doing what he was setting out to do, he still persisted in going.

The permissive will of God is not always beneficial to those who persist in their pursuit of permission. God sometimes allows even his choicest vessels to pursue some fleshly endeavor without his immediate resistance. Then when the moment arises for a lesson to be learned, the Lord exposes the folly of those who have unwisely followed wrong desires or counsel.

The prophet Balaam desired to obey the king of Moab, but also wanted to be obedient to God. He then devised a plan whereby he could do both. After his failed attempts at prophesying against the nation of Israel, he decided to advise the king to seek out the most beautiful women of the land and cloth them in the finest and most desirable clothing and have them go near the camp of Israel. The plan was that when the men of Israel would see them, and desire them, that they would then seduce them into offering sacrifices to their heathen gods. The plan worked, and many Israelite men fell victim to the plot and the result was that God sent judgment among the people of Israel.

Many men have become victims of this sort of seduction from Satan. It is an accepted fact that people are susceptible to visual seduction. This is why Satan is always trying to get people to view seductive situations and to fill their minds with sexual images that stir carnal desires. He uses many techniques to achieve this goal and to bring, otherwise good men, into a position of judgment.

This was one last purging of the numbers of individuals whose bodies would fall in the wilderness. I suppose it is sex-related problems that prove to be the greatest challenges for most people on this journey through life. One individual who had been a part of the drug revolution once said it was really sex that was the great attraction to this lifestyle. Drugs were what they did, but sex was the big hook. In the end it was drugs, not sex that took over as their master.

If we are to please the Lord, we must have the belt of truth about our loins. God is the author of sex and therefore knows what is best for us as human beings. He not only authored sex, but also authored a set of rules to abide within so that our lives might be enriched by its proper role

in our lives. It is when this desire is exploited by satanic deception, temptation, or seduction that great trouble and sorrow result.

One of the attractions to idol worship was the sexual overtone of the false religions. Some religions provided temple prostitutes, both male and female, as a part of their worship. It was not sex alone that made idolatry bad in the eyes of God however; it was the worship of a false God. Sex was the bait that drew the people away from the Lord.

Is it any different today? How many alcoholics were, in the beginning, only looking for companionship? The destruction of marital bliss is a number one target of Satan. It is the means of bringing people into a compromising attitude that leads away from a relationship with God. Where dissatisfaction lies, so lay temptations.

This is also the reason why a man is not to look lustfully upon a woman; and this is why pornography is so destructive. All such activities undermine satisfaction with wholesome relationships. Satan wants to make sin seem so appealing, that the legitimate provision of marital sex is viewed as outdated or bland. The opposite is true, of course, but Satan doesn't want you to know that it is.

The essence of real temptation is dissatisfaction with what we have in our present condition of life. This dissatisfaction is not limited to matters of sex, however; it is also behind the pursuit of riches rather than provision, and therefore is what constitutes greed.

If we are to be delivered from want in our lives, we must first be delivered from excessive wanting or desiring. The relief of poverty may temporarily satisfy want that has its origin in real poverty, but it can easily be re-ignited as new reasons for desire are presented.

Advertisers know full well that desire must be ignited if they are to be successful in selling their products. Some product producers know that if they can add an addictive substance to their product, they will sell more of it. Once a substance with addictive qualities has been used to the point where the addiction takes over, the user will experience repeated desire, and even overwhelming desire, for the product.

It is possible to also have addictions that are not substance based. When some form of euphoric experience is lodged in the psychic of an individual, the desire to re-experience it can also be overwhelming.

When the Israelites camped in the region of Moab, they were unaware of the plot that was underway to bring judgment upon them. When the women of Moab began to come near the camp of Israel, the men were not aware of the evil desire of the women. They may have thought "it is only sex," but in the world of political power seeking, or money grabbing, evil lurks behind each form of new temptation. Pornographers, for example, are not interested in entertaining an audience, they want to destroy the morality of the viewer and thus gain a customer who will come again and again to their product.

The Moabites and or Midianites (both are mentioned in the passage) sent their women dressed as seductively as possible to the camp of Israel. This technique is still being used to sell products today. The real product, so to speak, was idolatry but, as the saying goes, sex sells. The plot worked as planned, and God sent judgment upon Israel, just as Balaam had planned it.

How many times has this sort of situation been played out in your life or the life of someone you know? Temptation has come, but the person to whom the temptation has come is unaware of the satanic plot to destroy his life. It is sad to behold an individual who is under the power of temptation, unaware of the evil that is gripping his life. When that same individual crosses the line of rebellion against known commands, it is especially distressing. It is the rebellion that

then opens the door for all sorts of sinful indulgences that are destructive and even if repented of, can leave lasting scars.

It was not the fact that the women were Midianites or Moabites that made the situation evil or forbidden. They may have been eligible women for marriage, but they were not there for marriage. Moses himself had married a Midianite woman, Zipporah, during his years in exile. It was the rebellion against the commands of God that became the real issue. There are some temptations that are not bad in themselves, but when there is an evil associated with it, it is evil.

The gambling industry is an example of evil at work. Many individuals have gone to a gambling resort or hotel to relax and have a little fun, only to leave with all their money gone and in some cases all their possessions as well. The people running the establishments are not in it to make you happy, they want your money. Entertaining you is a way of keeping you interested so you will continue to patronize them.

These experiences recorded are for our benefit to learn lessons from them. God doesn't want us to follow their example of disobedience and thereby enter into judgment. If we take these matters to heart, the blessing of God will enrich us.

# Chapter Twenty-two

## After Judgment Comes Hope

Numbers 31

The time finally arrived; forty years of suffering and wondering aimlessly about had come to an end. They could now enter the land. Moses had delivered his final address to the people, he was about to go to the mountain God told him about, there he would view the land and then he would die. Now it was time for a new generation to take over, a generation of freemen under forty years of age, born in the wilderness after the slavery of Egypt. Only two men remained of the original Israelites, Joshua and Caleb. Joshua would be set apart into the role of leadership and Moses would go to the place of his death. The time for hope had come again.

Moses was given one last assignment to fulfill before the mantle of leadership would pass to Joshua, he would wage war upon the Midianites who had seduced Israel into sin. Moses called for a thousand fighting men to be selected from each of the tribes of Israel. These twelve thousand men were outfitted for battle and sent to fight against the Midianites. They killed all the men of Midian, and took all the women and children along with the livestock and articles of wealth and brought them back to Moses and the camp of Israel.

After returning to the camp Moses then commanded them to kill all the remaining males and all the women who had ever slept with a man. This may seem a little harsh by today's standards, but if a society is to remain pure all means of contamination must be removed. It was the spirit of sexual seduction that had brought judgment upon Israel, therefore, all those who were in any way connected to that spirit must be eliminated.

We live in a very permissive society, one that excuses sin, and therefore have serious problems in understanding such drastic measures. The United States of America was once known as a Christian nation, but permitted people of other religions and persuasions entrance into our borders and now it is viewed as offensive to society to invoke the name of Jesus in a public forum! This is the result when permissiveness is embraced as virtue. Spiritual decadence is the result. To avoid the pitfall of permissiveness, Moses nipped it in the bud.

God then spoke to Moses and commanded him to bring Joshua to the tent of the meeting where he would commission him. As God began to speak of how he was going to give these people this land flowing with milk and honey, his heart was breaking at the thought of what was about to happen to these people. Soon they would be occupants of the land and they would settle into the blessings of the land and forget the Lord God who brought them here. They would begin to worship foreign Gods and his judgment would have to fall on them again and again. How hard it is for people to understand that God will not be mocked, that sin produces judgment.

In America today, the word of the day is tolerance. We are being told that we must tolerate each other, even if tolerating sinful living is what we must do. The result of this is that we are tolerating many sinful appetites in the workplace, theaters, and wherever people gather. Even our churches are under pressure to no longer preach against some kinds of sin. America has bowed its knee to the idol of sexual indulgence and any sin that is sex related is now being tolerated if not worshiped!



America was founded upon Christian principles in both our private and public lives. Even though the practice of the faith varied from person to person and church to church, Christianity was the faith of the population of this country. People of other religions have also come here and found refuge from persecution. This is how it should be; however in the process, the public attitude has shifted from a Christian attitude to an attitude of tolerance of sin. We have not only lost our way as a nation, but I fear we have also lost our souls. That which made us great as a nation has been to some degree lost, and what remains is so weak we are vulnerable to disaster.

Already we see the signs of divine displeasure upon us. This nation is being hit with one disaster after another. We are going from crushing cold to sweltering heat; from droughts to floods; we suffer from the plagues of aids, venereal diseases, cancers, heart disease and a host of other ailments. We have had killer storms and earthquakes, yet the end is not in sight. What is our response to all of this? Government intervention! We no longer seem to even think that maybe, just maybe, we should pray! Prayer, we are told, might offend someone, so we save that for more serious threats, such as war.

One day, war may come but prayer won't help. Repentance alone will be what God will listen for, and even then, what has been sown will have to be reaped. We have been blessed above all nations on earth, but we are selling our birthright for a bowl of flesh (sinful indulgence).

The Israelites were listening to their aged leader who was going to make one last journey up a mountain where he would be shown the land that he had so long wanted these people to enjoy. He had heard about it, no doubt dreamed about it, but he was never permitted to see it. Now God would show it to him, and then he would die.

What became of him then is a matter of speculation. The Israelites went and searched for his body, but could not find it. God had buried it, or as some have speculated, took it into heaven. Whatever happened to Moses was not for man to know. People tend to idolize such leaders, and God would not permit the body of Moses to become an idol.

Moses was dead and God buried him. They sent out a search party but never found him. This was the end of an era. It was time to move on.

# Chapter Twenty-three

## “Moses my Servant is Dead.”

"Since (Moses) no prophet has risen in Israel whom the LORD knew face to face, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel." (Duet. 34:10-12)

After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses." (Joshua 1:1-3)

Moses was an extraordinary servant of the Lord, but Moses was dead. The last chapter of his life was truly remarkable. The first forty years was lived in the courts of Pharaoh King of Egypt, and then due to his temper and the slaying of an Egyptian who was mistreating an Israelite, he had to flee the country.

He then lived another forty years among the Midianites where he married a second wife named Keturah. (I say second wife because Miriam, Moses sister criticized Moses for having an Ethiopian wife. This wasn't Keturah because she was a Midianite. It is my belief that Moses had married her while still in Pharaoh's court and had gotten back with her when he returned to deliver Israel.) Little is known of Moses' private life because the focus of the story was about God's roll in delivering his people.

What God accomplished through Moses in the last forty-year period of Moses' life is truly remarkable but that is history now. Moses is dead and it is time to move on.

God gave a promise to Moses that he would deliver the people of Israel from Egypt and deliver them into the Promised Land. It was now time to fulfill that promise. Joshua was the newly anointed leader of the people and God was talking to him now just as he had talked to Moses.

Under Moses leadership the East bank of the Jordan River had been secured, and two and a half of the tribes of Israel requested it as their inheritance. That request was granted, but they were still required to go across and assist in the battle to deliver the rest of the Promised Land.

Joshua led the people to the bank of the Jordan River to a point near Jericho where they would cross the river. Here preparations were made for the actual crossing. The crossing would happen without enemy resistance but a mighty miracle was involved in the crossing.

In our lives as Christians getting to the point of crossing over into the Promised Land always involves a miracle of God. We were born in sin and the love of the world was in our hearts. Jesus came to us with the deliverance he had accomplished on the cross by the shedding of his blood. Once we applied that blood to the entry point of our hearts, (doorposts and lentil) the angel of (eternal) death could not enter. We were then free to leave the sinful life and all its evil entanglements and leave we must or we would surely become Egypt's (sin's) slave again. We had to face the reality that Satan was in hot pursuit with all his old habits, lifestyle, and loves, to capture us and return us to his land. We had to be delivered once more, this time from the grip of our past, just as Israel had to cross the Red Sea.

Once across the sea a new problem arose, how do we live now? A void was now in our hearts that was once filled with sin. Could God satisfy our thirst for what was once so satisfying to us? We, like Israel, had come to a pool of water of God's provision but found it bitter to our taste. Another miracle would have to take place in us if we could receive this water. Bitterness from the hurts of the past would have to be healed. This was accomplished at the cross where Jesus triumphed over the temptation to be bitter against his enemies and to exercise self-will instead of submission to his Father's will. It is when the two ingredients of forgiveness and submission are applied to our hearts that bitterness is healed. It is when we see God's will as having been played out in our lives bringing us to this point that we are able to view our past in the light of the future glory.

We are now ready to move on but soon we will have to encounter our God as he reveals his will regarding how we are to live our lives now. Israel was taken to Mount Sinai, but we are taken to revelations of the Word of God, the Bible. Moses instructed them, but we are instructed by the visitation of the Holy Spirit. Then came the wilderness experience for the Israelites, not that it had to be, but it did have to be because they still had the love of Egypt in their hearts.

It isn't until we stop loving Egypt (sin) that we can enter the Promised Land. There must be a full and total transfer of our affections from what was to what God is bringing us into. It is a burning of the bridges, a total forsaking of the past that is required. They had to want this new land, ah, love this new land if they were going to be willing to die for it. Their hearts had to feel at home here. They had to have a sense of belonging.

I remember when my wife and me first came upon the house we now live in. We needed to locate in Lodi, because where we were living in north Stockton was a little too far to be convenient. We found this house located on a large city lot just blocks from the church. It was old and boarded up. The city had condemned it but it was for sale. I took my wife to see it and when she walked in she said this is home. That was hard for me to understand because it definitely needed more than repairs. What she meant was she had a spiritual sense of belonging. Over the next year and a half we completely redid it from the foundation to the roof with some additions to the floor area. What is is only a hint of what was. The floor plan is totally different, but the same trim is back on. The old doors are in use and the pillars that were once across the long porch are now on the new smaller porch. What is is a blend of the new modern conveniences with the charm of some of the old. What was an empty space between the ceiling and rafters is now a second floor. We have been living here for several years now and the sense of home is still in our hearts.

To be secure in what you are, you must have a sense of belonging and contentment. Going into the Promised Land requires some sacrifices and effort, but the end result is a new place of residence for many years to come.

God is working toward permanency in our walk with him. He is not interested in becoming an occasional visitor; he wants to live in us. For this to become a reality we must also live in him. He takes up residency in our hearts when we take up residency in him! This is what it means to live in the Spirit, to be in Christ, to be a part of his body or to be a part of his church. It is living in a constant state of readiness to react to the Spirit's directives, without the interference of misplaced affection, pride, self-will or rebellion. It is living a life that is in harmony with the character and purposes of God.

The Israelites would cross over and deliver much of the land and settle in it, but not without battles. They were deceived into making a costly compromise with an enemy, an opening to idolatry that was a thorn in their side. Too many compromises led to future idolatry as future

generations saw the ways of the people they had failed to drive out. They began to desire the ways of the other nations instead of instructing them in the better way. Their destiny was to become a light to the nations, but instead they became a symbol of what happens when people disobey the Lord.

Jesus came to fulfill all the promises to Israel and to all humanity. Their destiny is being fulfilled in Christ, though the nation is still in a state of rejection of him. We also have a destiny that can only be fulfilled when we obey the Lord, enter the land, and drive out the enemy. Any compromises will be deadly to the purposes of God. We must put on the armor of God, be alert, and pray with all kinds of prayers. (See Eph. 6:10-18)

The enemy that they had to face was a challenge and they met it, though never completely, but it was what happened later that was the greatest challenge. Once we have successfully conquered all known enemies and settled into our life in Christ that living for the Lord becomes a routine. It is when this happens that danger is lurking. Many of the lessons learned can soon be forgotten, and slumbering sets in. Relationship with the Lord soon becomes religion, and joy soon turns to boredom. Religious practice soon takes the place of spiritual experiences in Christ, and even the understanding of why we do what we do is lost. This was the process that overcame Israel in their later years. Many people have experienced this same pattern in their experience. What was once a joyful adventure in Christ has become a religious ritual and where evangelistic fervor was there is only fervor to protect some doctrinal points.

Jesus came to bring us life, not just a theory or a lifestyle, but rather real energy, life transforming energy. This energy is called the power of the Holy Spirit. Maintaining a life in the Spirit is not a religious ritual, though rituals do serve a good purpose in some cases. All people have rituals in their lives and our life with the Lord is no exception. It is when the ritual takes the place of the experiencing that there is a problem.

Then there is also another side to the problem of staying in Christ. When focusing upon the need to stay in an experiencing mode, there are those who make experience itself their focus. They will do whatever it takes to give them an emotional feeling, sing with gusto, clap their hands, dance about, jump, run, lie prostrate, or speak in tongues. All such expressions are legitimate in settings where it is the order of a service or in private, but to do it for the sake of an emotional experience soon takes on a spirit of falseness and becomes an expression of a religious spirit.

Some seek atmospheres conducive to such expressions but lack the discernment to see that it is only an atmosphere, and that the Spirit of Jesus is not present. It's the proverbial putting the cart before the horse.

When we seek Jesus getting our hearts right, praising him and worshipping him, focusing upon the Lord that joy results in inspiring expressions such as I have mentioned. The Lord doesn't restrict us from emotional responses to his presence, but rather encourages us to enjoy our salvation and his presence with us. It is only when the emotional experience becomes our heart's desire that a problem is lurking.

Those who desire emotional experiences alone can find plenty of them in the world. Satan is a master at creating emotional experiences. This is what he loves to do. It is the means he has of seducing us away from genuine experiences in Jesus. It is also a means of keeping us occupied so we don't dwell upon the goodness of the Lord.

The difference is like unto the difference between lust and love. When a man and his wife make love, the focus of their experience is upon pleasing their mate. When lust is involved, it is a selfish quest for pleasure with little or no regard for the pleasure of the other.

Love is always focused upon ones spouse; lust on the other hand is selfishness. There is at times a mix of the two, and this dilutes the experiencing of real love. Those who abandon themselves to pure lust become more and more perverse and evil.

Some think that lust enhances love, but it never does. Sipping poison may give a rush of adrenaline, but the end is sickness or loss of life. Keeping our relationship pure is what makes it meaningful and rich.

The nation of Israel would drive out the big enemies, but it was the desire to experience what the heathen around them were doing that brought them down. The greatest challenge that we will ever experience is the challenge of staying focused upon our Lord. Satan the master trickster is always seeking to distract us with a false experience of some kind. If we allow him to succeed we will fall into a snare. Getting from the land of bondage to the land where we can dwell in peace and freedom is a long and tedious journey, but maintaining freedom requires vigilance.

We must never let down and relax our defensive mode because we live in a land that has enemies all around. There are enemies outside the church and there are enemies within it as well. It is often easier to identify external enemies than to see the ones that come to us disguised as friends.

The Lord promised to deliver us out of Egypt and to deliver us into the Promised Land. He will do his part, but it is evident that we must do ours as well. Some people suppose that God does everything totally apart from human involvement, that everything is pre-programmed and what will be will be. This is not what the Bible teaches, however. Always, everything that happens spiritually has both man's part and God's part. "Ask and you will receive, knock and it will be opened unto you," etc. "Weep, wail, and mourn," are all commands that involve our participation. What results is God's part. We lay hands on the sick, but it is the Lord that lifts him up. We must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, it is God who gives us the Spirit of life.

As Israel lined up on the bank of Jordan, the command to march forward was what they must obey, and it wasn't until the feet of the priests entered the water of the flooding Jordan River that the waters began to part. All through their journey they had to look to the Lord for their sustenance and protection. God gave the manna but they had to pick it up off the ground. God sent them into battle, but they had to destroy the enemies. It was their obedience and swords that won the victory, albeit with divine help!

Often the victories in Israel's history went beyond what they did, but they were always involved in some way. We must never forget that where spiritual growth is concerned, we are a part of the process. This is why Satan is so intent upon occupying us with the world and with entertainment, this leads to complacency and complacency leads to spiritual inactivity. Spiritual inactivity leads to spiritual death by default. Just as people who stop eating become sick and die, so it is spiritually.

Our destiny is to live in Christ, fully developed into the fullness of his stature. God has predetermined that it is to be so. We will experience it if we do not give up.

Our part in the process is to continue our journey one step, one experience, one lesson, one correction, and so on, at a time. Never try to run ahead or anticipate what the next step is; doing so only delays the process.

He is the teacher, counselor, keeper, and guide. Walking with Jesus every day is the shortest distance between two points. Going from Egypt to the Promised Land isn't far really, but for Israel it took a long time. It didn't take God long to take them to the border, probably less than a year including the time spent at Mount Sinai and the construction of the Tabernacle, but getting

them ready to actually enter took an additional forty years. Had faith been found in their hearts, they would have entered then, no doubt about it, but fear was evident and faith was not there.

God is looking into your heart right now, what does he see? Does he see a heart that is in love with Jesus and is content to follow him? Does he see the kind of obedient spirit that says, "Do it your way Lord, whatever it takes." If so he will lead on. You will see; he is well able to keep his word. For those who persevere and walk with the Lord, the Land of Promise is waiting to be occupied, here yes, and also eternally.