

EVANGELICAL BIBLE COLLEGE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



**Life of Moses Volume 7
Deuteronomy 12-26**

**(LOVE AND OBEDIENCE IN
ALL AREAS OF LIFE)**

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CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION

We now begin a new section of the speeches of Moses that form the book of Deuteronomy. We are still in what I have called "Part 2", but we move from Moses summary of their history, to a recounting of the principal regulations of the Mosaic law, and Moses will expound upon them and give further reasons to the people as to why they need to be faithful and obedient to them. These chapters give us an insight into the principles of God's leadership protocols.

DEUTERONOMY PART 2

Chapters 12 – 21 Regulations to ensure the land of Israel remains their own

Chapter 12	One place only to worship in the land – no "high places".
Chapter 13	Warning against false prophets and false gods.
Chapter 14	Dietary regulations.
Chapter 15	God's poverty program.
Chapter 16	The three main feasts that all males are to attend.
Chapter 17	Various Laws.
Chapter 18	Tests for the true Prophet of the Lord.
Chapter 19	Cities of refuge and the extent of the land and legal jurisdiction.
Chapter 20	Laws regarding Warfare.
Chapter 21	Laws regarding Murder, Marriage and juvenile delinquents.

As you can see from the brief summary of the content of this next section, this first chapter before us covers the need to eliminate all false forms of worship. It reminds us that anything that looks or feels "pagan" in any shape or form is to have no place in our worship. We are to SEPARATE ourselves from all appearance of evil. 1 Thessalonians 5:22, Jude 20-23.

As the Ambassadors of the living God we are to be "visibly different" to the world, and all who see and hear us are to know that we are not of this world, but speak the things of God. This means our dress, our speech, our manner of work, and our manner of living is to be visibly different to the pagans amongst whom we live. Luke 19:3, John 12:21, 1 Corinthians 14:33, 40, 1 Timothy 2:8-10. The biblical leader mentors this and makes it easier than it actually is – as the Lord is encouraging us to question all the norms that surround us and select only those norms and standards that fit with biblical principles.

DEUTERONOMY 12:1-32

12:1 These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth. **2** Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: **3** And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place. **4** Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God. **5** But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: **6** And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: **7** And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee. **8** Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes. **9** For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you. **10** But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; **11** Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD: **12** And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you. **13** Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: **14** But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee. **15** Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee: the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roebuck, and as of the hart. **16** Only ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water. **17** Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy wine, or of thy oil, or the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock, nor any of thy vows which thou vowest, nor thy freewill offerings, or heave offering of thine hand: **18** But thou must eat them before the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates: and thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto. **19** Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth. **20** When the LORD thy God shall enlarge thy border, as he hath promised thee, and thou shalt

say, I will eat flesh, because thy soul longeth to eat flesh; thou mayest eat flesh, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after. 21 If the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to put his name there be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the LORD hath given thee, as I have commanded thee, and thou shalt eat in thy gates whatsoever thy soul lusteth after. 22 Even as the roebuck and the hart is eaten, so thou shalt eat them: the unclean and the clean shall eat of them alike. 23 Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh. 24 Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water. 25 Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD. 26 Only thy holy things which thou hast, and thy vows, thou shalt take, and go unto the place which the LORD shall choose: 27 And thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of the LORD thy God: and the blood of thy sacrifices shall be poured out upon the altar of the LORD thy God, and thou shalt eat the flesh. 28 Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest that which is good and right in the sight of the LORD thy God. 29 When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land; 30 Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. 31 Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. 32 What thing so ever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. The Mosaic Law was not just a set of rules to live by; it was also a set of principles (judgments) that were designed by God to teach mankind to think biblically. The Law was designed for obedience, but also for education in the character and plan of God. As we have seen already in Exodus and Leviticus the Law teaches principles and prophecy, doctrine and practical instruction for community and agricultural life. The Mosaic Law is given to Israel for all the days that she will be upon this earth. This is the reminder that the greatest days of the Mosaic Law are yet to come; they will be celebrated during the Millennial Kingdom of the Lord Jesus upon the earth, when for a thousand years the Law of Moses will be the Law of the entire earth.

The land was given to the Israelites by the Lord God Himself. To receive the land and sanctify it (set it apart for the Lord), they were to destroy every last vestige of the worship of the pagan gods. These were altars set up in groves of trees, especially planted large Oak and other mighty trees, stone structures upon mountain tops, and altars in the midst of circles of standing stones. These places were to be totally destroyed and smashed to pieces. The large trees used for pagan worship were to be cut down and their timber burned with fire, and nothing was to be left of them.

The very names of the places associated with the pagan gods were to be changed. No remnant of their worship was to be left intact. All items associated with this pagan worship were to be smashed. Paganism was not to be talked with, compromised with, nor were any deals or treaties to be made with these people; exception – they all became believers.... Let us test ourselves and our twenty first century attitudes against the words of the Lord to/through Moses, for we have been taught to tolerate things that cannot be without destruction of biblical values, and society with it.

Total and unremitting war was to be declared upon these people and their belief system. They were to be seen as servants of Satan himself, and they were a plague to the people of God. They were to be destroyed totally and all things associated with them were to be smashed into pieces. We are not used to such strong condemnation and such violence in the order for the destruction of a belief system, because we do not see the satanic origins and the dangers.

We have been influenced by the modern viewpoint of tolerance, but biblically this viewpoint is the satanic “New World Order” system. Satan is behind all the present movements for tolerance and equality between the world religious systems, for from this platform he will build his false religious system in the Great Tribulation period. What we identify of course today is that all faiths are apparently tolerated, all of course except any biblical faith, for it is always attacked.

Tolerance at this present time however actually suits us, for it gives us the opportunity to spread the Gospel message, but it masks a great evil, behind which Satan works with all his energy. Satan is the author of all pagan religion, and he uses them to blind those who are lost. **Ephesians 2:1-10**. We have no mandate today to violently destroy paganism, for the Lord will do that when He returns. Our new mandate as the Church is given in the “Great Commission”, and we are to follow that until this present Age ends. **Matthew 28:18-20, 2 Corinthians 5:16-20**. Lets hear God’s orders to Moses, and see God’s point, and then apply **our orders** and evangelize.

Verses 4 – 5. Worship format and content was to be directed by and to the Lord alone. The Lord had told them what was acceptable and what was not, and also would specifically select one place for a worship centre, and that was the place all the tribes were to gather. They were not to think that they could select a place, or that they could choose to worship how they wished, for the Lord alone was to make such choices and they were to be obedient. Let us pause and reflect upon our worship services in light of these strong points.

Our present Christian worship services have evolved over the last 2000 years into the many and various forms that we now see in all the varied churches on the earth. At one end of the spectrum of Christian worship we see the grandeur of the high church Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican services, where incense wafts around, and chanting and other

rituals dominate the worship. The priesthood at the front is active and the people are passive, responding only at set times and in prescribed and traditional ways. Many of these rituals come from the Jewish Temple of Herod period, but even more are taken from the pagan religions of the old Roman Empire and were “Christianised” as they were made part of church services in the fourth and fifth centuries.

We go from this “temple like” service, to the totally open and sometimes chaotic Pentecostal services where there is no priesthood at the front, but the majority of the people are involved in some active way in the service. In between we have a variety of legalistic, as well as grace oriented services, some of which magnify singing, others, prayer and meditation, and others Bible reading and study.

Without me giving my “perfect church service”, I want to challenge you all to assess each element of your own order of service and measure it against the reality of the Church Age, which involves the following principles:

1. The priesthood of all believers. All are equal and to be involved actively in some way.
2. The importance of the Gospel Message being heard. Bible teaching is a crucial part of every service.
3. The centrality of New Testament doctrines to spiritual life. Systematic teaching occurs to ensure all know truth.
4. The believers walking and being filled with the Holy Spirit. Exercise of spiritual gifts, and worship occurs.

Ask yourself relating to your particular church services, whether they enable the church members to fully express their role, their responsibility to the Lord (giving and prayer and evangelism), and their gifts from the Lord?

Let us not be too “traditional” in our service formats, for what we consider “traditional” is only the habit of a few hundred years, and we need to constantly re-examine the service formats to fine tune our worship to make it more holy and more meaningful to the Lord’s people. The Lord wants us to worship Him in holiness, in love for one another, in service, in prayer, in giving, but most of all, in spirit and in truth. **John 4:20-24, 1 Corinthians 14:23-40.**

Verses 6 – 7. Each tribe would become very parochial over a short period of time and warfare would even break out between them. There was the danger that one tribe would feel special because the tabernacle was in their area and others would feel resentful and not come into that other tribe’s area to worship. The Lord alone would select the place, and they were all to come there. No-one was to be hindered from coming to worship, and no-one was to stay away because they didn’t like the members of that other tribe. They had been united in the wilderness with common enemies, but their unity would break down quickly in the land, as each looked to their own good and not the national good.

Self-centredness would destroy the nation quickly, just as it destroys churches now. Satan’s main attacks come in on us at this point; through our selfish Old Sin Nature, he distracts us into paths that feed our selfish lusts and desires, and he amplifies our self-centred thoughts.

In the filling of the Holy Spirit we will experience the steady growth in the life of the “fruit of the Holy Spirit”, which are all either Christ centred, or other-centred. When we are under the control of our Old Sin Nature we will see the fruits of lust – which has at its heart self-centredness. **Matthew 7:13-23, Galatians 5:13-26.** Notice in these verses that the evidence for the Holy Spirit’s presence is the holy fruit in the life of the person. Coming to worship in unity of faith, in spite of cultural and racial differences, without conflict or hatred, is a major sign of the filling of the Holy Spirit, and is good evidence that the church is worshipping in a godly and spiritual manner.

Verses 8 – 9. The seeds of destruction were already sown by the Old Sin Natures of the people in their hearts. Each had been interpreting the Law in their own way up till this time, and in a manner of speaking, they had, “done what they believed was right according to their sight/viewpoint”. Sadly this would continue, and the words of Moses would be ignored. Judges 17:6, 21:25.

As the Lord’s pastor-teachers we are to remember this principle; we are called to speak the truth of the Lord, teach and personally obey His Word, but having done that faithfully, the responsibility is now with the Lord’s people. Each of us is personally responsible for our own spiritual health and safety, just as we are personally responsible for our physical health and safety. We show the seriousness of the instructions given to us by our faithful obedience to the Lord’s words and we worship in spirit and in truth before Him and the Lord’s people. All worship is personal as well as corporate, because it is our own gift of love and obedience to the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

When the people of Israel come to that place of rest in the new land they will be required to apply these things Moses is saying to them now. Until then they will not be judged, for there isn’t opportunity to apply the instructions, but once they are settled, the Lord will require obedience, and all disobedience will be judged. We are used to thinking that all we do is “our business”, but in the area of worship all we do is **God’s business** and for His Glory, and we must be “holy” and be following any instructions he has given that apply to us. **1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Ephesians 1:4, 5:27, 1 Timothy 2:3, 1 Peter 1:12-16, Jude 20.**

Verses 10 – 14. When they have rest from their enemies they will be required by the Lord to pay attention to obedience to all that they have been ordered to do here. The Lord will then direct Joshua and Eleazar as to where the tabernacle is to be set up, and that choice of the Lord is to be final, until He directs them elsewhere. The first choice will fall upon Shiloh. Joshua 18:1ff. As a judgment upon the nation this choice will be later rescinded, and Shiloh will become a place of desolation in the latter days of Eli, 1 Samuel 4, 7:1-2, and when David is king Jerusalem will be later chosen. 2 Samuel 7:8ff. The judgment upon Shiloh will become a proverb for the Lord’s rejection of a place after evil and disobedience has been left unresolved. Jeremiah 7:12-14, 26:6-9.

The Lord makes it clear that they will go over Jordan and they will come into the land and dwell there in peace. There is absolute certainty in the commands of the Lord to them. Their job is to fulfil the orders given and enter the land and subdue it. Once it is subdued, then they are to ensure that the tabernacle functions and that they do all that the Lord has ordered them through Moses.

God's choice will be initially upon Shiloh, as it is a central location, and within the boundaries of the children of Joseph, who are the most numerous of the tribal groups. Joseph's bones will be buried at Shechem, Joshua 23:32, which is on the border of the lands of Manasseh and Ephraim. Shiloh is further south. So the spiritual leadership of the nation will be in Shiloh, the national leadership, and the entire nation will be encamped in Gilgal for a time, and then they will disperse to their areas. Shiloh will be a teaching centre, as well as a ritual centre, and will later be a lesson for them all.

The coordinating authority from then onwards was meant to be the tabernacle at Shiloh, and the High Priest was meant to be the one who gave judgments over the people, with the priests and Levites acting as local judges in the various towns. This arrangement would break down quite quickly as the people failed to come to the tabernacle and as the Levites failed in their spiritual responsibilities. The final and fatal crisis came in the days of Eli when moral corruption reached an all time high. 1 Samuel 2:12-17, 27-35, 4:11. The prophetic cry will be, Go to Shiloh if you doubt God judges.

The Lord wiped away this arrangement and allowed the Philistines to destroy the Israelite army in the field, capture the Ark for a time, and destroy Shiloh. The tabernacle was taken to Nob and hidden away and the worship of Israel did not function properly until David brings everything back together again in Jerusalem, within the tribal boundary of Benjamin and Judah. The worship centre for Israel will thus move south over the years and settle in Jerusalem, and this will be the centre of Israel's history and destiny, from that point onwards.

The centre of the early church will also experience changes. It will initially be Jerusalem also, but then it's epicentre will shift to Antioch, then to Ephesus, and then to Rome. Through the centuries of Church History the centre of the Church's earthly mission has shifted again and again, to Europe, to the Americas, to Asia, and to Africa, as different people groups show proper devotion to the true mission of the Church. Finally the centre of the Church's activity will also return to Jerusalem, at the Second Advent, for all history will find it's culmination there. Zechariah 12:10 – 14:7, Acts 1:9-11.

Israel's history, and the history of the Church both teach the same point; God chooses those to be at the centre of His Plan, and they are those who are obedient to His Plan. The Church diverges from Jerusalem and the Jewish people after their rejection of their King and Messiah, but will be reunited with Jerusalem in the end and the two streams of revelation will come back together in the person of the One who is King of all kings and Lord of all lords.

Verses 15 – 19. Until the camp of Israel breaks up and the people disperse to their tribal allocations all the animals killed were to be killed at the door of the tabernacle only. All blood shed was to be seen as holy and devoted to the Lord. Every animal killed for food was to be dedicated to the Lord and slaughtered at the tabernacle, and its blood poured into the ground there. Once the people are in their lands this will not be possible, as it will be several days journey from some places in the land to the tabernacle and back again, so the rule is changed for animals killed for food. Leviticus 17:3-6. The killing of all animals was still to remain a special thing, and the shedding of blood was to be a holy thing, and the blood was always to be released from the animal and poured into the ground, never caught and eaten in any form.

Even though animals may be slain for food in local towns, the formal sacrificial and ceremonial meals may only be eaten by the Levites in the tabernacle and the people were to ensure that their local Levites attended the tabernacle to fulfil their duties every year. During their annual service the Levites would undergo "in service training", and learn from the High Priest, and so "be fired up" with God's Word again as they lived in the tabernacle surrounds for their month of service every year. Paul would do this also with his team, both as they walked, and with special meetings. Titus 3:12-15.

The tithe from all the crops was to be delivered to the Levites living amongst them, and they were to be supported and valued by the people in each and every town they lived. It may be that the local Levites would collect the tithes and then deliver them when they attended the tabernacle for their yearly service. It appears that the Levites would also do the local slaughtering of the animals, and so receive a portion of the tithe for their upkeep as a result. They were also to be the judges of the local communities and judge in accordance with the Mosaic Law. In places where the Levites were spiritual men this would work well, as Bible saturated and obedient men would be the spiritual centre of each community.

Sadly when they became corrupt, the ritual killing of the animals at the city gate could quickly develop into a local cult and a local shrine be erected, and before long paganism would enter the community, run by the Levite. This will occur in some places in the days of the Judges. The people are urged not to forget to support the Levite, and the Levite is urged to lead the people in their worship and their obedience to the Mosaic Law, and ensure all blood is poured out before the Lord. This same phenomenon occurs when pastors become corrupt today and establish self centred and self serving cults rather than centres for genuine worship and Bible teaching.

Verses 20 – 22. The Lord will enlarge their borders and the distance to the tabernacle will be too great for them to take their animals there, but they are still to remember the rules of Leviticus and recognize the permission given to kill the animal in their own city is a grace provision and they are still under obligation to keep the rest of the Law and attend the tabernacle every time the Law demands. The flesh of animals was to be eaten, after the blood was poured out, but the animal was not to be considered a sacrifice, for only at the tabernacle itself could sacrifices occur.

Verses 23 – 24. The blood was to be always seen as belonging to God who gave the life to the animal. There was to be a sacredness to the life of the animal as there was to be to man. Only those who had been condemned because of gross sin were to be killed. Men and animals were not to be killed wantonly, or with cruelty, nor was blood to be left in the animal, but poured out into the earth with prayer.

The recognition of God's ownership of all life, and that all life was to be poured back into the earth, from where it came, was to saturate their thinking. All life was to be valued and animals killed for food or sacrifice only, never for pleasure. It appears that the animals spoke in the Garden of Eden, as neither Eve nor Adam were surprised when the serpent spoke, as it was "normal" then. Genesis 3:1-7. For the animals to be sacrifices implies that they gave themselves to the Lord on man's behalf, for they could speak and that meant speak to God about his plan.

If the animals gave themselves for man, then man was to respect their sacrifice and honour all the created world, never abuse it. Genesis 3:21, 4:4. Blood was to be seen as holy and never to be insulted, abused, eaten, or carelessly shed. When the man and woman first put on the skins of animals they were animals they had spoken to – feel the shock of this and see and feel what our first parents felt as they faced the full consequences of their sin. The last sacrifice would be the very Son of God, the Lord Jesus, and the horror of that death was the final reflection of the first confrontation with the cost of sin in the Garden of Eden.

The lives of men and women were to be taken when gross and deliberate evil made it necessary only, and even then the ones killing the evil people were to consider themselves unclean until seven days had passed, and were to offer up sacrifices for themselves, for they had taken life. Numbers 31:19-20. The Creator was to be honoured and the Creator was to be worshipped alone, and the Creator was to be obeyed in all things pertaining to the creation. The holiness of the created world was not to be lost because of the stain of sin. All Men and Women were to honour what God had made, and remember that it was our sin that lost all the goodness and wonder of Eden.

Verses 25 – 28. The key phrase here is, "thou shalt do right in the sight of the Lord". It is repeated in this section to underline its importance. What the people thought was alright was to be checked against what the Lord had revealed was His will, and they were to correct their views of right and wrong by divine revelation. They were not to relax spiritually and do things that were forbidden. They were to offer sacrifices only upon the Lord's altar; and they were to build no others in the land.

We are to be in no doubt about the plan, purpose, and power of God, and as the Lord's pastors and teachers we are tasked with instructing the people of God clearly in these things. The pastor-teacher is the "herald of the king" and that means we teach the King's Policy – the doctrines of the Bible. The teaching of the Word of God is essential for all of God's people.

We are not our own, to do what we like, but we are bought with a price, the precious blood of Christ was shed for us. We are therefore under the Lord's orders in all things and are to be obedient in all things. 1 Corinthians 6:20, 7:23, 2 Peter 2:1. Jesus reminded his disciples that he calls us his friends when we do what he tells us to do.

John 15:7-15. *"7. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.
8. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.
9. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.
10. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.
11. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.
12. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.
13. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.
14. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.
15. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."*

Verses 29 – 31. They were to constantly remember that the Lord was dispossessing the people of the land of Canaan, and they were inheriting land that was previously other peoples, and they lost it due to their evil. If the Israelites forgot this and practiced the same evils that the previous people did, then they would lose the land, just as the previous people did. The danger they faced was enslavement. The evils of the old paganism were subtle and powerfully seductive. It was easy to slip into paganism, and it still is for God's people today. The enemy has attractive people on his team and his ways are pleasant and easy to walk down hill into! Matthew 7:13-14.

The temptation was to join the remnant of the pagans living amongst them in the "natural worship" of that land. The pagans could argue that their gods were there long before the Israelites and their traditions were "good luck" to practice. They could seduce them with the sexuality of the pagan worship and also could seduce them with the pleasant pastoralism of their grain and cake offerings. It was subtle and it was pleasant and sensual, but it was evil.

The Lord makes clear that all paganism is an abomination to Him, and He will not allow any to practice it without judgment. God hates this in all its varied forms. There is no "safe" paganism; all forms of it will destroy the people seduced by it over time. The Israelites are to apply the Law, and not to add to it any paganism, nor diminish from it any rules that were ordered. God's Word was to be honoured and followed and all paganism is to be avoided. Today this means, we are not to enter any pagan temple, nor be a part of any shared "worship" with pagans in our communities. We

are to be separate from them and proclaim the only message of salvation, which is through the name of Jesus alone. Acts 4:12, 16:31.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. God's Word is to be followed, and to be followed it must be known. Let us test ourselves in this. Are we teaching the Word of God enough within our local church? Are we opening the Word of Truth and teaching the people the truth often enough to keep them from the subtle temptations of the enemy? Let us teach the truth often and thoroughly. The Lord holds us responsible for proclaiming the truth and we are not to add or subtract from it.
2. Let us guard ourselves against all inroads of modern paganism. The enemy is subtle, but all practices that take us away from genuine worship of the Lord our God and the honouring of His Word and work are to be fled from. Let us keep auditing our worship services to ensure we do not get away from the thorough systematic protection of the Lord's people by the regular proclaiming of the Lord's truth. The bible systematically taught alone protects God's people.
3. Let us separate ourselves from all appearances of evil. The world is constantly tempting believers to act, speak and live like pagans; let us resist all such temptations and stand as the people of God, visibly different to the pagan world. Let us be separate from all forms of paganism and have no part of their evil practices. Let us preach the Gospel message whenever we can and proclaim truth whenever we speak.
4. To be discerning requires that we have the principles of doctrine to apply into situations. This requires knowledge of the doctrines of the scripture. Systematic teaching is a basic requirement for maturity in the Christian life. As pastors we have a solemn responsibility to do a lot more than entertain God's people each week. We must teach them or they will be lost lambs for easy slaughtering in the devils world.
5. God would select a place to worship and the proper way to worship for Israel. We, in the Church Age, are given far more flexibility as to how services are to run, but let us ensure they are holy, godly, thoughtful, intelligent, and involve both training for believers and worship. Let us test ourselves against the standards of scripture, not the practices of men.

REFLECTION UPON THE LAW OF MOSES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

All of the Ten Commandments, given in Exodus 20, are quoted in the New Testament. This indicates that the PRINCIPLES of righteousness, obedience, respect, etc which underlie the Law still do apply in our lives.

1. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." (Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27)
2. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." (Acts 15:20-29, 21:25, Romans 1:18-32, 2:22, 1 Corinthians 10:7,14, Galatians 5:20, Colossians 3:5, 1 John 5:21)
3. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." (Matthew 12:31-32, Mark 3:28-29, 7:22, Luke 12:10, Colossians 3:8)
4. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." (Romans 14:5-6, Galatians 4:9-10, Colossians 2:14-17). It should be noted that the New Testament commands freedom from any obligation to the old Jewish Sabbath, but that **every day** is to be looked upon as our "Sabbath rest" – a day to serve, to worship and to honour God with Holy Spirit filled work, not our own human "works". Hebrews 4:1-2, 10:1-10, 12:1-12. The Mosaic Law is expanded totally – with all days to be for worship.
5. "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." (Matthew 15:4, 19:19, Mark 7:10, 10:19, Luke 18:20, Ephesians 6:2, Colossians 3:20, 2 Timothy 3:2)
6. "Thou shalt not kill/murder." (Matthew 5:21, Mark 10:19, Luke 18:20, Romans 13:9, James 2:11, 1 Peter 4:15, 1John 3:15)
7. "Thou shalt not commit adultery." (Matthew 5:27-32, 19:9,18 Mark 10:11-12,19, Luke 16:18, 18:20, Romans 2:22, 13:9, Galatians 5:19, James 2:11)
8. "Thou shalt not steal." (Matthew 19:18, Mark 10:19, Luke 18:20, Romans 2:21, 13:9, Ephesians 4:28)
9. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." (Matthew 15:19, Mark 10:19, Luke 18:20, Romans 13:9)

10. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's." (Mark 7:22, Luke 12:15, Romans 1:20, 7:7, 13:9, 1 Corinthians 6:10, Ephesians 5:3-5, Colossians 3:5, 1 Timothy 3:3, 1 Thessalonians 2:5, Hebrews 13:5)

REFLECTION UPON THE "FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT"

1. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer. We are commanded to allow Him to fill (or fully control) our lives (Ephesians 5:18).

2. The filling (controlling) of the Spirit can be broken by:

- a) Grieving the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) - sin, doing something you shouldn't.
- b) Quenching the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19) - not doing something you should (like quenching a fire, allowing the flame to go out).

3. The filling (controlling) of the Spirit can be restored by confession of sin and full surrender to do the will of God (1 John 1:9)

4. The Spirit produces the very character of the Christ in the believer: (Galatians 4:19, 5:22, 23, Ephesians 3:16, 17, Philippians 1:20, 21, 2 Corinthians 3:3)

a) The fruit of the Spirit:

- i) Galatians 5:22-23 - Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-control.
- ii) Romans 14:17 - Righteousness, Peace, Joy.
- iii) Colossians 3:12-15 - Compassion, Kindness, Humility, Gentleness, Patience, Forgiveness, Love, Peace, Thankfulness.
- iv) 1 Thessalonians 1:3 - Faith, Love, Endurance, Hope.

b) Rejoicing in Christ (Philippians 3:1, 4:4).

c) Loving one another (John 15:12, Romans 12:10, Ephesians 5:2).

d) Striving for the faith (Philippians 1:27, Jude 3).

e) Putting away all sin (1 Corinthians 5:7, Hebrews 12:1).

f) Abstaining from all appearances of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

g) Submitting to injuries (1 Corinthians 6:7).

h) Subduing the temper (Ephesians 4:26, James 1:19).

i) Shunning the wicked (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

j) Abounding in the works of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58 1 Thessalonians 4:1).

k) Showing a good example (1 Timothy 4:12, 1 Peter 2:12).

l) Following after that which is good (Philippians 4:8, 1 Timothy 6:11).

m) Perfecting holiness (2 Corinthians 7:1, 2 Timothy 3:17).

n) Hating defilement (Jude 23).

o) Overcoming the world. (1 John 5:4-5)

p) Adorning the gospel. (Philippians 1:27, Titus 2:10)

q) Forgiving injuries. (Romans 12:20)

r) Living peaceably with all. (Romans 12:18, Hebrews 12:14)

s) Visiting the afflicted. (James 1:27)

t) Sympathising with others. (Romans 12:15, 1 Thessalonians 5:14)

u) Honouring others. (Romans 12:10)

v) Submitting to authorities. (Romans 13:1-7)

w) Being content. (Philippians 4:11, Hebrews 13:5)

x) Walking worthy of the Lord. (Colossians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:12)

y) Walking in the newness of life. (Romans 6:4)

z) Walking as children of light. (Ephesians 5:8)

aa) Glorifies Christ in his body. (Philippians 1:20, 21)

bb) Christ is at home in his body. (Ephesians 3:16,17)

cc) A lifestyle which honours God in the presence of men. (2 Corinthians 3:3)

5. The filling of the Holy Spirit in every believer only occurs in two ages of mankind:

a) Church age Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:22,23

b) Millennium - Joel 2:28, 29 (characterized by ecstasies)

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a vital one with application throughout all history, for it, along with chapter 18, gives us the rules relating to false prophets, and tells us how to spot the fake from the real prophet of God. God has used prophetic voices throughout history and if the Lord chooses to speak through a prophet it is vital we hear the Lord's words in that situation, for clearly it is a serious thing. In all ages the way to identify the true prophet is the same, and the way to spot the fake is the same. The Bible keeps us safe from seduction and distraction, if we pay attention to it, and obey the Lord's words.

The penalty in Israel for false prophecy was death, and the penalty for all who left the truth and entered into apostasy was death. If a city left behind the faith of their fathers and entered into the paganism of their neighbours, then that city was to be totally and utterly destroyed and its ruins burned with fire. The godly people were to be afraid of even touching any thing from a place that had gone into idolatry. While we have no authority to do this to apostate churches today we are to see that God's attitude to corrupt and godless liberalism is that it is an evil, and we are not to even enter corrupt, or liberal churches that reject the truth of God's Word.

We must test ourselves against these things today. How seriously do we avoid the evils of false religion and fake Christianity? Many believers will pay for tours to take them to pagan lands and they will visit and photograph the great pagan temples of the places. They are not there to evangelise, but as tourists! This is wrong and will always be judged by God, for we are not to be tourists of evil, but evangelists of good.

I want to challenge you all after we have studied this chapter, and say that no believer in the Lord Jesus Christ ought ever to be a tourist in pagan lands, nor be a visitor to satanic sites. We are to give no comfort to the enemy, nor pay homage or respect to his shrines, nor pay his bills by our tourist dollars. We are also to avoid the churches of those who have rejected the Bible as God's Word, who practise corrupt rituals, or make merchandise of the Lord's people.

DEUTERONOMY 13:1-18

13:1 If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, **2** And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; **3** Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. **4** Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. **5** And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee. **6** If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; **7** Namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; **8** Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: **9** But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. **10** And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. **11** And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you. **12** If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the LORD thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying, **13** Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known; **14** Then shalt thou enquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you; **15** Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword. **16** And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every whit, for the LORD thy God: and it shall be an heap for ever; it shall not be built again. **17** And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand: that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and shew thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers; **18** When thou shalt hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the LORD thy God.

REFLECTIONS

Verse 1. The biggest danger for all believers through all of time is satanically inspired deception. The enemy is a counterfeiter of truth. He masquerades as an "angel of light". 2 Corinthians 11:14. Satan is not all powerful, and the believer always has the promise of God's Word, 1 John 4:4, to claim in any encounters with satanic forces, but the devil and his demons are able to work miracles of sorts. He can work "miracle signs and lying wonders". 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12. We are not to knowingly expose ourselves to his power at any point. **Deception** – remember Matthew 7:13-23.

The works of the enemy are designed to distract, deceive and lead astray all who do not love the Lord with all their heart, and have not taken His Word seriously. The false will prosper under Satan's encouragement until the Lord returns to judge this world. Matthew 13:24-43.

Satan hates mankind and seeks the destruction of all the people he can seduce. He knows his destiny is the Lake of Fire, Revelation 20:10ff, and he wants all the men and women he can get to join him there. He is malice filled towards mankind. The most powerful religious tools he uses are the false prophet and the satanic wonder worker, and unless the people of God are vigilant they will be fooled by such people. We must always be on guard; this is not a holiday cruise! **James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8-9.**

There have always been more false prophets than true prophets at all times in history when the Lord is speaking to His people. Remember, the enemy is a counterfeiter, and when God is moving he counters every move with his own! **Isaiah 9:13-16, Jeremiah 6:13-21, 23:9-40, Ezekiel 13:1-23.** The final elimination of false prophets will only occur when the Lord returns to judge the world, deliver the Jewish believers fighting in Jerusalem, and establish His kingdom. Zechariah 13:2-9. Once again, we have no authority now to kill/eliminate these people, but must spot them and expose their falsehoods, and we can expect them in the church in increasing numbers as we draw near the end.

Verses 2 – 5. Three cases of false prophets are mentioned here in this chapter and vigorous measures are to be taken against them. Whether they are straight prophets, who speak the words aloud, or dreamers of dreams who tell what they have "seen", or workers of miraculous signs, the test is to be made of them to prove their origin, whether they are of God or of the enemy. We are urged to "test the spirits" which speak in the church services through the members assembled there, **1 John 4:1-3.**

One test is given by John, and relates to the belief in the physical coming of the Lord as the only Saviour, but this section of Deuteronomy gives us another test that is to be applied to all prophetic words and visions. All the tests are included in the doctrinal studies on prophecy at the end of this chapter. The first thing to see very clearly in scripture, is that God's people are to be sceptics and testers of the miraculous; we are not to be credulous and foolish, as is too often the case today!

The first category of wonder worker is given in these first five verses; the person speaks in the name of God and does a work of wonder, and the "sign" or wonder they do is apparently real. The first issue here is testing the real from the fake straight away in the "sign". The great magician Houdini around 1900 exposed to ridicule, and proved all séances that he attended and tested were fake and simply the work of charlatans and tricksters. The enemy hated him for this and he was killed by a careless and malicious punch by a Canadian student during one of his shows.

All apparent miracles are to be tested by believers, for we know the enemy is out to deceive us, and so no "sign" is to be accepted without thorough testing. Let me use a modern example. A "preacher/healer" comes to town and demands the attention of God's people with his special revelations and power "signs", and he dramatically heals a person in his first meeting. Such a healing is to be immediately tested for reality; the "healed" person's medical history is to be checked, their relationship with the "healer" checked out, and the reality of their healing ascertained medically.

If they are proved genuine and the healing is real, then the miracle is to be accepted, but the preacher who did the healing is still not to be believed yet, nor obeyed at that point. So having tested the sign and making sure it is real, the next step is to be taken to test the person of the healer and her/his words further. Reason given in **Matthew 7:13ff.** The enemy has power, and the certification of any healer-prophet was a two step process; first the actions were to be certified as real, and then the person was to be tested, to ensure they were not "angels of light" from Satan.

If the "healer-wonder worker" then calls the people to worship other gods, then that person is a false prophet and is to be publicly exposed as such. Anyone using a powerful sign to call people away from genuine worship to a false thing is to be seen as a false prophet. Such a person has been allowed to come into the nation to test it, to see if the people will hold to the Lord their God, or be easily fooled. Now be careful here, for the Lord has not sent such a person, but simply used their coming for His own purposes. God knows the plans and schemes of Satan before they are actioned and so is well able to stop all of them. The Lord allows some to prosper for a time to sort out His people; challenging us all to apply His Word, and disciplining us when we fail to do so. **2 Thessalonians 2:9-11.**

Verses 6 – 10. The second case is the secret temptation to turn away from God. The challenge to God's people is that they obey the Lord and His Word at all times and in all the ways ordered, and that nothing, no power, no person, and no event will budge them from their obedience to the Lord. The person who calls the believers away from the truth of God was to be immediately executed, as soon as they were exposed for the servant of the devil they were. No relationship of kinship or friendship is to protect the person who is a charlatan.

The wonder worker comes openly, but others will come with subtlety and privately to individuals as their friends, marriage partners, and relatives, and try to get them to walk away from God to follow after evil. If anyone tries to entice the believer away from the truth they are to be dealt with most severely. No mercy is to be shown to them, for their secret temptation is evidence of their prior total commitment to the enemy of God. For someone to try to lead astray into evil their closest friend or relative, it is a sign of just how far they have gone away themselves. People do not entice others into a secret sin unless they are totally hooked on it themselves! **Galatians 1:6-9, 2 Timothy 4:1-5.**

Verses 11 – 18. All dealing with evil men and women was to be in public, that all might fear the Lord and flee from evil. 1 Timothy 5:20. The third case is now opened up for study and remedial action. It is far more serious and extensive than the other two, because by the time it has come to light the poison of evil has had time to work in a community. In this case people of Israel have given themselves over to the worship of Belial, and their relatives and friends have not acted to stop the evil, but have joined them. The evil has then spread into that community to the point where the entire village or town is now given over to the worship of the evil deities of paganism, and the ways of God are rejected. The thing is done quietly and by the time it is known the entire town is under the spell of paganism.

Once this comes to the knowledge of the High Priest, or elders of the tribal group amongst whom the apostates live, then investigation is to be made of the truth of the allegation. The investigation is to be thorough and fair, for the truth is sought alone. This is no witch hunt, but a serious attempt to find out what has happened in this place and to take action to limit the spread of the poison of paganism. If the investigation discovers that this place has been given over to paganism, then the tribe in whose area it is must take radical action.

It is not clear whether all the Israelites or just the tribal group affected is to take the action, but I suspect that all the nation is to gather, or send representatives to undertake the assault upon the apostates. The entire community that has gone astray is to be destroyed, with all put to the sword. No prisoners are to be taken and no mercy shown; the entire adult population is to be destroyed. The cattle also are to be all killed, and all the booty of the city is to be gathered into a heap and burned with fire, then the entire city is to be burned and smashed into the ground and the place is never to be lived in again. It is a cursed place once the entire population has gone into idolatry.

The Lord will not forgive the sins of such a place, nor forgive the rest of the nation for letting such evil survive in the land. They are to be destroyed totally. When the evil is wiped out, then the Lord will forgive the people and show them mercy and enable the blessing of the land to be enjoyed again. Total destruction of the evil place is required, and nothing short of it is acceptable. What is right in the Lord's eyes is to be done, not what is right in man's eyes. Once again it is vital we remind ourselves we are not permitted to do such a thing today, but the principle is to be seen and sat with.

What is right in man's eyes is often to forgive well before it is safe to do so, and let sin slide by without thinking where it will go! We can be too quick to overlook sin and too fast to forgive and forget evils that are destructive to the community, and so we open the door for their re-emergence. I have seen Christian Churches forgive rapists, paedophiles, and murderers, well before there was any evidence that indicated they were changed men. I have then seen these evil men use those foolish churches to target their next victims and so multiply their evil, and destroy the church's witness.

If we overlook sin we will allow it to grow, and if we ignore evil, hoping people will "grow out of it", we open the door to rape, robbery and murder! We have no mandate to kill entire communities today, for we are here to preach to them until they die of natural causes, but we must pause and reflect upon just how destructive unchecked evil is. Believers are often horrified at the Lord's instruction here, yet the alternative is the death of many, many more as a nation goes downhill into total evil. We are horrified by God's judgment at times, and yet we have become used to the daily tally of evil in murder, drug addiction and rape/abuse.

Our focus today is to prayer in Holy Spirit power and preach in Holy Spirit power, and seek the salvation of the lost, but while we do that we are to keep the innocent safe from evil men and women, not open them to abuse under the excuse that we were witnessing to the drug peddlers, paedophiles and thugs. We would do well to reflect upon the cost of unchecked evil in our modern society, and long for the day more than we do when the Lord will destroy all the evil men and women who have caused such pain for so long. **Revelation 6:9-17.** Until then we preach the truth to them all that some might repent and enter heaven as trophies of grace. **1 Corinthians 6:9-11.**

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. All miraculous signs are to be tested by God's people, and all miracle workers are to be examined thoroughly and their lives, words, and work tested for truth or evil. Great signs and wonders will occur at all times in history, the only question to be asked is, where are they from? Let us be careful, and not impressed by power, only by the godly source of divine power. Let us be obedient to the Lord in these things and test the spirits that speak through men and make sure that the vessels are pure and holy, not servants of the enemy himself.

2. Satan is a deceiver and he hates mankind. His hatred needs to be spoken of more often and people need to know his "devices". He deceives with "lying wonders" and we must warn people not to be impressed by signs of great power, for they are not to be seen as godly in origin until they are tested and found to be so. We are to be sceptical, not gullible!

3. Jesus had said, "By their fruits you shall know them". We are to examine the lives of all who preach and teach to ensure that they are holy vessels for the Lord's service. An unclean vessel cannot produce good fruit for long! The main fruit is godliness and the encouragement to be godly. No-one who loves the Lord will try to lead people away from the Lord and His holy worship. None who love the Lord will be lewd in behaviour and language. None who love the Lord will entice people into evil and sinful activities. Let us be rigorous and test the preachers of good to ensure they are not leading good people astray.

4. All evil workers will be eliminated from the earth when the Lord returns. **Matthew 24:29-44.** We are not to be shocked by the elimination of evil, for when people have decided to follow after the enemy's ways there is no hope for

change. They have made their choice and the Lord then makes His choice, and they are eliminated. Recognize that this is the only way evil can be eliminated; there are no soft options to eliminate evil. Let us thank God that He is just and fair in His judgment, and that our task now is to ensure that the lost have no excuse before Him for their choices.

REFLECTION UPON EXPECTED SATANIC ATTACK UPON BELIEVERS

1. As believers we battle two enemies; the Old Sin Nature from within, (Romans 7:18, 8:8, Galatians 5:16-19) and Satan without. (John 8:44, 1 John 3:8)
2. We must know what Satan is up to and learn his strategies so that we might be ready and alert. (2 Corinthians 2:11)
3. Satan's most potent attack is to install false pastor teachers within the church who teach just enough false doctrine to sidetrack foolish believers. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)
4. Satan attacks believer's assurance of salvation.
5. He also accuses believers of sin both to God and to the believer in the form of guilt. (Revelation 12:9-10)
6. Satan wants us to trust our feelings; God wants us to trust His Word. (Romans 8:1)
7. Satan lures believers away from the Word (Genesis 3:4) whilst God wants believers stabilised upon His Word. (Isaiah 26:3)
8. Satan hinders believers from doing the geographical and operational will of God.
9. Satan will do all he can to hinder the believer's growth: (2 Peter 5:18)
 - a) by getting the believer's eyes off Christ and onto self, others or circumstances
 - b) by encouraging lust for material things over spiritual growth
 - c) by encouraging mental attitude sins.
10. Satan is the author of sin and the founder of fear. We are not called to fear but to faith. (2 Timothy 1:7)

CHAPTER 14**INTRODUCTION**

As we go through this chapter, (and we will go through it reasonably quickly), we will wonder why the Lord made such rules for His people. None of us would ever think of eating most of the things that are forbidden unless we were in a survival situation, yet obviously these were issues for the people of God, and if this much space is taken up with the rules, there must be a number of key points here. We are presently excused from following these rules, in accordance with the Holy Spirit's guidance to the early Apostles. Acts 10, 15:19-21. Having noted this however, there are several key doctrinal principles that will emerge as we study this section that have application to all the ages of man. God does not waste words and instructions, so let us reflect upon the things Moses says from the Lord here.

DEUTERONOMY 14:1-29

14:1 Ye are the children of the LORD your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead. **2** For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth. **3** Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing. **4** These are the beasts which ye shall eat: the ox, the sheep, and the goat, **5** The hart, and the roebuck, and the fallow deer, and the wild goat, and the pygarg, and the wild ox, and the chamois. **6** And every beast that parteth the hoof, and cleaveth the cleft into two claws, and cheweth the cud among the beasts, that ye shall eat. **7** Nevertheless these ye shall not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the cloven hoof; as the camel, and the hare, and the coney: for they chew the cud, but divide not the hoof; therefore they are unclean unto you. **8** And the swine, because it divideth the hoof, yet cheweth not the cud, it is unclean unto you: ye shall not eat of their flesh, nor touch their dead carcase. **9** These ye shall eat of all that are in the waters: all that have fins and scales shall ye eat: **10** And whatsoever hath not fins and scales ye may not eat; it is unclean unto you. **11** Of all clean birds ye shall eat. **12** But these are they of which ye shall not eat: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the ospray, **13** And the glade, and the kite, and the vulture after his kind, **14** And every raven after his kind, **15** And the owl, and the night hawk, and the cuckow, and the hawk after his kind, **16** The little owl, and the great owl, and the swan, **17** And the pelican, and the gier eagle, and the cormorant, **18** And the stork, and the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and the bat. **19** And every creeping thing that flieth is unclean unto you: they shall not be eaten. **20** But of all clean fowls ye may eat. **21** Ye shall not eat of anything that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien: for thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk. **22** Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. **23** And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always. **24** And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the LORD thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD thy God hath blessed thee: **25** Then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose: **26** And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household, **27** And the Levite that is within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee. **28** At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: **29** And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 2. The mourning and funeral rituals of people tell you a lot about the belief system of those people. The pagan peoples shaved their heads and slashed themselves with knives when their family died. The amount of blood that flowed became a sign of the greatness of the grief, and the mourning rituals became self centred displays of emotion and despair. The experience of death is not to disfigure any believer, either spiritually or physically. Nor is grieving to be about us, it is to be remembering the dead, and affirming their/our belief in our shared eternal destiny.

We have a faith system that incorporates the fact of death and there is no reason for despair and emotional excess when we face a death of a loved one who has gone ahead of us to the arms of the Lord. The pain and sadness of death is rooted in sin and evil, and if we are triumphant, in Christ Jesus, over the kingdom of Satan and this world, then we have victory over death's sting. **1 Corinthians 15:55-56, Psalm 68:20, 116:15.**

The promises of God are abundant regarding death for believers. The two key Old Testament words from the Lord on this matter are, firstly in **Psalm 68:19-20**. "*Blessed be the Lord who daily loads us up with benefits/blessings. He is the God of our Salvation. Selah. He that is our God is the God of our Salvation. To the Lord our God belong the issues from death.*" Notice how the central doctrine that is to be considered in light of the fact of death, is the doctrine of Salvation. Then, having settled your salvation status before the Lord, all the issues that flow from the fact of death are in the Lord's hands, just as our salvation is.

Secondly look now at **Psalms 116: 12-15**, and see how salvation and praise also figure centrally. *“What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits to me? I will take the cup of salvation, and I will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.”*

When a loved one dies we have sadness, often great sadness, for in our human life we are sorry for the lack of on-going company with that person. Believer’s grieving is coming to terms with the fact of temporary separation from them. Unbelievers weep because they face the end of all their hopes, plans and dreams at death. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. For the believer death should be seen as the gateway to the full fellowship that we have known in part only here upon the earth. **2 Samuel 12:18-23, Acts 7:55-60, 1 Corinthians 13:9-12.**

Even though death means the entry into heaven of a believer, the losses associated with it for those left behind are what pains us most in our grief. This pain of loss of fellowship is normal and certainly not sinful. The deaths of children, and deaths of depressed people through suicide when they were “beside themselves”, will always be awful, but the grief will last only for a time, when Bible doctrine guides the souls of those who live on. We are able to process grief over time if we walk close to the Lord in whose arms our loved ones rest until we meet again. Until then we have the assurance of scripture that the dead departed believers look on and cheer us on from heaven’s “stands”. **Hebrews 12:1-3.**

Verses 3 – 8. The Law covered animals, birds and fish that were clean and able to be eaten, and unclean, and forbidden for food. In most cultures of this day every thing that moved was eaten in some form or other, and still in many parts of the world this is the norm, and even living things that have died of natural causes are cooked and eaten after they have died naturally.

The eating of all living things was at times a sign of the desperation in hunger, but all too often of the simple greed of the people involved. The Israelites were not to behave in such a manner, for if they did things the Lord’s way there would be no lack of food for them to eat, and they were to eliminate the vast majority of living things from their “menu” as a sign of their difference to other nations and as a sign of the faith that God would provide enough “clean” food for them without their having to be desperate or perverted in their taste.

Now firstly let us examine the concept of “clean” and “unclean”, for it has nothing to do with physical cleanliness of the food when cleaned and dressed for cooking. Pork or rabbit, when cleaned and prepared for cooking is equally physically “clean” to beef and just as tasty and nutritious. It was not any physical health hazard that leads to this rule, but a special teaching point of the Lord that was behind this. Had it simply been a health hazard reason, then the ban would have continued, but it does not now, as we see in the vision of Peter in Acts 10.

The first word to look at is the word “abominable” in verse three. It is a word that is associated with pagan worship and ritual practices. The food that will be banned was often food that was associated in some way with pagan rituals that had disgusting elements to them. All that was associated with paganism was to be avoided, for the Lord’s people were to be totally separated from all aspects of the wrongful belief systems of the pagans amongst whom they dwelt. Nothing eaten was to make a pagan believe that the believer was in any way associated with their religion. Believers were not meant to resemble pagans in any way, nor give them any comfort/encouragement regarding their false beliefs.

The second word to look at is the word “clean”. It clarifies further the concept we have just seen. The root word here means, that which is morally pure, unadulterated by any evil or decay, and set aside for the Lord’s work. It covers a sense of “approved of the Lord for a set purpose”. In effect the Lord was saying, “I am setting rules that you are to follow, and not ask why, but accept my rules”. God wanted these people to be different to all others, and so the rules given set them apart, and the care they took to identify what was within the rules and what was not, was to be taken with all the details of daily life. God’s point to His people is that they were to live carefully and prayerfully, and all they did was to be run past His divine standards. 1 Peter 1:13-25.

The rules about what was to be eaten and what was not are now given. All animals that had hooves that were cloven, and that chewed the cud were allowed to be eaten. This included the cattle of all sorts, goats of all sorts, sheep of all sorts, and the wild animals that were like them; the chamois, and all the deer family. The animals that chew the cud, but do not divide the hoof, like the rabbit and hare family were not to be eaten, and neither were the camel family, nor any of the swine. They were not to be eaten, nor were their dead carcasses to be touched. They were to be shunned as food, even when they were plentiful and the non-Hebrew peoples were eating them.

God’s people were, and are, to be different, and the points of difference were to be points of contact for evangelism. We are to be “strangers and pilgrims” in our manner of living, and even though the dietary laws of Leviticus 11 and here are changed for us, the basic principle is the same; we are to be visibly different to the pagans amongst whom we live.

Verses 9 – 10. There is no need for us today to be told not to eat crows, eagles and cormorants, for we would not think of it in the Western world, but in some places anything that lives is eaten still. As believers remember, we are to be different, and in some cultural settings we ought to stop serving any dishes associated with paganism in our culture, as we want to give out the message of separation from evil so that the gospel message alone is seen by those amongst whom we live.

Verses 11 – 20. Of all the things that fly, only the chicken family and a few other families of birds was to be eaten, **not any of the bats**, or birds of prey. Post Covid-19 we all wish that some people groups were not eaters of bats and other disease ridden animals; they are meant to be away from people, enjoyed as free creatures, not food sources.

Only the birds that ate grains, or worms and insects were to be eaten. The fish eaters, and carrion eaters were banned. There are some game birds that we delight in eating that were banned. Swans were not to be eaten, even though they are as physically clean as a chicken, duck, pheasant, or turkey, but the swan was a bird associated with pagan ritual, myth, and worship and so it was not to be touched lest the people be associated with paganism. Once again we see that the key reasons for the banning of certain birds centres around their worship in the pagan religions. This was also relevant in the matter of the birds of prey, with the eagles being symbols of a number of pagan nations and their religions.

Verse 21. All animals that died of old age or disease were to be treated as unclean, and buried away from habitations, but if the non-Jews living in the lands wanted to eat them then they were to be given to them for food. The standards of the believers were not binding on the unbelievers living amongst them. There was to be no arrogance in these food rules, nor any judgments made on those who did not believe. These rules were marks of distinctiveness for believers in Israel's God alone.

The food laws were designed to set the people of Israel apart as a holy people to their God and for all the pagan nations around them to notice their distinctiveness and ask why, and then notice their faith. There was an evangelistic purpose in these things. The purpose in making Israel distinct in the age of history they would have spiritual leadership over, was that the world around them might notice their faith and come to know their God, and worship Him.

Verses 22 – 25. They were to give God the tithe of all their crops, and the increase of their herds and flocks in the land into which they were going. The feasts were to be celebrated together as a combined nation at the tabernacle gates. God's purpose was that the nation would gather around the tabernacle every year at the feasts of Passover-Unleavened Bread, and at the feast of Tabernacles, and that these festivals would be the spiritual bonding time between the tribes when any issues that had caused animosity would be dealt with and any rifts healed. Sadly the tithes and the yearly feasts would be forgotten and the tabernacle left alone in Shiloh and then in Nob, and not until the days of David would worship become a central and binding factor for the nation again. God's provision was made perfectly for them to enable them to keep the feasts and deliver the tithes, but they would fall into disuse.

Those living far away from the tabernacle didn't have to bring the crops or the animals; they could turn them into gold or silver and bring that to the tabernacle, but they had to bring it there. God wanted them to put themselves out to come and worship. They were to consciously express their free will in their worship and value it above and beyond any work on the farms that needed doing. They were to pull back from the daily demands of work and travel to worship. Distance was not to stop them, nor the difficulties and dangers of the road. They were to go and serve the Lord at His chosen place. Worship was mandatory for all believers, and it still is! **2 Thessalonians 2:1, Hebrews 10:23-27.**

Without regular worship we drift away from our fellowship with others and with the Lord who binds us together. Without regular worship we are not spiritually recharged as the Lord intends. Without regular worship we are not challenged by God's anointed leadership, and so we lack the discipline of the believing community that God has ordained to operate in each age. Without corporate worship we do not stand united for God in our nation and represent the Lord together as He intends us to do. God's people must also be challenged to "put themselves out" if required to attend meetings.

Verses 26 – 29. They were to bring the tithes each year and hold a joyful feast unto the Lord at the site of the tabernacle, and there they were to remember the Lord and His Word, and worship Him with joy and feasting. The nation was to gather in joyfulness each year and remember the blessings that the Lord had given them. Every third year there was an additional tithe. Deuteronomy 26:12-15. This was the social welfare offering for the local people who were widows and orphans, and also for the provision for the local Levites. This was to ensure that they were able to praise the Lord also.

God's Law always made provision for the poor, but never for the lazy or the criminal. Those who were unable to help themselves were to be assisted, and those who refused to assist themselves were to be rebuked. No mercy was to be shown to the lazy man, or he would simply have his laziness rewarded, when God's purpose was that he might learn to work for his own bread. The elderly poor were to be assisted by their families, and the church became involved only if the person had no family and if they were prayer warriors for the local church. Drunkards and people who hated the Lord and His work were not assisted at all. 1 Timothy 5:3-10. This is the present standard which the church ought to follow. 1 Thessalonians 2:9-12, 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Let us be sure we grieve in a godly fashion, and not weep and wail as those who have no hope, for we have great hope, and secure confidence in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-19. Like ancient Israel, we are to be a holy people, who are separate from the world in matters of faith and practice. Our grieving ought to be quite different to that of unbelievers. Let us ensure our funerals are godly events, with the hope that is in Christ Jesus at the centre of the ritual and the message given. Let us face our own death with Bible doctrine guiding our own souls, and with the comfort of the Lord keeping our hearts.

2. Let us be sure that we do not eat or act in any way that resembles the pagans amongst whom we dwell. We are not to expect them to act in accordance with our standards, but rather meet them where they are and give them the Gospel. Even though we are no longer under the food rules of Leviticus 11, we are still to be distinctly different to the people amongst whom we dwell, so that they ask what it is about us that is different. The purpose of distinctiveness is

firstly for holy worship, and secondly it is evangelical. We are not to live with any “desperation” regarding food, and we are not to eat “disgusting” things, nor eat in disgusting ways. Our eating is to be dignified and an event that is holy, not weird, rude, disgraceful, or outlandish. We are to trust the Lord to provide good food for us, and rest in His provision. Let us live holy lives, set apart for the Lord. Let us live carefully and prayerfully.

3. The innocent poor are to be remembered and provided for by God’s people. Believers are challenged to make distinctions between those who are poor as a result of their own evil and those who are to be cared for by the church. Those who have lived carelessly and squandered their living on alcohol and other evils are not to be a burden to the church. Satan delights in modern “welfarism” for it ensures that the money that could go into worthy programs is squandered on rewarding evil men and women for their evil lives. Those who choose to live lives of evil are not to be rewarded by the churches.

The Gospel message is not a meal ticket, it is a truth message, and part of that truth is, “if a man will not work for his bread, then let him not eat”. **2 Thessalonians 3:6-12**. People unwilling to work for their bread are not to be fed by the church, any more than they were fed by the Israelites. We show love by telling people the truth, not by rewarding their lie based life! Let us do the work to which the Lord has called us. This means we evangelise the lost, train the saints and support those who love the work and do it with all their strength.

CHAPTER 15

INTRODUCTION

The rules for life in the nation of God’s covenant people continue in this chapter. This chapter sees Moses covering the rules relating to the emancipation of slaves who have served out their bankruptcy time, and the dedication of the first born of the cattle. Why link men and beasts together? As we will see, as we go through this chapter, there is connection of thought between the principles being covered, but the connective logic is not Western Word logic; it is Middle Eastern. The logical connection between this section and the last is the Lord’s desire that annually all the twelve tribes should gather together at the Tabernacle, and that every seven years there should be a special total community gathering.

DEUTERONOMY 15:1-23

15:1 At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. **2** And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD’s release. **3** Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it again: but that which is thine with thy brother thine hand shall release; **4** Save when there shall be no poor among you; for the LORD shall greatly bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it: **5** Only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all these commandments which I command thee this day. **6** For the LORD thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee. **7** If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: **8** But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. **9** Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee. **10** Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou putteth thine hand unto. **11** For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land. **12** And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. **13** And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: **14** Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him. **15** And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to day. **16** And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee; because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with thee; **17** Then thou shalt take an aul, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever. And also unto thy maidservant thou shalt do likewise. **18** It shall not seem hard unto thee, when thou sendest him away free from thee; for he hath been worth a double hired servant to thee, in serving thee six years: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all that thou doest. **19** All the firstling males that come of thy herd and of thy flock thou shalt sanctify unto the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work with the firstling of thy bullock, nor shear the firstling of thy sheep. **20** Thou shalt eat it before the LORD thy God year by year in the place which the LORD shall choose, thou and thy household. **21** And if there be any blemish therein, as if it be lame, or blind, or have any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the LORD thy God. **22** Thou shalt eat it within thy gates: the unclean and the clean person shall eat it alike, as the roebuck, and as the hart. **23** Only thou shalt not eat the blood thereof; thou shalt pour it upon the ground as water.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 2. These first verses cover the laws associated with the Sabbatical year. Every seventh year was to be a year when the ground lay fallow and the people gathered for worship and Bible teaching at the Tabernacle. Exodus 21:1-11, 23:10-11, Leviticus 25:1-7. All credit advanced, and personal and business debts incurred were to have a maximum time frame of seven years, and every seventh year there was to be a release of debt and debtors.

The indebted person was expected to work off any debts as a slave (indentured servant) to the ones they owed money, but at the seventh year they were to be released from their bondage, even if only part of debt was repaid. It was to be called the “Lord’s release”. If the person had worked all that they could to pay their debt, then the remnant of the debt was to be remitted and the debtor was freed of it. The debt was to be considered, “as unto the Lord”, and not exacted again from the Israelite debtor as the new seven year cycle began again.

If the debt was a foreigner’s in the land, then the debt was not to be remitted at the seven year point, for that person was not under the Covenant covering in such matters, and they had to pay their debt to the full. This provision was to stop foreigners coming into the land specifically for the purpose of taking advantage of the Israelites and stealing their money under the guise of loans they never intended to pay back. The Israelites were to be financially independent of all other nations and owe them nothing. Any borrowing for national advancement or business growth was to be funded from within the nation. The Lord intended the covenant people to financially support and encourage each other, not extract the last penny from each other. Greed and revenge were not to be a part of the Israelite nation.

If an Israelite person honestly repaid a debt to the best of their ability, and then worked as a slave to pay anything outstanding, then they were to be forgiven when the Sabbatical year came around. The time when the debts were to be repaid, or finally remitted was at the Feast of Tabernacles, as that occurred after the last harvest, and all the money that would be received in one year was then accounted for. God’s law was rigorous but fair, and it was gracious, and the people were expected to give thanks in voice, in gifts and in their forgiveness of debt to those who had experienced hard times in the land. They were all recipients of God’s grace and were all to remember that fact. If they failed to follow these laws, then the results would be the terrible judgments that we see them having faced this last 2000 years. Leviticus 26:1ff, Deuteronomy 30:1-20, Nehemiah 5:6-13, Amos 8:1-14, 9:8-15.

Verses 3 – 6. The foreigner who was not under the covering of the Law could be pressed for payment of all debts and there was no time when the debt lapsed to the Lord, for such people had not accepted the Lord, and so could not be covered by His provision at that point. Those foreigners who had lived under Israelite protection, and accepted the Lord and His Law, were however covered by the Law and were entitled to the same justice, grace and mercy as brethren. Exodus 22:21, 23:9, Leviticus 16:29, 17:12-15, 18:26, 19:10ff, 19:34.

The Lord’s promise to the Israelites is that there will come a day, when they all follow the Law in absolute obedience, when there will be no poor amongst them- when Messiah rules. God’s plan through the provision of the Law was that they would be the bankers of the world, but that they would borrow from no-one. Leviticus 26:3-17. There was a promise of prosperity to Israel while she stayed in the land that was given them, and did all that the Lord ordered them to do there. Proverbs 11:24-28, 14:21, 28:26-28.

Verses 7 – 11. If the people saw a poor brother outside the gate of the city, they were not to harden their hearts against their poor brother and not assist him. Remember, this did not cover those who were drunkards and criminals, for they were to be rebuked and corrected, and if they failed to pay their bills they were to be enslaved, so that they might work off their debts and simultaneously learn the value of disciplined daily living with ordered work.

After seven years, as we have seen above, they were to be released, hopefully having learned to work hard for their living, and so be able to handle freedom. The genuine poor (those for whom crops had failed, or thieves had devastated, or poor businesses had failed, or sickness had affected their ability to work) were always to be helped, and they still are to be helped by the Lord’s people. Luke 16:19-31, Galatians 2:10, James 2:2-6.

The genuine poor were to be freely loaned (without any security other than their labour) enough to feed their families. Because in the seventh year any debt had to be wiped, wealthy people in the seventh year would not be ready to loan money, for if the crop failed that year the money would not be coming back. It was “good business” to withhold loans to the poor in the seventh year, and Moses identifies that this is “bad spiritual business” if they do this, for the Lord will judge them for their cold calculating logic. They are to assist their brethren, that their children do not go hungry. If the children of the poor are hungry, the Lord will judge the rich of His people!

Poverty will exist until the Lord’s return and we are to come to terms with it and assist the poor whenever, and however we can. God’s purpose was that all the Israelites would rejoice in the land, even those who were poor, through uncontrollable circumstances at that time.

In order for all to rejoice, all had to have the food they needed, and the wealthy were to ensure that the poor had such food to celebrate with the wealthy the grace and mercy of God. All were to gather together at the national feast days and all were to rejoice together. The bond between the twelve tribes was to be kept strong by annual and seventh yearly, corporate worship, just as our bonds with people within the many and various churches are to be kept strong through joint worship in spite of any differences. All who hold the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith are to be united with

as brethren whenever we can, even if we worship in quite different styles. The enemy is not to be assisted by creating division amongst God's people.

Verses 12 – 18. To pay for a debt incurred a Hebrew person (and their family with them) could be sold to another Hebrew as indentured servants. The maximum time for service was set at seven years, during which time the debt was to be paid off by all family members working for no wages. The "owner" had the responsibility of providing food and clothing for the people whose labour he had "bought". They were not to be treated cruelly, and they were to be given every Sabbath day off, and every national feast day their entire family was to be provided for. In effect it was a leasing arrangement for debt repayment, (it has been referred to in other cultures as "indentured service") and the person who purchased the labour of his brethren was to take the responsibility for their welfare very seriously, and remember at all times that these people were "brethren" and was to treat them like family.

There was the provision for the person who had lost everything, to recognize that they needed being looked after in this sort of master-servant relationship, and they could opt to serve their master until their death. They were able to remain a servant then and be cared for in the household all their natural life. While to most of us this is inexplicable, take a look at the homeless populations of our great cities and you will see people who cannot use their freedom, but who would be cared for if they were in such a relationship with a loving master who they served, and yet enjoyed all the good things of life there, with days off to worship and feast. Exodus 21:1-11, Leviticus 25:25-44. This was the Israelite "Welfare System".

When a Hebrew servant was sent away free at the Sabbatical year Feast of Tabernacles, they were not to be sent away empty handed. They were to be sent away with clothing, live animals from the flocks, sacks of grain from the store rooms, and wine from the cellars. As the Lord has blessed the household while the servants were there, just so the master was to bless the family of the servants. As the Israelites left Egypt with back wages paid, just so any Israelite who had been required to work for seven years as a servant was to be blessed with gifts as they went. This was a command of the Lord and Moses makes it clear that the Lord will require this of the people if they disobey.

If they treat their servants well the promise of the Lord is that they will be blessed materially for their good treatment of their brethren who have fallen on hard circumstances. The option for both men and women was to stay permanently in a good household and this is repeated here from Exodus 21. A good servant may be worth double the hire of a worker and if they have worked that well then they are to be rewarded well. We are to be known as people who bless others.

Verses 19 – 23. The connection of thought between this next section and that on slavery above is the concern of the Israelite for the service of the Lord and the blessing of the Lord. The individual Israelite is blessed through their good treatment of their brethren who have fallen on hard times. They will also be blessed if they give of the first born of the flocks and herds to the Lord. Obedience to the directions of the Lord brings blessing; in matters of men, or goods, and of animals. Every detail of life is to be made right and brought into submission to the Lord's will.

Every first born animal was to be delivered up as a sacrifice to the Lord for the family, and it was to be taken to the Tabernacle and offered up there, and the family was to partake of the meat outside the door of the tabernacle and feast upon it in praise to the Lord for the goodness of the land. If the animal had any blemish at all it was to be killed and eaten at home, for anything that was not perfect could not be offered up to the Lord. Only the best was to be offered up to the Lord. All service to the Lord, and all obedience to the commands of the Lord, was to be with all our heart and mind and body. Obedience was to be at the best level possible, whether it involved, people, time, goods, services, or other offerings. The Lord was to receive our best at all times.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. The best was to be given to the Lord, and all that was given to the Lord was to be our best possible offering. Believers were to see the service of the Lord as their greatest work and nothing was to be held back from that service. Our total energy is to be spent on our service for the Lord. Let us ensure that we are not half hearted in our worship or in our giving, or in our obedience in the areas of service we have in this life.

2. Slavery is such a despised institution today that it is hard to discuss Hebrew Slavery concepts with a calm spirit, but let us pause again and reflect upon this institution under God's Law. What the Mosaic Law envisaged here was not slavery in the historic sense, but was indentured service for a period of up to seven years (normally it was six only, as the first year the person got into hopeless debt that required their selling to pay for it.) Under Hebrew slavery (or better – bonded servitude), the person was not sold, their service for six years was sold. This arrangement meant they were always considered a free person before God with rights and privileges, and they always had freedom offered at the end of their allotted time.

Under this system they could also serve for life if they realised that this was the best place for them to be in this life. As a welfare system this was a very fair and safe one, and did not lead to the great evils of drug and alcohol addiction and family violence that our present hand-out welfarism produces. Let us not join the liberals in their attacks upon this provision of the Lord, for it was a good one, and far outstrips our modern alternatives in its good results for all society.

3. Poverty is with us until the end of this present age. The Lord alone will be able to bring in a poverty free situation in this world, and it is likely that He will reinstitute the service-welfare system as part of this. Until the Lord's return we are to assist the poor and ensure that children do not go hungry on our streets, nor suffer the indignity that can

go with poverty of sexual and physical exploitation. The churches of today provide most of the welfare in the present world and we are right to do so. Let us ensure that the poor are kept safe and secure, and are able to hear the Gospel without hating those who give it, for they have not shown the care of Christ towards them.

REFLECTIONS UPON CHRISTIAN GIVING

1. Giving is an important part of spiritual life. It includes your attitude, the giving of yourself, your capacity as well as your possessions. Giving is as much a part of worship as praying, singing, listening to teaching, observing the Lord's Table, reading the Word. It is a function of priesthood for team work and often to sustain the work of leadership.

2. Basic Principles of Giving

(a) Old Testament Giving - this giving was grace giving just as it is in our age. (Proverbs 11:24,25)

(b) New Testament Giving - (2 Corinthians 9:7) also grace giving.

(c) Tithing - this means ten per cent. It was a form of income tax in Israel. Offerings or giving were above this. Tithing was for all Jews, offerings for believers only. It should be remembered that Israel was a theocracy.

[i] In Israel two tithes were required annually

[ii] Tithe 1 - for the maintenance of the Levites (Numbers 18:21, 24) Civil servants in a theocracy.

[iii] Tithe 2 - for national feasts and sacrifices (Deuteronomy 14:22-26)

[iv] Every third year a third tithe was required:-

[v] Tithe 3 - for the poor of the land. (Deuteronomy 14:28, 29) Social security. In (Malachi 3:8-10) it mentions tithes and offerings, the tithes to be brought to the storehouse or treasury.

(d) The time to give - the first day of the week. (1 Corinthians 16:2)

(e) How much - as God has prospered (1 Corinthians 16:2)

3. General Scripture on Giving. (2 Corinthians chapters 8 & 9)

(a) 2 Corinthians 8:1-8. Contrasts the Macedonian givers to the Corinthian givers, the former having been made poor by Roman oppression gave liberally. The Corinthians, the richest Church in Greece, gave sparingly.

(b) Giving is an attitude of grace and inner happiness rather than compulsion or the amount donated (2 Corinthians 8:2)

(c) Before money is given you must give yourself. (2 Corinthians 8:5)

(d) Giving is as important an act as any other act in the fellowship. (2 Corinthians 8:7)

(e) Giving is love giving not law giving (2 Corinthians 8:8)

(f) Giving depends on being oriented to grace, the prime example being the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 8:9)

(g) Money given in the Lord's service must be properly administered. (2 Corinthians 8:19-21)

(h) If you give in grace you reap bountifully. If you give in legalism or with strings you reap sparingly. (2 Corinthians 9:6)

(i) How to give. Giving is a reflection of your character, by grace not habit. (2 Corinthians 9:7)

(j) God has given unto us his unspeakable Gift. (2 Corinthians 9:15, 1 Peter 2:24)

[k] Giving should be regular. 1 Corinthians 16:2.

[m] As we are prospered so we give: God provides the capital with which to give. 2 Corinthians 9:7-10.

[n] Mature believers are most effective givers. 2 Corinthians 9:10. Generosity of mind leads to generous giving. 2 Corinthians 9:11. Philippians 4:14-18.

[o] The pastor's logistical support comes from giving: He makes an issue out of the word never money, if he does his job God will provide the money. Pastor provides spiritual food and receives money for physical needs. Mutual blessing is thus assured, as the people show their appreciation for the ministry of the word. 2 Corinthians 11:7-9, Philippians 1:3-5, 4:10, 4:14.

REFLECTION UPON THE BROTHERHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

1. All believers are referred to as brothers (gk adelphos), the Greek word used indicating family relationship with both male and female included. As members of the same family who will rule throughout all eternity together it is of the greatest importance to have a special attitude towards our fellow believers. (1 Peter 2:5, 9-10, Revelation 5:10)

2. This attitude should be one of agape love or caring for the ultimate well being of others. (1 Peter 2:17, 3:8, 1 John 3:23, 4:12)

3. We are our brother's keepers, not by way of interference but by being active and alert for their good. (Genesis 4:9 cf James 5:20, 2 Thessalonians 3:15)

4. Because of family closeness there is a danger that one member may lead another astray, so discipline is required. (1 Corinthians 5:11)

5. In our family there must be a readiness to forgive. (Matthew 18:21)

6. The world has its own brotherhood of evil and sin. (John 15:19)

7. The soul and fruit of a person shows the family to which they belong. (Matthew 12:33)
8. All of us were born into Adam's family. (1 Corinthians 15:22)
9. We either stay there in sin or become a member of the Lord's family. (John 8:42-44)
10. Our attitude towards other believers is given in 1 Peter 3:8-9

[a] Be of one mind - To be of one mind means to avoid any behaviour that would create an argument leading to a church split, or violence of any kind. Mindless unity is not called for, it is to be a unity of the mind, based on well thought through positions, rooted and grounded in apostolic teaching.

[b] Show compassion - Compassion is rooted in the mental attitude that sees others as Christ sees them. The heart that shows compassion, shows it because they see the others needs and short-comings, and feels sorrow for the lack in the life of the other rather than arrogantly despising them.

[c] Love as brethren - This fruit of the Holy Spirit is demonstrated in life. The word used is philadelphos, the word for brotherly love; the caring practical love for those within the same family. It looks for a practical thing it can do for the much loved brother or sister. It is the reminder that we are in the same family as these fellow believers, and we are being watched by our heavenly father, who looks to us to behave as blood bought brethren.

[d] Be tender hearted to each other - The Greek word here is a great one; eusplagnos, which literally means, "good intestines". It catches what the Greeks meant by the word. It refers to deep feelings in the stomach, the emotional feelings towards one we love that we can literally "feel deep within". This is the level of the deep tenderness we should feel for our brethren.

[e] Be courteous - The word here, almost another synonym, brings further encouragement to love in practical ways our fellow believers. Act in such a way that others looking on would know you are friends.

[f] Do not render evil for evil - This instruction reminds us that believers are not perfect, and at times a young or disobedient believer will verbally attack us, and practice, even 'evil' against us. What is to be our response? It is not to be in accordance with the Mosaic Law (Exodus 21:23,24, Leviticus 24:19-22), which gave the right to all Jews to demand justice and reparation for every blow or insult. Peter is saying to all believers that we are NOT TO DEMAND our rights under the old law of lex taliones, but to place ourselves under the higher spiritual laws, the Law of Love, the Law of Supreme Sacrifice. We are now under the "Law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2), and the demands of that law are the ones Peter makes here.

[g] Do not give verbal abuse for verbal abuse (railing) - When we are verbally abused, or lied about, we are not to respond in kind and lash back. We are to treat them as Christ has by showing a love and care that shames the sinning brother rather than copies them.

[h] Give rather blessing - The Lord's words come back to us here. "Ye have heard that it has been said, (Leviticus 19:17,18, Deuteronomy 23:6), 'thou shalt love thine neighbour and hate thine enemy'. But I say unto you, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; (in order that) ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, . . . Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:43-48, Luke 6:27- 36). These commands are clearly our Lord God's standard of behaviour.

They are the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ to us all. If we would be his disciples we are to obey, and if we would be called his friends, then we are to be following these commands daily (John 15:9-17, 1John 3: 11-24).

Notes

CHAPTER 16**INTRODUCTION**

We tend to place Passover first in all reference to the Jewish feast days, and it is first received and celebrated, but as Moses speaks to the people he has placed Tabernacles first, for it foretells the rule of Messiah upon the earth and is the terminal point of all prophetic words. Jewish history focuses upon the end, and the end is the victory of God over Satan's schemes, and is the ruler ship of the Lord God over all the earth. The Feast of Tabernacles will be the key one celebrated throughout the Millennial Kingdom for this reason. Zechariah 14:10-21.

Having discussed the Feast of Tabernacles and the freeing of the Hebrew bonded servants at that time and the cancelling of debts, Moses moves back to the start of the Hebrew year with the Feast of Passover. Tabernacles and Passover-Unleavened Bread were the two feast times that the entire nation were expected to present themselves before the Lord as a united group at the gates of the Tabernacle. The feast of Trumpets and Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement) were not such feasts, and attendance at those was voluntary, reflecting the free will nature of salvation.

DEUTERONOMY 16:1-22

16:1 Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night. **2** Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto the LORD thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the LORD shall choose to place his name there. **3** Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life. **4** And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coast seven days; neither shall there any thing of the flesh, which thou sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the morning. **5** Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee: **6** But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt. **7** And thou shalt roast and eat it in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose: and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents. **8** Six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread: and on the seventh day shall be a solemn assembly to the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work therein. **9** Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn. **10** And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the LORD thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the LORD thy God, according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee: **11** And thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to place his name there. **12** And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and thou shalt observe and do these statutes. **13** Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine: **14** And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates. **15** Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD shall choose: because the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice. **16** Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty: **17** Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee. **18** Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment. **19** Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. **20** That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. **21** Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the LORD thy God, which thou shalt make thee. **22** Neither shalt thou set thee up any image; which the LORD thy God hateth.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 - 3. The instructions for Passover and the seven day feast of Unleavened Bread that it began had been given in Exodus, and had probably been followed in the wilderness every year. There were extensive sacrifices each day of the feast of Unleavened Bread. Exodus 12:1ff, 13:3-10, 23:14-18, 34:18ff, Leviticus 23:1-16, Numbers 9:1-11, 28:16-25. The complete abolition of leaven from the households of the nation was to set this time apart for the people as one of special remembrance and thankfulness for their deliverance from Egypt and all it stood for.

Verses 4 – 7. The two central rules for the feast of Unleavened Bread are here repeated. Firstly no leaven was to be found anywhere in Israel during this time; it was to be thoroughly purged from the nation. Secondly the eating of the flesh of the animals was to be complete; no meat was to be left from the feast until the dawn of the next day. Both these rules spoke strongly of the need to purge out all corruption of the flesh from the nation. God wanted the nation to be pure before Him and the people were to cleanse themselves and their houses of all traces of any principles of evil or

corruption of life and lips. Another key element of the Passover Feast was however that it had to be sacrificed at the Tabernacle only, and the entire nation was expected to gather to do this as a unified group before God.

Notice this rule carefully. No Passover sacrifice could be offered up in any place other than the recognized Tabernacle that had been placed at a site under the direct orders of God. The nation was not to find alternative venues for the Feasts of God; they were to obey the Lord their God and do things His way only. Today the Passover is kept, but it is without the lamb, for the reason that there is no Tabernacle/Temple at which the lamb can be slain, and if there is one built the real Passover can only be celebrated there at that place. At our present time in history no Passover meal, with the lamb, can be held at all, and will not be until the Temple is rebuilt and re-consecrated by the Lord Himself, and then it would appear that Tabernacles is the only Feast celebrated.

During the Great Tribulation a rebuilt temporary temple will begin sacrifices again, but they will not be acceptable to the Lord, and they will be stopped half way through that period in accordance with the orders of the Anti-Christ himself. Daniel 11:36-12:13, Zechariah 12:10-14:21, Revelation 14 – 15. Refer to each of these chapters and read them, as this is a subject that the people of God need to understand, for we may be the generation that sees this fake temple built.

Verse 8. The feast is to be kept together as a nation for seven days, and during that time all are to eat unleavened bread only. On the seventh day they are to keep a national holiday and feast together, giving thanks to the Lord. Leviticus 23:3-8. No servile work is to be done that entire week. Every servant is on holiday with their master. None are to work during this period, except such "work" as keeps people and animals alive and safe. Servile work is banned for all people. This means that the slaves of Israel received two periods (Unleavened Bread and the feast of Booths/Tabernacles) of seven days holiday every year when they were free from all work. Men and women were to be free of the burden of cooking, cleaning and general house and farm work; all were to pause and reflect upon God's gracious provisions for them as a united nation. Until the 20th century no other nation had two seven day holidays in one year, and this remains the "Gold Standard" for annual rest and recharge... God does know best....funny that...

Upon the earth God's people have the "troubles" associated with hard physical work, but in heaven we rest from our labours and our "work" then is the whole hearted praise of the Lord. John 16:33, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, Revelation 19:1-10. These feasts were the fore taste of heaven for the believers of Israel, as a good worship service is for our selves.

Verses 9 – 12. The Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, got it's name from the fifty days time period used for it's calculation. From the day of First fruits at the start of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, to the day of Pentecost was fifty days. It was a Feast, like First fruits, that always fell upon a Sunday, and was a major reason for the shift of the early church of their day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. The two great events of the history of the early church occur on these two feast days; the Resurrection occurs on the Sunday of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the coming of the Holy Spirit occurs on the Feast Day of Pentecost.

The Feast of Pentecost was a time to bring freewill offerings to the Lord. Leviticus 23:37-38, Numbers 29:39. The people were to look at their corn harvest, by then ended, and they were to think about making their free will offerings to the Lord to give thanks for His gracious provisions for them. This makes this feast a wonderful picture of Church Age Spirituality, for we are expected to do all things as "free will offerings", whole heartedly giving ourselves over to the Lord.

All things done for God are to be done of free will, without any compulsion. The "Free Will Offerings" for Israel were laid down in Numbers 28-29, but they were to be given with gladness, and of their own free will. This is the same for ourselves today, for the Holy Spirit directs us into the service for the Lord that God wills for us, and the challenge to ourselves is to embrace the will of the Lord with whole-hearted joy and serve with the spirit of celebration and power from the Holy Spirit. All service is to flow from this same source of love, gratitude, and joy in the Church. If we cannot serve and give in joy we need to wait until we can, for we are out of fellowship with the Lord our Saviour!

The essence of the celebration was because the nation had been slaves, but now was free, and they were celebrating their freedom in worship of the One who set them free. Do we celebrate our spiritual freedom from sin and death daily in and through our worship? Do we catch the spirit of this feast of Pentecost in our churches, and in our daily life? This is the standard! Ephesians 2:4-10, Philipians 3:1, 4:4.

The first symbolic bundle of corn from the new harvest was offered up on the Feast of First fruits, and then after the week of Unleavened Bread, all were expected to head home to complete the corn harvest. They were then to re-gather for the Feast of Pentecost for one day as a people, and really celebrate the Lord on this day altogether as a nation at the place where the Lord had directed the Tabernacle to be erected. In latter years many would simply camp out by Jerusalem for the fifty days, while others stayed at home and brought in the harvest. Acts 1:1-5, 2:1ff. Those living far from Jerusalem only coming to celebrate this feast every few years, as significant provision had to be taken to ensure the farm or other work was done while they were away.

It was possible to follow the instructions of Moses here annually, but it would be difficult, and most would quickly "forget" to do these things, because they were too hard. The result of this was the feasts would be poorly attended until the days of David and Solomon. Once the Jewish people were dispersed around the ancient world, keeping these feasts became impossible annually for most, and people tried to go once in their lifetime to Jerusalem for the key feast days and stay for them all. The impossibility of keeping the feasts was a sign of judgment from the Lord, as it was the sign that the majority

of their population were out of the land of promise. This situation continued until our own day. Only in 2019 did the numbers of Jews in the land exceed those in the diaspora for the first time since 586 BC.

Verses 13 – 17. The Feast of Tabernacles is now mentioned again, and notice the emphasis upon the joy at it's heart; joy at what the Lord had done for the people in giving them such great blessing in the land in their crops and herds. Gratefulness and joy is at the heart of the feasts of Israel, and this same spirit is to be at the heart of all the worship of all the Ages of mankind. How open are we with our worship of the Lord? How full of gratitude are we? How often do we turn the sorrows and burdens of this present world to praise, and so transform them to joy? Isaiah 61:3.

How often do we speak of revival and yet we do not open ourselves to worship the Lord as His Holy Word instructs us to worship. Read through Nehemiah 8:1-18, and see a great revival take place. It centres in the reading of the Word of God, and then the prayers, praise, and worship that is built upon the people's understanding of the words of God. The path to power for the church is the path of Bible doctrine centred worship, because worship that centres in the knowledge of God's Word, centres round the truth of God's character and plan.

Verses 18 – 22. The Levites and tribal leaders were to take responsibility for the welfare of the people in every place they settled. The standard for judgment was to be the standard of God's justice, drawn from His Holy Word. The words of Moses were to form the basis for all the law and decision making within government of the tribal groups. The specific rules against corruption are spelt out in verse nineteen. Justice was not to be a commodity to be bought, nor were the poor to be ignored and the rich who could bribe heeded. Justice was to be dealt out with the impartial fairness of those who seek truth alone as their guide in decision making. The inheritance of the land will depend upon their following of the principles of justice. If they stray after the evil of injustice and self interest in matters of law, then the Lord makes it clear, they will lose their tenure to the land itself!

Injustice in matters of law is now linked to idolatry and compromise in matters of faith. Injustice goes hand in hand with idolatry, because injustice has at its root self interest and self centeredness. It is self centeredness that is at the root of all satanic counterfeit religion, for Satan seeks for man to magnify self above God. Isaiah 14:12-17, Ezekiel 28:13-19, Matthew 4:1-11. Bible Doctrine guides us to the best worship, the correct service, right judgments, and God honouring lives. This is God's plan for us upon this earth; that we walk before Him in holiness and joy. John 10:9-11.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness". Psalms 96:9. Holiness is defined as a state of separation to the Lord. We separate ourselves from the cares and distractions of this world by means of our praise and prayer, and in worship this should be our mental state; set apart to God. Let us lift our hearts and our voices and praise the Lord in the midst of our trials and troubles and so transform them into praise. We expect the Lord to deliver us, and He will deliver us, Halleluiah!
2. Gratefulness should drive all our service for the Lord. Worship is joyful because it is built upon the foundation of thankfulness and gratefulness for who the Lord is, what He has already done, and what He will yet do. Let these things fire up our worship. Let us praise the Lord for His goodness to us, for His mercies are renewed every morning. Psalms 30:5, 65:8, Lamentations 3:23. Let worship be as it was meant to be, a foretaste of heaven itself.
3. Free will offerings were to be brought to the Lord. They were directed as to what was to be brought, but they were to be brought of "free will", after thought and prayer. We are called to walk in the power and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and freely do all the Spirit directs us to do. Let us be obedient with a free and devoted will, gladly submitting to the will of the Lord in our life.

CHAPTER 17**INTRODUCTION**

The key text of this section is, "you shall put away evil from Israel". God's standards for Israel are holy and righteous standards and they are to be kept absolutely as He has directed, and those who think differently are to be removed from the nation permanently. They are to have a zero tolerance for evil and all the works of Satan in the land the Lord gives them. They are to see any practise of evil religion as adultery before the Lord who gave them the land, and they are to see just how awful the pagan religions are and hate them.

Any who practised paganism were to be executed, but great care was to be taken to examine each reported case and the death penalty was only to be carried out when there were two or three witnesses in that case. The Lord was the "offended party" in all such cases, for those who left the true faith and worshipped under satanic religion were guilty of gross evil in leaving the One who gave them all good things and following the enemy of God.

The Order of Judges whose appointment is recorded in Exodus 18 have grown old and died under the same judgment as all the other older men who fell into sin at Kadesh Barnea. Numbers 14:1-37. Others were likely appointed within the tribes, on the deaths of the older men, but Moses has not told us of that process as it may have occurred through the forty years of wandering. It is possible that on the deaths of these first judges that there were no appointments until this time on the Plains of Moab. We simply do not know. Deuteronomy 16:18.

It would appear that each tribe appointed the men they believed were best suited, and Moses dedicated them, much as the Early Church would appoint Deacons later. Acts 6:1-7. Moses recognizes the limitations of these men in advance, and under the Lord's direction, the Levites at the Tabernacle are appointed as the final Court of Appeal and Justice of the land. The Tabernacle becomes the Supreme Court of Israel for all difficult judgment cases, and there is a hint that the Lord will raise up prophets-judges to assist the people of the land in making difficult decisions also. The greatest of these will be Samuel.

DEUTERONOMY 17:1-20

17:1 Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the LORD thy God any bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish, or any evil favouredness: for that is an abomination unto the LORD thy God. **2** If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the LORD thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the LORD thy God, in transgressing his covenant, **3** And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded. **4** And it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and enquired diligently, and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel: **5** Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, even that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die. **6** At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. **7** The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you. **8** If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the LORD thy God shall choose; **9** And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment: **10** And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the LORD shall choose shall shew thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee: **11** According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, to the right hand, nor to the left. **12** And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth there before the LORD thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. **13** And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously. **14** When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; **15** Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. **16** But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. **17** Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. **18** And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: **19** And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: **20** That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.

REFLECTIONS

Verse 1. The sacrifices of the Mosaic Law all speak of the perfect person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. They all have prophetic significance in their operation as they look forward to the Cross, just as the feast days of Israel prophetically portray the history of Israel in advance. The sacrifices must be checked to make sure they are perfect or they will not portray the Lord as they are meant to. This problem of bad sacrifices would be an issue for Israel at times throughout its history and the prophet Malachi faces this very issue in his ministry. **Malachi 1:6-14.**

Verses 2 – 5. The important phrase here is, “within your gates, which the Lord your God has given you”. The sin of apostasy (leaving the true faith and following after a false one) is at the top end of seriousness for the Israelites, because they are openly insulting the Lord their God who gave them all the good things they enjoy. They are turning their back upon the One who has blessed them. To insult love and grace is a great sin indeed. Those who would do such a thing will stop at nothing, and we must remember at this point that these pagan religions practised child sacrifice (the ritual murder of children and babies as part of fertility/sex worship).

The evils of these religions were great indeed and anyone who headed away from the truth and began to serve any of the pagan deities was to be executed immediately before the socially fatal disease of paganism spread. There was to be the “surgical excision” of all who practised evil from the land to protect others. The harshness of the death penalty is to be put against the reality of what paganism would mean to the community in that day.

Any leniency in forgiving the pagan and allowing them to continue the practise of their faith would lead down the track to the gross sexual immorality, drug taking and the ritual murder of children as a part of that faith. All paganism would lead to the eventual moral decay of the entire nation and national disaster. Leviticus 26. No mercy was to be shown those who entered into such evils, be they men or women. While we mustn't/cannot take this instruction literally in our day we need to feel and express the great danger to society of the evil of satanic religion for it remains equally destructive today.

Verses 6 – 7. The principle of justice here is one that has been dropped from most legal codes world wide. People today are convicted on the basis of one witness or form of witness, whereas under God's law there was always corroboration required from another source. No possibility of a person falsely accusing another was to lead to the death of an innocent person. Great care was to be used to ascertain facts before any action to judge was taken. The witnesses to the evil had to be the ones to cast the first stone against the guilty ones. To accuse of evil was a very serious matter, as you would have to look your neighbour in the eye and cast the first stone to kill them.

People were to reflect upon the greatness of the evil of false religion, and they were to apply this law to protect their society from what it would mean for such evils to take hold. Later generations would fail to act against this sort of evil and the result would be the wholesale slaughter of babies and children in the “fires of Molech”, where they were burnt alive as part of pagan sexualised worship by their own parents. 2 Chronicles 28:3, 33:6, Jeremiah 7:29-31.

When Satan is given opportunity to kill the innocent he normally takes it. We are to remember he hates mankind. I awoke to news this morning that a significant number of young Christian school students were killed on an adventure expedition. I still feel the deep sadness at this news now as I rewrite these words years later; great sorrow for the adults who made the decision to enter a river during a time of great storm and heavy rains, but overwhelming sadness also, for the parents who have lost their children, and for friends and family who have lost their loved ones in this terrible tragedy.

All my bush craft training and military training taught me a simple principle regarding river crossings; do not enter rivers when it is raining heavily in the upstream hills. Flash floods will occur in seconds in such a time, and that is what has happened here. All “adventure” has its risks and we need to be ready to take risks in training people in character building, but the risks need to be carefully weighed in light of the benefit we are trying to derive by the activity.

Those taking the decision did so, with plenty of experience, and possibly with prayers for safety, but they entered into an activity with proven high risk, and so the enemy was given a chance to kill his enemies (the young Christian leaders). Satan will always take the chances we give him to destroy. It is not that God cannot protect us, but that we are challenged to keep ourselves safe, make safe and settled factually based decisions, and only with our brains already fully engaged, then make our prayers to the Lord. **Nehemiah 4:7-23.**

We must not cover any bad decisions by prayers, for foolishness is not sanctified by prayers, nor is evil protected against by them. We must guard ourselves and our children from the evils of satanic attack, and that means having our spiritual armour on, walking the “narrow way” of God's plan for our life, and making ‘straight/safe paths for our feet’. **Ephesians 6:10-17, Matthew 7:12-14, Hebrews 12:12-15.**

As a nation we face a great tragedy, but the dignity with which the Christian community has handled this event has won a hearing for the Gospel from the pagan media, and so even in a great tragedy we can see the Lord bringing challenge through the deaths of His saints. Psalms 68:20, 116:15, Romans 8:28-31. Let us heed the seriousness of the passage before us and guard ourselves against the enemy winning easy victories against us, but also be focused upon the Lord's path forward, once we realise what has happened. James 4:7-8, 1 Peter 5:8-9.

There was blame assigned in this tragic case that we faced as a nation that terrible week, and hopefully lessons will be learned by others, but for all believers it is a reminder of several key doctrines that we must understand, believe, and cling to as we face difficult things like this.

1. All believers are to remember that the enemy seeks our life, and we are not to hand him an easy victory by any careless action, poorly researched decision, or any act of foolishness. Even when doing challenging

activities we are to be safety conscious at all times, and this event we face as a nation reminds us that we need to err on the side of caution at all times. Christians are not to be “dare devils”, but saints who risk their lives for others and for the Gospel’s sake, but never for a personal thrill. In the Armed Forces I had to jump out of perfectly good helicopters into the sea at times, but I do not pay adventure tourism firms to parachute jump now. I will “take risks” according to some in mission fields in Africa, but they are weighed risks for the gospel’s sake, and they are prayer led and prayer saturated. Let us be careful soldiers of the Lord.

2. Daily the believer is to put their spiritual armour consciously on. They are to ensure that all plans undertaken are in the will of the Lord, and only then are they to advance into the day with prayer.
3. Once the will of the Lord is clear we are to advance into the day with confidence and courage. If we are faced with death we are to act with courage and do the right thing, assured of our place with the Lord. The teacher and others of the students who died, once they realised what was happening, did courageous deeds in trying to save one another. Their nobility and courage has been inspirational to the nation at this Anzac Day time.
4. Even when we face death due to an error of another we are precious to the Lord and our eternal life is safe in the Lord’s hands, and we enter into the arms of Jesus as did Stephen. Acts 7:55-60.
5. The Lord can always turn tragedy into opportunity to eternally influence others. Many tragic events through history have been the cause of numerous people coming to the Lord. The principle behind Romans 8:28 is true and can be claimed in all such situations.

Verses 8 – 9. At times a major issue would arise that was too hard for the local judges. In such situations they were to immediately withdraw judgment, and take the case, and the witnesses to the tabernacle gates. No matter what the distances involved all involved were to go to the Levites and there the case was to be held. The final matter could be judged by the High Priest using the option of direct judgment from God if required. The Levites or the “judge that shall be in those days” will be the judge of all matters, or it could be directed to God alone through the High Priest. The most famous of the judges of latter days is Samuel, but others also “judged Israel” and fulfilled this purpose that Moses foresees here.

Verses 10 – 12. Start from the last verse here and work backwards. The purpose of the Lord in all the commands is that evil might be “put away” from the land. God’s purpose was always that people be protected from the evil that would otherwise overwhelm them. God’s rules are always protective, and with religious evil the consequences of leaving it to grow within a nation are too awful to contemplate.

Once a judgment has been sought, then it is to be applied and the people are to follow the judge. In the medical area we are all used to getting “second opinions”, but the people are not to seek other Levites or judges to get the ruling they want; they are to accept the ruling and apply it. What they are told they are to follow to the letter, not deviating to left or right. There is to be no debate, only obedience to the Judge. To openly raise your voice against the judge and urge people to disobey the judgment of a Levite was to face the death penalty also.

There was to be a holy fear of the Law, and men and women were to have a spirit that valued the Mosaic Law, and did not harbour any resentments or rebellion towards the rules of God. They faced many pagan nations all around them and if they did not stand firm upon the Law of God they would be swept away in the tide of paganism.

Verses 13 – 15. In advance the Lord tells Moses that they will want a king and what they are to do when they do feel this need. This is not evidence of a late date for these words as the liberals argue. At Kadesh Barnea they had argued for one to lead them back to Egypt. They asked for a “king” then. Numbers 14:4. They will seek to, “be like other nations”, just as believers today at times long for the success of unbelieving friends who do not have the spiritual battles to fight that we do. We are not meant to be the “same as others”, but visibly and spiritually different. Let us celebrate our difference to the pagan world, and worship the Lord who “sets us apart”.

The Lord has called us to be different to all those around us, and have different values and different goals and lives to the pagans. Under pressure that means we have a different attitude and different strategies, for we see eternal issues, not just those of time. Moses sadly reflects that they will desire to be the same as pagans one day, and yet through God’s choice of their king they will be different still, and under David and Solomon they will be, and they will have their golden age. Psalms 2:1-12.

The only king they were to have was to be a Jewish king, and one that the Lord had chosen. Their first king Saul began as a good man, but was quickly corrupted by power lust and did great evil. He was replaced by David who obeyed the Lord in most things, but still worked evil at times, as did Solomon. God’s plan was that they would live without kings, who would find supreme power hard to handle, but the people would believe they knew better than their God. The Lord warns us here that mankind find power hard to handle without it turning their head – we are to be warned.

When the Messiah came to earth the last kings over the nation Israel were of the family of Herod, who were Jewish by religion, Edomite by birth, and all evil by nature. The nation’s first and last kings became evil, for most men and women who become impressed with their own power follow Satan rather than their God. There is hope only in God’s final king for them, for He is the One who went first to the Cross for them. He is the King of all kings, and the Lord of all lords.

Verses 16 – 20. The following verses detail the rules for the king when he takes the throne. These are the rules for him to keep, and sadly the greatest and most powerful of them all, Solomon, would break them all, even having advised his sons to avoid the very sins he will fall into. **1 Kings 10:18-29, 11:1-10, Proverbs 3:1-8.** The kings were not

to fall into the trap of being Eastern Potentates and rule with shows of wealth and power that were an insult to the poor of the land. They were to be mentors for behaviour, and set their standards by God's Word rather than the behaviours of pagan kings. Sadly David also would fall into gross immorality and begin the harem culture, and Solomon would expand it to his own destruction and that of the nation after him! 2 Samuel 3:1-5, 5:12-16.

Both these great men multiplied, silver, gold, wives, horses and chariots. They took on all the trappings of Middle Eastern kings and their hearts were not true to the Lord in all the details the Lord required. The result was their houses failed and fell from the kingship. Solomon's line ended with the sons of Joseph, and it was the descendants of the unrated son of David, Nathan, who would descend to the young woman Mary, who would give birth to the Messiah, who would finally inherit the throne of David. Matthew 1:6-16, Luke 3:23-31.

The king was to be stabilized by hearing the words of God from a Levite who was to daily stand before him and read from the Mosaic Law. The king was to be provided with his own copy of the Mosaic Law for his own reading also. What will keep the king and the kingdom was to be the "**fear of the Lord**". This is a phrase that crops up a lot through scripture and it means the holy and purifying respect for God which is held high above the opinions and values of unsaved men.

Arrogance was the danger for the king. He was not to lift up his heart above his fellows, as if he was special and could be beyond or above the Law. The king was to see himself as a man amongst men and see that the Lord held him responsible for keeping all the Law, just as he did all mankind. The prosperity of the royal house depended upon the king's obedience to the Law. If he became arrogant, his ruler ship would be short over the people and his house would die out or be extinguished. This is the story of the books of Kings.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Arrogance is the enemy of the child of God. If we think that we can live and work without the power and plan of God guiding us we are fools and we will fail in all we do. Let us remember the dangers of the kings who believed their own publicity! They thought they were special, but all that makes us special is the power of God within us. Let us glory in the Lord, but not be distracted or deceived by wealth, power or the praise of men. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of real wisdom.

2. If an offering was not perfect, it was not to be offered up. Anything sub-standard was unacceptable to the Lord and was not to be offered. The people were to be careful in all matters that spoke of the Lord and ensure the right message was given. How careful are we in our preaching and teaching that the absolutely correct impression is given to all who hear our words? We stand for the Lord, and so let us speak rightly of Him and about Him. If we give to the Lord, let us give of our best, not our cast offs.

3. Do we have a proper appreciation of the greatness of evil and the awfulness of sin? Do we see the enemy as he truly is? Do we see the paganism which surrounds us as the threat that it is to our lives? We have allowed the tolerance of liberalism to stop us taking the stand we have needed to take against some of the evils that now abound. We cannot save our society from decline, but we can pluck brands from the fire. This is our task, and so let us commit ourselves to speaking the truth about God at all times we are able to.

4. The enemy hates us and seeks ways to destroy us. Religion is his best tool, but foolish decisions are also a good way to get Christians to destroy each other. Let us be careful in our daily lives and not give the enemy easy victories over our children and our selves. Let us teach the Lord's people about the dangers of the enemy and ensure they are trained to fight him and avoid his obvious traps. We are losing too many young believers because they simply are ignorant of his devices! This is our fault as pastors! Let us teach the truth and do it often and well!

REFLECTION UPON THE LEVITICAL OFFERINGS WHICH POINTED TO CHRIST

1. The Levitical offerings and sacrifices were a picture of the work of Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 10:1)

2. There are five offerings in Leviticus 1-6
- a) Burnt animal offerings Chapter 1 The work of Christ.
 - b) Cereal offerings Chapter 2 The person of Christ.
 - c) Peace offering Chapter 3 Reconciliation.
 - d) Sin offering Chapter 4 Unknown sins.
 - e) Trespass offering Chapter 5-6v7 Known sins.

3. Burnt animal offerings (Leviticus 1)

An innocent perfect animal was killed for the sins of the offerer. A representation of Jesus dying for our sins on the cross.

a) Bullock v2-9 Offered by the rich person.

Bullock is a male without blemish = Jesus Christ as a perfect person.

Offering is on the brazen altar = The death on the cross.

Offered voluntarily = Faith in Christ is on the basis of free will.

Sinner, (offerer) puts his hand on animal's head for an atonement. = Sins laid on Christ on the cross. Christ died for the sins of humanity. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Killing of the bullock = The death of Christ

Blood covering the altar = Total cleansing from sin.

Flaying of animal to check that there were no inner blemishes = Jesus was perfect and free from sin both outwardly and inwardly.

Wood burnt = Human good removed. (1 Corinthians 3:12, 15)

The head is burnt = The perfect mentality of Christ

The fat is burnt = The outward perfection of Christ.

The gut washed with water from the brazen laver. = Cleansing from sin. (1 John 1:9)

The legs washed. = Cleansing from sin allows for service.

Bullock is burnt. = The solution to the sin problem at salvation and during the Christian life has been accomplished at the cross.

b) Sheep v10-13 Offered by the middle class.

c) Birds v14-17 Offered by the poor.

4. The Cereal Offerings (Leviticus 2)

a) The Gift Offering = the gift of Jesus Christ.

Fine flour = Perfection of Christ

Oil = Holy Spirit

Frankincense = Satisfaction to God the Father

Salt = Preservation

Leaven (not included) = Sin

Honey (not included) = Human Good.

Take a handful of the mixture = Appropriating salvation personally by faith.

Burnt on the altar = Judgment of Christ on the cross.

Oil = Jesus filled with the Holy Spirit.

The priest eats the remainder. = the priest is sustained by the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit.

b) The Oven Offering

Unleavened bread = Christ had no sin.

Baked offering hidden from man's view = Godward side of the Cross. Golgotha shrouded in darkness during the period of judgment of the sins.

Fire = Justice of God

Offering = Perfect humanity of Christ

Oven = Cross

Oil = empowerment of Christ.

Frankincense = God is propitiated or satisfied.

c) The Flat plate Offering

Fine flour with oil = Perfection of Christ

Unleavened = No sin or sin nature

No frankincense = No propitiation until God judged the sins of the world.

Part into pieces = Crumbled - something completely destroyed - Christ's body broken for us. Crushed with our sin. (Isaiah 53)

Oil poured onto crumbs = Oil of appointment - Messiah or given one. God the Father appointed God the Son to go to the cross cf. dove at baptism.

d) The Frying Pan Offering

Partly closed, partly open - Unseen = Godward, propitiation. Seen = manward, reconciliation.

The offerer gives offering to priest who takes it to the altar, takes part as a remembrance (memorial) for (judgment) = compare with Lord's Table remembrance

rest eaten by the priests - how we appropriate Christ - faith.

e) Rules of Cereal Offerings

Prohibited leaven = sin or evil

Honey = Human good or human sweetness

Garnished with salt = a contract between God and man.

f) Cereal offerings were made at the

Passover (with burning = judgment = cross)

First fruits (without burning = resurrection)

Day of Atonement (with burning = judgment = cross)

g) The Memorial Offering

Green corn = Christ in resurrection

Dried = Roasted by fire, Judgment
 Beaten = Bruised or crushed
 Full ears = Perfection of Christ
 Put oil on = Messiahship appointment.
 Frankincense = Propitiation, satisfaction.
 Burnt = Reference to the cross
 Memorial = Lord's Table of the Old Testament.

5. Peace offering Chapter 3 Reconciliation.

Similar to the burnt offering, with both male and female animals sacrificed.

6. Sin offering Chapter 4 Unknown sins.

Confession and repentance from sin, equivalent to 1 John 1:9 (and cleanse us from all -unknown sins - unrighteousness)

7. Trespass offering Chapter 5-6v7 Known sins.

Confession and repentance from sin, equivalent to 1 John 1:9 (forgive our - known/confessed - sins)

REFLECTION ON OUR LORD – HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION – THE ROAD TO GLORY

1. The Lords Jesus Christ in Exaltation - **Hebrews 8:1** - "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."

2. The Road to Glory - **Philippians 2:5-11**

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" [v 5]

[a] "let this mind be in you - (Present. Active. Imperative) have this attitude. To think objectively, noble thinking of divine viewpoint based on thinking the mind of Christ. 1 Corinthians 2:16 compared to 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

[b] "in yourselves" - among believers Vs. 4 "look" - (Present. Active. Participle] consider, focus Basis of 4 Laws of the Christian Way of Life.

3. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God" [v 6]:

[a] "form of God" - Inner Character. Divine Essence- in his pre-incarnate state.

[b] "being" - (Present. Active. Participle.) Eternal existence. Revelation 1:8 John 1:1 Colossians 2:16

[c] "robbery" - "to be grasped" - (Present. Active. Infinitive.)

[i] Used for act of robbery

[ii] Used of a thing robbed

[iii] A prize or thing to be grasped; be won but something to clutch hold of strongly,

4. "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" [v 7]

[a] His incarnation: not something to hold. No reputation - "emptied" - (Aorist. Active. Indicative.) To lay aside privileges, deprive oneself of normal function:

[i] Not loss of deity

[ii] Not loss of divine attributes

[iii] Rather, a choosing not to exercise His essence so as to become "like us:" Hebrews 2:14,17

[b] being the form" - (Aorist. Active. Participle.) human essence - body, soul, spirit no Old Sin Nature

[c] "being made" (Aorist. Middle. Participle.) Having become. Precedes "humbled"

[d] "likeness of men" - of same condition, nature and ability.

5. "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." [v 8]

[a] His Humiliation: - "being found" - (Aorist. Passive. Participle) being recognised, discovered.

[b] "in appearance" - In contrast to all that He was, what He appeared outwardly to others.

[c] "He humbled Himself" - (Aorist Active Indicative.) Mental attitude of grace from birth to death. True humility Romans 12:3

[d] "becoming obedient" - (Aorist. Middle Participle.) to hear & obey.

[e] "to the point of death" - Spiritual death. Christ learned obedience through suffering (Hebrews 5:8) maximum self-discipline.

[f] His Humiliation: - "death on a cross" - Most disgraceful form of death. Reserved for hardened criminals and runaway slaves.

6. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name":[v 9]

[a] His Exaltation: -"therefore" - because of His humiliation "highly exalted" - (Aorist . Active. Indicative.) To raise above and beyond.

[b] Christ shared God's glory in Eternity Past, but this is the exaltation of His humanity. Compare Ephesians 1:20-23

[c] "bestowed" - (Aorist. Middle. Indicative.) Freely bestowed, as Christ gave Himself freely.

[d] "name" - The rank, office, dignity. The name, Hebrews 1:4-8

7. "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth"; [v 10]

Kingship Recognised/Universal Acknowledgment: "at the name" - In sphere of His exalted position

[i] Those in heaven - angelic

[ii] On earth - human

[iii] Under earth - dead unbelievers and imprisoned demons.

8. "And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" [v 11].

[a] "every tongue confess" - (Aorist. Middle. Subjunctive.) Openly acknowledge volitionally - self condemned

[b] "Jesus Christ is Lord" - Deity

[c] "to glory of God"

APPLICATION

1. True humility is the way to greatness. Luke 22:24-27 grace-oriented thinking. Romans 12:3
2. The way to lead with authority is to follow with submission. Luke 7:1-10
3. True understanding of authority demands that one serve - not be served. 1 Corinthians 9:1-18 The Law of Supreme Sacrifice and the Christian Medal of Honour.
4. Application to the Pastor. 1-Peter 5:1- 4

CHAPTER 18**INTRODUCTION**

The key theme of this chapter, as of the last, is obedience in humility. This is a core value for leadership and Moses mentored this to the people. The spiritual danger for the people of Israel, as for the people they will take the land from, was pride. The Old Sin Nature weakness of these people was the tendency to believe they knew best, and could do things that God said they were not to do. Pride is at the heart of Satan, and this weakness is common to many men and women. It is this weakness that leads to all manner of evils, and was the original point of temptation in the Garden of Eden. Genesis 3:1-13.

Pride is at the centre of the Angelic Conflict. The Angelic Conflict may be summed up in a question posed by life itself to all free creatures; "Will you serve the Lord your God in humble obedience, as a creature in submission to your Creator and Saviour, or will you reject the Creator and Saviour's right, to direct your actions?" Where will we stand today? It is the daily nature of this question that is to grip our soul and spirit – we are to stand for Jesus, not stand in our own pride.

The Levites role was to constantly remind the people of these standards and Laws of God, and to challenge the people to reject pride and all its evils, and be obedient to the Lord's righteous demands in humility of spirit. **John 3:5-8, 4:23-24, 6:63, Romans 8:1-16, 1 Corinthians 12:3-13, Galatians 5:16-25, Ephesians 5:9-18.** They were to be the conscience of the nation, as the ministry of the Holy Spirit now is the conscience of the world. John 16:8-11. The Levites had no inheritance in the land, other than the right to live in houses and work land in the various tribal areas, but they were to be provided for by all the people through the sacrifices. They were to live off the spiritual work they did.

In this present Church Age, in which we live, all believers are to have the mental attitude of the Levite; that we are here to serve the Lord and not be pre-occupied with houses, goods, and lands, and as pastors we are to live from the results of the spiritual work we do. Here we have no continuing city. **1 Corinthians 9:6-14, Hebrews 13:7-17.**

This chapter ends with the contrast between the prophet of God and the various "mediums" of the pagan gods. Satan has a complete alternative religious system to that of the Lord our God. He has always had more false prophets, diviners, mediums, seers, and priests than God has. Satan has been able to fool the majority of people in most ages of man, but his numbers do not mean he has more power, for God alone has the power to fully rule this universe. 1 John 4:4.

Satan can only bring chaos and disaster; he cannot bring life, lasting prosperity, or happiness to mankind. The reason for this is the root of his power over man; that root is pride. Anything built on pride is built upon narcissism, self centeredness and selfishness, and so no unity between men and women can ever be built upon such negative forces.

Moses reminds the people that there are clear signs to distinguish the many false prophets from the few true prophets of God that will come. The words translated as "presumptuousness" in Deuteronomy 17:12, 13, and here in 18:22, all underline this important point. The Israelites had been pride filled and "presumed" to know more than God, for that is what disobedience indicates. When we deliberately disobey God's Word we are saying we know better than the One who made us, and we presume to know more than it is possible to know!

Spiritual presumption indicates we have given the enemy a foothold in our soul through pride, and unless we eliminate this, we will be fooled by his agents, the false prophets. We are not to "presume", we are to obey the Lord our God, and that is the message of the Levite and the true prophet, just as it is the message of the modern Pastor-teacher.

DEUTERONOMY 18:1-22

18:1 The priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and his inheritance. **2** Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the LORD is their inheritance, as he hath said unto them. **3** And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep; and they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw. **4** The firstfruit also of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him. **5** For the LORD thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons for ever. **6** And if a Levite come from any of thy gates out of all Israel, where he sojourned, and come with all the desire of his mind unto the place which the LORD shall choose; **7** Then he shall minister in the name of the LORD his God, as all his brethren the Levites do, which stand there before the LORD. **8** They shall have like portions to eat, beside that which cometh of the sale of his patrimony. **9** When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. **10** There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch. **11** Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. **12** For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. **13** Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. **14** For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do. **15** The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; **16** According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my

God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. 17 And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. 18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. 19 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. 20 But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. 21 And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? 22 When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 5. The Levites were to have no land area assigned to them as a tribal group. They were to be given the use of cities and their surrounding areas within each tribal area. Numbers 18, Deuteronomy 10:8-9, 12:19. While they lived in their homes they were to work for their own food upon the land granted for their use, but while they served in the Tabernacle they were to eat of the offerings given there. The basic principle for all mankind since The Fall has been, “by the sweat of our brow we feed our selves and our families”. This was expected of the Levites while they lived in their provided home areas. **Genesis 3:17-19, 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13.**

This same principle applies to all believers today and to pastor-teachers also. While we are expected to look after our own families with our own labours, if we are pastor-teachers, we are to be fed by the believers around us, if we have to stop our physical work to spiritually feed the people of God. Now it is the last “if” that is to be noted by all people today. 1 Corinthians 9:6-14. Paul is our mentor here, and he worked until he was jailed, and only then lived on the gifts of money he received from the church. We must not be quick to take wages in the Lord’s work, but only do so when we are really working for the people of the Lord and cannot support ourselves as well.

The Levites were called to serve in the Tabernacle and they were set apart to do so. They were to stay there and serve the Lord, and have their families with them as they did, and when their turn was over they returned to their houses in the tribal areas, and were replaced by the next group. We know the priests originally brought their families to Shiloh, and later Nob, from the tragic murder of 85 of the priests and all their families by Doeg the Edomite on the orders of king Saul. 1 Samuel 22:18-22.

We know that there were, under the kings, twenty four “courses” of priests and Levites who served in turns by the references in the book of Chronicles. This was written during the Babylonian captivity, possibly by Ezekiel around 560 BC. 1 Chronicles 16:1-9, 23:6ff, 24:1ff, 2 Chronicles 31:2. There were various re-organizations of the courses down the years, and it appears that in early days the time served was quite long, whereas certainly by the end of the Second temple period the time of service was still two weeks every lunar year, but the families did not join the priests in their time at Jerusalem. Luke 1:5ff.

It would appear from these verses before us that not just the sacrifices at the Tabernacle were to feed the priests and their families. The first fruit offerings also were to be used to support the local Levites. The first of the crops, even down to the wool from the sheep and goats was to be given to the local Levites in thanks for their work in the wider community. By means of these offerings the Levites were provided with the necessities of life and freed from daily work at times throughout the year and so they were enabled to be the judges and the spiritual teachers of the local people. That was at least the purpose.

As we will see in the book of Judges, the majority failed in this duty terribly. Some dispute centres around the question as to whether the Levite received the assigned portions of all animals they assisted in slaughtering for private food supply, even if done on the local tribal areas.

Were the Levites the local kosher butchers for all the tribal areas, and did they receive the “Levitical portions” for their work in killing the animals for others for their food? I suspect that this may have been the purpose of Moses, so that all animals killed were killed and bled in the correct manner, and the blood fully poured upon the ground. I take this from my reading of Deuteronomy 12:13-28, which I interpret as assigning the Levites as the kosher butchers of each community, with all animals killed for food being killed by the Levites only, and always publicly at the city gates, so that all can see the blood flow into the ground. They were paid by receiving the “Levitical Portion” of the animal. All this may not be correct, and it remains in dispute between ancient and modern commentators.

Verses 6 – 8. The Levites “sojourned” in the land, just as we do in our own houses today. We recognize that we have no lasting claim to any land upon the earth, but that we are here to serve and be buried, and that we have a heavenly destiny where our true “home” is. **1 Peter 1:3-7, 13-17.** Heaven is to be our focus while we serve upon the earth, yet we hear very little about this theme today. Let us be rebuked about this, for the Levites mental attitude is to be our own, and heaven is our destiny. We are challenged by the Lord to rejoice more in future heavenly realities rather than present earthly power and victories. Luke 10:20.

The mental attitude of Paul and his team towards their earthly lives and bodies is portrayed vividly in 2 Corinthians 5:1-9, and yet this is a seldom preached passage today. Read it and challenge yourself over these words believer. The great lie of the so called “prosperity gospel” has perverted God’s people away from these truths and we need to return to the Lord of glory who served in humility and poverty at times. Luke 9:56-62. Let heaven be our focus. Read the following verses

and reflect upon the mental attitude we are called to hold as we travel through this present world. **Philippians 3:20-21, Colossians 1:3-6, 4:1-5, Hebrews 10:31-39, 11:32-40, 1 Peter 3:18-22.**

The Levites that travelled from their houses to the tabernacle were to do so with willing hearts for service and trust in the Lord to provide for them as they served, and for their families while they were away. They were to serve in faith, and walk in faith along dangerous roads, and trust their loved one into the Lord's protection and provision. Even after the murder of the 85 priests by King Saul, they were to return to the tabernacle and serve there, and leave their destiny in the Lord's hands. Psalms 68:20, 116:15.

They were to be obedient to the call of the Lord upon their lives, and not be distracted by the duties of the farms they worked, or the businesses they ran through the rest of the year. We are under the Lord's orders ourselves as His pastors and servants within the churches, and so we are to be ready to walk the roads of this world under His orders, and leave our lives in the Lord's hands. 2 Timothy 2:3-19.

Verses 9 – 12. Close contact with unbelievers will "educate" us in the varied forms of paganism around about us. The challenge is not to be distracted by, or distorted in our own thinking by the evils that we meet daily. The people of this day will be affected by their pagan neighbours and over time they will be seduced by their evils. Moses warns them strongly, again and again, of this danger. The practises of paganism are "abominations" before the Lord. The great evils of this day were child sacrifice, sexualised religious practises, séances, divination, keeping pagan festivals with special prayers and offerings of cakes and wine, and various forms of witch craft, that involved speaking with the dead (actually it was being spoken to by a demon that pretended to be a dead relative).

To be involved in any such activities was to open the Israelite to demonic attack and influence and to lose their spiritual way. To compromise with such religious activities was to open the door to national destruction. It still is the path of death for believers. There can be no compromise with evil. **2 Corinthians 6:14-18, James 1:19-22.**

Verses 13 – 14. The faith of Israel was to be expressed by both negative and positive means. They were to reject the paganism that surrounded them, and they were to stand actively for righteousness and truth. The word translated "perfect" here means all of the following; complete, without blemish, whole, pure, sincere, upright. It means to be whole hearted in obedience to the Lord, without holding back anything that the Lord requires. It sums up the mental attitude of the person who is "sold out" for God, and will not give less than their best in anything they do for the Lord their God. This is the standard for us all still, and will be for all time.

Pagan worship is centred in selfishness and so those who follow their religions will keep adding in new and weird things for more experiences. When people do not trust their god 100%, then they will "cover themselves" by seeking further advice and counsel, and so they will seek for diviners, seers and people running "special" little ceremonies that bring "good luck". Pastors need to beware that such pagans do not seek "advice" from them, and ensure they receive the Gospel Message alone.

Paganism adds new elements to its religious systems to keep their people entertained. They have no problem adding in things, as long as they hold their people under the spell of the enemy. Believers often do not see the dangers in the "additions" that abound in our society. Many believe that they can worship the Lord on Sunday, but still read their horoscopes and consult the "counsellor" who is a tarot reader, or a "spiritual" medium. It is a shocking thing to discover just how many Christians give themselves into the hands of tea leaf readers, seers, tarot card readers, and other servants of the enemy, for such they are indeed. We are to add nothing to the simple teaching of the scripture and it is to be enough for us. Let us be filled with hatred for all aspects of the enemy's work and not go anywhere near such things.

Verses 15 – 16. We now have the first clear prophetic word from Moses about the Lord Jesus Christ coming as the last prophet to complete his work. It was this passage that the people had in mind when they asked John the Baptist, "are you that prophet?" John 1:21. It was this prophetic word that caused the dissension with the Pharisees also, and they forgot that the prophet Isaiah had indeed said that "That prophet" would "light up Galilee of the Gentiles" also. John 7:37-53, Isaiah 9:1-7, 11:10, 42:1-6, 49:6, 60:1-16.

Moses would give the "Beatitudes" and they would be recorded in Deuteronomy 28:1-14, and they would be completed by the Lord in Matthew 5:1-16. He would end this part of his message by pointing out that He had come to complete the Law of Moses, not destroy it. Matthew 5:17ff.

Everything the people wanted in a leader would be fulfilled in the life of the Messiah – the Lord Jesus Christ - who was coming in Moses place, yet more perfect than Moses who failed. Exodus 20:19-21, Numbers 20:9-12. Moses longed for the day of the Lord, and it is fitting that he stood with the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration to rejoice in His coming. Matthew 17:1-9. The Lord would come to stand before the people, as Moses had, and give them a clear vision and message of the Lord. The early disciples saw that the Lord was indeed the One spoken of by Moses and rejoiced in that fact. John 1:45-51, 12:46-50, Luke 16:16-31.

Verses 17 – 22. The Lord's words are very clear to the people. They are to expect a prophet, like Moses, who will speak the very words of God and they had better believe and obey the words they hear from that prophet. God will hold them responsible for their obedience in that day that this prophet comes, and if they fail to hear his word and do them, then they will cease to exist as a nation in the land.

This judgment would come upon them forty lunar years after their rejection of the Lord Jesus. The crucifixion occurs in 32 AD and the city of Jerusalem falls and the Temple is burned in 70 AD, exactly forty lunar years later. The repentance of the nation when they finally accept the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah will be with great sadness. Zechariah 12:10-14.

The true prophet of God will speak the words of God, but there will arise many false prophets who will speak in their own names and will fool many. Those who are proven false prophets are to be killed as soon as they are exposed. The main proof for falsehood will be that the words they speak do not come to pass. Those who make prophetic words and they fail to come to pass, then that person is to be considered a fake, and executed.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. We are to see the enemy's religious systems for what they are, and we are to hate every aspect of them and avoid all contact with them. False prophets are to be exposed and shamed in the Church. No person giving a false prophecy is ever to be allowed to speak to any church again. The Lord's people are to be protected from falsehood. We are to hate falsehood, not ever be amused by it.
2. Genuine pastors are not money hungry, but churches that value the preaching of the Word of God never underpay their full time pastors either! When a Christian leader who can work for himself starts to aggressively seek gifts of money, rather than making it himself, there is a problem some-where. If a person is unable to work for their living because they are so busy serving the church, then the church is to compensate them, and pay them well. "Double honour" means to pay twice as much as would be expected, and a faithful pastor can be paid twice the standard rate and the money will simply come back to ministry, for faithful men of God always give more than they get.
3. The Levites were to serve without fear, favour, or any half heartedness. They were to do their duty with total devotion to the Lord their God, and so are we. Let us ensure we serve with 100% energy. There is no room for any offering, be it of time, money, goods or ability, being anything less than given with 100% devotion. Anything less than our best is not good enough for the service of the Lord.
4. Whatever happened to heaven in our preaching? Is our focus upon wealth and power here upon the earth or is it on our service here and our rewards in heaven? We are "sojourners" here and we need to be focused upon serving well and not being distracted by the things of this world.

REFLECTION – THE ALTAR OF THE SOUL

1. The altar was the place of sacrifice, where people met God's holy demands through a sacrifice for their sins. We meet God in our prayers each day through the sacrifice of the Lord for us; his blood opens up the way from our access to the throne room. Hebrews 4:16, 6:19, 13:6.
2. Those who served at the altar in the Old Testament ate from the food offerings; they shared the blessings of God. We now share the blessings of the Lord through the work of Christ that has made our soul the meeting place with God, rather than an earthly temple. Hebrews 13:10. Our body has become the temple of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 6:19, 2 Corinthians 6:16.
3. Our prayer altar in the soul reminds us that we are only temporary residents of the earth; here to serve the Lord, but destined for a greater universe, the new heavens and new earth. Hebrews 11:9-16, 12:22, Revelation 21.
4. We serve the lord from our body and soul's altar, but we long for the day when we will serve him "face to face". 1 Corinthians 13:12, 2 Corinthians 5:1-10.

REFLECTION UPON OUR SPIRITUAL PRIORITIES

1. The First Person - Jesus Christ has ultimate priority - Colossians 1:16-18
2. The First Possessions - The kingdom of God, the greatest gift - Matthew 6:33
3. The First Offering - the giving of oneself - 2 Corinthians 8:5
4. The First Denial - the denial of self - Matthew 7:5
5. The First Discipline - the discipline of prayer - 1 Timothy 2:1-4
6. The First Commandment - to love God supremely - Matthew 22:37-38
7. The First Excuse - too busy to have time for God - Matthew 8:21-22

REFLECTION UPON THE SPIRITUAL PROSPERITY OF THE CHURCH AGE BELIEVER

1. Nearly every letter of Paul opens with the prayer greeting, "Grace mercy and peace to you all from God...." i.e. Gods love in action, unmerited favour and blessing in all areas of life and peace. Eirene = prosperity, a relaxed mental attitude, rest in soul, no strife.
2. "Peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" Philippians 4:7. Peace of mind = greatest prosperity of all! This is what the wealthy crave for and the lack of it is why they often suicide surrounded by plenty!
3. Israel looked to blessing in time as the key thing. For them, power/money/status = sign of spiritual blessing! This is not necessarily so for our age of history. There is no direct promise to Christians that spirituality = monetary wealth. The principle of Matthew 6:31 -34 applies to us. Put God first and do not worry about future, i.e. apply doctrine and get to work. (Lord will not see you short, 1 Corinthians 10:13, you will never be pushed beyond what you are able, with doctrine, to stand). In Israel to be in poverty = judgement, but this is not so for the Christian, Philippians 4:11, "In whatever state I find myself there I am content."
4. Christian maturity = spiritually minded + Peace and Prosperity, c.f. carnally minded = death. Romans 8:6. To be carnally minded = concerned for things that decay! = living death! We are to be concerned for things of eternal consequence = liberated.
5. Not having our eyes on earthly treasures. Matthew 6:21 - for where your thoughts are = there your soul rests and lives! Question for you, Where does your soul live today? Turn to James 5:1-6 (Read). NB: James is writing to believers with unjust business practises. Turn to Luke 12:16-21 (Read). The warning is clear, don't be the richest man in the cemetery!
6. Our treasure is hidden in earthen vessels = doctrine in the soul! 2 Corinthians 4:6&7
7. Riches = Gods word. Colossians 3:15&16. The result of this = others blessed and comforted.
8. Prosperity for believer = fruit of Spirit in the Soul. Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 1:3. Love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,.....
9. The overflow of this spiritual status may be physical and monetary prosperity. It is bona fide for mature believer to pray for money! 3 John 2 "I wish that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers." This is a good prayer = that a person's wealth keeps us with their spiritual resources to cope with it! Such a believer will use their wealth to honour God.

If this physical prosperity is part of Gods will for us, then we can relax with it, for he alone can only give as true prosperity! 1 Corinthians 16:2. The point in these verses is that God pours physical and other blessings upon us when we have the spiritual capacity to cope with them and use them to the glory of the Lord. Read 1Timothy 6:6-12.

CHAPTER 19**INTRODUCTION**

Moses now mentions other laws, which flow from the previous ones that referred to the Levites. Moses connection of thought is seen again here, (evidence of his hand) as the next issue mentioned is the Levitical cities that are the cities of refuge. The issues surrounding the safety of a person fleeing to a city of refuge bring up the question of boundaries and the importance of boundary markers being respected. The dishonesty of people who would move a boundary marker, and in effect steal land, from another to whom God gave it, brings up the issue of false witnesses.

Moses thought flows from one issue to another here and in the next chapters, but there is a logical connection between the subjects that reminds us again that we are looking at the script here of a speech that was given aloud to the people. The central theme of this speech is that God has given them this land, and the people of Israel are to respect the Law that God has given them with their tenure of the land, and deal with each other respectfully. They are to remember that God has set the physical boundaries of the land, and the rules for living within the land, and they are to be obeyed in all details.

DEUTERONOMY 19:1-21

19:1 When the LORD thy God hath cut off the nations, whose land the LORD thy God giveth thee, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their cities, and in their houses; **2** Thou shalt separate three cities for thee in the midst of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it. **3** Thou shalt prepare thee a way, and divide the coasts of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to inherit, into three parts, that every slayer may flee thither. **4** And this is the case of the slayer, which shall flee thither, that he may live: Whoso killeth his neighbour ignorantly, whom he hated not in time past; **5** As when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbour, that he die; he shall flee unto one of those cities, and live: **6** Lest the avenger of the blood pursue the slayer, while his heart is hot, and overtake him, because the way is long, and slay him; whereas he was not worthy of death, inasmuch as he hated him not in time past. **7** Wherefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt separate three cities for thee. **8** And if the LORD thy God enlarge thy coast, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, and give thee all the land which he promised to give unto thy fathers; **9** If thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to love the LORD thy God, and to walk ever in his ways; then shalt thou add three cities more for thee, beside these three: **10** That innocent blood be not shed in thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and so blood be upon thee. **11** But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities: **12** Then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. **13** Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee. **14** Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it. **15** One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established. **16** If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; **17** Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; **18** And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; **19** Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. **20** And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. **21** And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 7. Moses has systematically taught these things before. Numbers 35:9-34. Here he reminds the people of this earlier teaching, and now firmly urges them to carry out the earlier instructions and follow through on the process behind it. The “man slayer” is to be given a fair hearing, and the avenger of blood is not to execute a person unless they are actually guilty of murder. Accidental killings are not to be avenged. No cycles of blood feuds are to pollute the land of Israel as they did in other lands. Only those guilty of premeditated, callous, and conscious murder were to be executed for any killing of a person.

Moses begins this section with the reminder that God will give them cities they have not built and houses they have not furnished. They will walk into the land and dwelling places of the Canaanites and they will be able to enjoy them, right down to the pots, pans, and food supplies. The Canaanites have lost this land because of their great sins, and the Israelites are to keep remembering this fact, for if they follow the Canaanite religion in any way, then they will share their fate. They “succeed” the Canaanites and they do so under God’s plan, and in His Grace, and their behaviour must be better than that of those evil people.

There are to be three cities appointed within the borders of the land for anyone guilty of homicide to flee to and there await a fair trial before the judges. The entire land west of the Jordan is to be divided into three portions, and all in the land are to know their closest city of refuge, and know that they are to flee there if they accidentally kill another person.

This arrangement parallels that for the East bank territories. Deuteronomy 4:41ff. Such a person is not one “worthy of death”, for they are not guilty before God of murder. Remember, a city of refuge will not save a murderer from righteous execution, just buy time for them to receive a trial. If they did not meet the criteria for refuge they would be handed over to the grieving relatives for execution. The criteria for a person to seek refuge are then given.

1. The person who kills a person has had no quarrel with them before. There is no motive for murder. There was no hatred between them.
2. The act that leads to the death is referred to in the KJV translation as “ignorant”. This means there is no intention to kill.
3. The cause of death is accidental. The example given is the joint felling of a tree, and the axe head dislodges and hits the neighbour and kills him.
4. The person who has accidentally killed their neighbour must immediately flee so as to avoid the hot anger of the relatives who may, in grief and anger, commit murder themselves. These people will take centuries to learn forgiveness and self control.

In most Western societies such rules are no longer needed after over a thousand years of Christian presence, because the concept of forgiveness and “accidental death” are well established. However, in many cultures still, the anger of the people group after a sudden death burns white hot immediately, and unless a person who has been involved in an accidental death flees, they will be struck down in the rage of grief the people feel.

Drivers of cars in some countries are advised that if they hit a person on the road, they are to immediately drive on to the next police station, and there await the decision of the police, and pay damages to the family of the one injured or killed. In mission work in Papua New Guinea you must drive on or you will be killed by the local villages. If after an accident, the people in the vehicle do not drive on immediately, a mob will quickly kill them. The contrast to our own societies is extreme in such cases. This is paganism, and takes hold of communities where the gospel message has not transformed lives. By their fruit you know them.

Verses 8 – 13. There is provision to add a further three cities within the land, if the borders expand and fill all the land promised to the Patriarchs. From Dan to Beersheba there are to be three cities, but if they gain all the land from the Euphrates to the River of Egypt, then they must add three more. They must also maintain the roads to these cities, so that people can travel there fast. If they fail to provide a place for the person to flee who is responsible for an accidental homicide, then the Lord will judge them, because the death of the innocent person will be wrongful. If they neglect this provision, innocent people will die, and God will judge them all for the “blood guilt” that will result.

The Law is meant to produce satisfaction and justice for all, not resentment and unnecessary sadness. If in the heat of grief based rage a neighbour slays their one time friend who has just accidentally killed their loved one, then two families are now without fathers, and the community then lacks two armed men in time of threat, and the bonds of love that bound that community together are broken. This law was to stop one careless act leading to more disaster.

An accidental death was not to lead to more pain and distress than had already occurred. We must remember, that in Israel at this time, there were no police, no jails, and so no way to stop a hot headed relative taking vengeance upon a person who was responsible for such an accident. This provision stopped further death until the case could be examined properly by the Levitical and tribal judges.

The penalty for the person responsible for an accidental death was still a serious one, even if they were not guilty of murder. They had to stay in the city of refuge until the death of the High Priest; this may be an exile of many years for them. The purpose of this was to allow the grief of the loss of the loved one who had died to itself abate and cool for the rest of the community. It was a serious “sentence” upon the person who had not been careful enough in some way so that a death occurred. This was the Lord’s “Health and safety” legislation, and made all people more careful in all work that could end in injury or death, for the personal consequences of an accidental death were serious for all concerned.

They are also reminded, through this law, that obedience to the Lord their God is the way they show their love for the Lord. Their love for the Lord must be stronger than everything else, including their desire to avenge the death of a loved one. The Mosaic Law will prepare for the day when they will be able to hear the words of Jesus. John 15:7-17. Sadly the effect of the paganism that they will leave active within the land will stop their thorough application of the Mosaic Law, and their compromises with evil will lead to greater evils in later days. Jeremiah 7:1-24.

One of the reasons for their entry into the fifth cycle of national discipline in 586 BC and 70 AD will be their shedding of innocent blood upon the land that the Lord gave them. In doing this they broke the sacred trust the Lord gave them with the land and so they lost it twice. In our own day today they are back there and have it again, and this time they will see their Messiah, and He will deliver them into the glory of the Millennial Kingdom, and he will rule through this very Law we are studying.

Verse 14. A land mark was placed on the borders of all surveyed land, and this instruction here indicates that this was formally done within each of the tribal areas. Land marks, like modern boundary pegs, were placed when the land was received and were not to be moved by anyone. They marked the land that the Lord had given

to that group and to move a boundary marker was to act in contempt of God who gave the land. Proverbs 22:28. No-one was to seek to prosper by dishonest means. None is to try to build their own prosperity through the losses of others. This is a lasting principle for all mankind. No gain is to be made by robbery of another.

Verses 15 – 21. No matter was to be judged except by means of two or three witnesses. One witness was never to be enough to secure any condemnation of another person. If it came down to the testimony of one man against another, then the two men were to be taken before the judges, who were to hold a thorough investigation and ask all questions they wished to establish truth. There was no right to silence under God's Law; for such things are only to protect the guilty and make money for lawyers.

God's Law was focused upon disclosing truth and establishing guilt or innocence. The judges have the duty to establish who is lying, for clearly one of the men is a liar, and possibly a murderer. If a man falsely accuses another of any crime, then the penalty of that crime was to be settled upon the person who was found to have falsely accused their neighbour. This was a major disincentive to false witness, and false accusation. In today's world it would be a worthy addition to our own laws. Too often false witnesses and lying accusers escape with minor fines or no punishment at all.

The purpose of the Mosaic Law was for justice to be done and for people to be in fear of the Law, not in fear of crime. The present world we live in has fear of the criminal dominant, not fear of the Law. This will change in the reign of the Lord, for what we read here will be the Law of the Kingdom of our Lord. Those who lie and try to use false witnesses will pay whatever price they hoped to visit upon their neighbour, and the Lord makes it clear, that if they intended their neighbour's death, then they are to be executed for their false witness. Men and women were to fear standing for evil, not boast in it as today in weekly magazines. The day will dawn upon this earth when these things will be done as the Law under our Lord. That is why the Millennium will be heaven on earth.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. The Laws of God were about Love. It was love of God and of your fellows that was to motivate all obedience to the laws themselves. By obedience to the Mosaic Law an Israelite showed their love for their God, just as we show love for the Lord by our obedience to the words of Jesus.

2. The rules about the cities of refuge are about health and safety legislation for ancient Israel. As believers we are to be leaders in health and safety in our own community. Christian organizations ought to be the most safety conscious, and when accidents occur through carelessness of any sort we ought to feel the "blood guiltiness" that the Lord speaks of here. No believers ought ever to be careless of the safety of others under their care. All activities we engage in ought to be done so soberly and carefully, with thought for the safety of all concerned.

REFLECTION UPON DIVINE DISCIPLINE FOR ANY NATION WALKING AWAY FROM GOD

1. **Leviticus 26** states that there are five "cycles" or stages of divine discipline over any nation that deliberately walks away from God's revealed policy for mankind.

If the people in the nation do not want to do things in God's way, God will discipline them in five stages of increasing discipline until He completely destroys the nation if they persist in evil.

2. **First cycle** - v 14-17 - sickness, depression, economic problems, people losing their strength of character, lack of power in the nation.

3. **Second cycle** -v 18-20 - this is an intensified form of the first cycle with recession turning into depression, they become even less enthusiastic.

4. **Third cycle** - v 21-22 - the situation further intensifies, psychological problems in the nation multiply, people behave like animals, the wild animals are prowling on the streets both physically and symbolically. It was not safe to go out. Here you have a breakdown in a nation with psychiatric problems and criminal problems.

5. **Fourth cycle** - v 23 - 26 - this is the invasion of your land with defeat with all the things that go with it, with food rationing, with privation.

6. **Fifth cycle** - v 27-39 - this shows nation collapse and the removal of the nation from the land.

6. The parallel passage in Deuteronomy 28 indicates that God deals with the nation that rejects his Word in a systematic way. God's objective is repentance and restoration of blessing and he only persists in discipline if the nation persists in evil. Judgment is Gods "strange work", Isaiah 28:21, not his preferred work.

CHAPTER 20**INTRODUCTION**

This chapter covers what are known as the "Rules of War". They are far more merciful than other nations of the day, but still read harshly to our eyes. Towards the Canaanites the Israelites were ordered to execute all that breathed. This is an order that we have seen before, and there is no way around this. It is the order of God through Moses and the God whose character involves love orders this. We accept that this is an order of God; we must sit with this and come to terms with it in light of the biblical teaching on the Character of God, not just culturally contextualize it.

The Canaanites had got to such a moral place that even their children and animals were to be executed as a real and physical threat to the Israelites. My belief, in light of this order and the character of God, is that sexually transmitted diseases and other factors had so polluted the genetic pool of these people, and they were a real physical threat to all others. All children who die below the age of accountability are with the Lord in heaven, so their eternal destiny is not in debate, but the horror of what the Israelites were ordered to do is still a problem for us, but one that must be sat with and accepted. This was an exceptional situation here, but one which reminds us that there are some things in history that we will not understand until we are in heaven, and there see the events of time as God sees them.

We live after the horror of two world wars and in the light of the United Nations War Crimes regime, and the Geneva Convention, which controls the conduct of warfare. Even with these things in place the "War Crimes Tribunals" are operating as I write, and they still need to operate! The great evil of uncontrolled war and the abuse of the victims of war remain rampant even today. We must recognize however that the War Crimes Tribunals for Bosnia would not be operating if the rules here before us were in force.

In the ancient world, the execution of all males after any war was considered "normal" and necessary, so that there was no threat ever again from that people group. The defeated nation had its women absorbed into the conquering population as wives and slaves. The killing of all men from a population would not have raised eyebrows in the days of Moses. The only way for threat to be eliminated at that time was for all the men and boys to be executed and the remnant of the population to be taken wholly into the conquering nation so that they had no independent existence ever again. Once again we face an order that is hard for us to accept as from the Lord, but it clearly was.

These rules also cover the psychological aspect of warfare, and are the first recorded examples of the recognition of traumatic anxiety, and other stress related distractions for soldiers. The Israelite Army would always be fighting against the odds, both in numbers and in materiel. They needed to have a different mental attitude to their enemies and all other armies, because they were being ordered to fight against odds at all times.

Most armies would work by strategy and by planning to defeat an enemy by first gaining materiel and numerical superiority, but Israel was being told that they would be expected to fight under Gods orders and completely ignore the odds. This required a tougher mental attitude than any other army that has ever fought wars in history. The only possible exception to this was the army of Alexander the Great, which was always outnumbered by at least three to one in every battle they fought.

We will test ourselves against these orders, for in the Angelic Conflict, we are ordered to fight against odds every day also, and we require the mental attitude of the soldiers here.

DEUTERONOMY 20:1-20

20:1 When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. **2** And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people, **3** And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; **4** For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you. **5** And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying, What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it. **6** And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not yet eaten of it? let him also go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it. **7** And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her. **8** And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart. **9** And it shall be, when the officers have made an end of speaking unto the people that they shall make captains of the armies to lead the people. **10** When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. **11** And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. **12** And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: **13** And when the LORD thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: **14** But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the LORD thy God hath given thee. **15** Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very

far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations. **16** But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: **17** But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee: **18** That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God. **19** When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's life) to employ them in the siege: **20** Only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down; and thou shalt build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee, until it be subdued.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1-4. They will see the enemies they are called to fight arrayed against them with professional armies many times. They will be on foot and be facing armies with cavalry and chariots that would cut them to pieces if they were used effectively. The first command is not to look at the enemy forces, but look up and be sure they are fighting for the Lord and under His orders. If they are standing for the Lord then they are to be courageous and be sure of victory. This does not mean that they do not use good military tactics in battle, but that these tactics are designed to defeat their superior enemies, and are to be carried through with outstanding courage. Israelite armies would defeat great forces throughout their history, when, and only when they operated under God's orders, and with courage, and wise tactical deployment.

They were to remember that the Lord disposed of the Egyptian "Ready Response" Army, which was the finest and fastest of all mobile armies in the world of its day. Exodus 14. The Lord at that time used this army to equip the first Israelite Army, and the weapons carried by the men to whom Moses spoke mostly came from that drowned Egyptian army. When they looked at their weapons, they were to remember that the Lord had provided them, and they were to use them under God's orders. All they had to do was follow the orders of the Lord, and they would win greater victories than even this one.

They were to fight without any fear of death or defeat; for death was entry into heaven and God's presence, and victory was to inherit upon the earth what God had prepared for them. We also are to stand firm and obey the words of the Lord our God and do whatever is required whatever the risk. We are to obey the Lord and leave our lives in His hands for time and eternity. Joshua 1:5-7, 10:8, 11:4-8, Psalms 20:6-9, 33:16-22, 46:1-11, Isaiah 31:1-3, Romans 8:28-31.

When the battle draws near the priest is to go forward in front of the troops and speak to them all. The priest is to speak on behalf of the Lord, not the General of the Army. Israel was to be led by spiritual power, not military authority. The words that the priest is to speak are given by Moses here. This "script" is to be known and believed by the priesthood and used every time Israel goes to war, and she is not to go to war without a believing priest of the tabernacle with them.

The Lord goes to fight for Israel and they are to know that as they advance into the battle before them. Moses ensured that he did this, sending Eleazar the priest with the army on operations from the base on the plains of Moab. Numbers 10:8-9, 31:6. Also refer to Judges 20:27-29, 1 Samuel 14:18-23, 30:6-10, 2 Chronicles 18:11-34. Notice the last reference, for the false prophets urge battle, but the true prophet of the Lord tells the truth and the king ignored it to his death. There is a time to fight and a time to pray and wait, and spiritual wisdom knows the difference. The priest/prophet will speak words of encouragement in the battle, or he will warn against fighting; either way he is to be believed and obeyed.

Verses 5 – 9. Once the priest has given clear spiritual direction and the men are standing still before their God and their officers, the Army Officers are now to speak with their troops. Spiritual challenge is to be given first, as all the men need to know that the Lord is with them, and they need to test themselves against this faith principle, and then commit themselves to the coming battle. Only when the spiritual issue is clear is the way out of this battle to be made open for those who, although ready to fight, are distracted by worldly cares.

Men were excused from military service if they had betrothed themselves to a new wife, but not lived with her yet. They were also excused if they had built a new house and had not dedicated it to the Lord and lived in it, or had planted a new vineyard and not eaten of the grapes. There is recognition here, that mental distraction in a battle kills a man. If a soldier is thinking of home and his unfinished business there he will not be focused upon each sword blow and will be killed by one of them. Fear is defeated by focus upon the Lord alone, without distractions. **Psalms 27:1-4, Isaiah 35:1-4, 41:10-14, Luke 9:62, Acts 15:37-38, Ephesians 6:11-18.**

The next offer is an interesting one indeed for modern armies. Morale in an Army is built by the men coming together in a spirit of strength and confidence in each other and the Lord who leads them. If a person is full of fear, they will be useless in the battle, for their sword blows against the enemy will be slow and weak, and in their panic they may lead astray others, who will then break line and the enemy may pour through their battle line and kill many others.

A fearful man is a danger to any Army. Numbers 13:31-33, 14:1-3, Judges 7:2-3. All such men were to be told to go home and leave the fighting to those who will stand and fight to the end, without distracting fears making them a menace to others. God has already made it clear that He does not need numbers to win, but He does need men who believe in

His victory and are totally focused upon the battle before them, without any distractions that will stop them giving 100% to the battle. These principles are behind Paul's instruction to Timothy, and all pastors, in 2 Timothy 2:2-10.

Verses 9 – 11. Only when the last speeches have been given, and the men still standing in line are totally committed to the battle, only then are the captains to be chosen. The leaders of the various sections will select themselves by their behaviour during the two speeches. The leaders will be the men who were totally encouraging to others during the talks given by the priest and the officers.

No-one is to carry any rank in the army of the Lord unless they have been tested in the battle for the mind before the battle involving the body. Only those with tough mental attitude are worthy to lead others in the Army of the Lord. No-one holds permanent rank in the Lord's army, for when they lose hope and succumb to fear they are to be relieved – only those who daily stand upon the rock of assurance in God's character and plan are to lead in the battle today.

The rules of warfare as they relate to the enemy are now begun. These are rules that apply to all nations they will fight outside the borders of the land, but not to those within it. The first principle was one of voluntary capitulation. If war has been declared, the people in the city are to be given an opportunity to surrender and serve the Lord God of Israel. Surrender will mean that they are to cast away their pagan gods, and serve the Lord alone, and serve the nation of Israel as their over lords. They must accept total service or fight. Remember, the war has been declared here under the wisdom of God and is just and right. Psalms 120:7.

The concept of "unconditional surrender" and the acceptance of total servitude were foundational before those who had made themselves enemies of God were forgiven and accepted into the nation. This remains a fact today. Unless a sinner comes before the Lord and bows themselves to Him fully and completely as their Saviour and their Lord, they cannot be saved.

Verses 12 – 15. Once peace was rejected and a siege started there was no quarter given to the inhabitants of that place. The battle was until the end. The rejection of peace by the inhabitants was a rejection of God, not just of man. **Luke 19:26-27, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9, Hebrews 10:28-31, 12:28-29.** All the men of that place were to be killed and every woman and child kept alive was, either to be enslaved as servants, or made their wives and adopted as the children of the conquerors. They were to be absorbed into the nation of God. All the cattle and the spoil of the city was the pay for the Army for their time away from their own fields. They were to eat of the enemy's food supplies and feed their own families from the supplies of their enemies.

Verses 16 – 20. The Canaanites were in a different situation to those nations that were beyond the land that would be fought later. The Canaanites were a people to be destroyed under the direct order of the Lord. They were "herem", accursed, and so assigned to judgment by God, and nothing could save them. This truth had to be accepted by the Israelites who went into battle against them, and no mercy was to be shown them, or they would destroy the people of God later. All were to be destroyed, and all their lands and buildings taken for the nation Israel. The Israelites were to fear the pagan influences of these peoples and were to hate every item that was devoted to their religious system of evil, and they were to destroy everything associated with evil.

The rules regarding siege warfare are to be noted next. No tree that was for food was ever to be cut down and used for firewood or for siege warfare. The Romans and others would destroy everything, but God's people were to think of future generations as they engaged in battles in their own day. The olive, the grape, the date palm, walnut and the various citrus fruits trees were to be kept alive for the local peoples of years to come. They were to ensure that the land was still a land of plenty after warfare, not a wasteland. Having said that, if a siege was entered into, then it was to continue until the city was taken. They were to be known as people who would not ever give up once they set their mind to a task.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. The hardest battle we ever fight is the battle for our mind. We are to stabilize ourselves upon the plan and power of God. We cannot be sane and strong without trust and obedience to the Lord our God. Let us rest upon the words of the Lord and walk in the filling of the Holy Spirit today, one day at a time, and so stabilize ourselves in relationship with Him.
2. No distractions! That remains the order for all who would work for the Lord our God. We are not to be distracted by work, by properties, by people, by human goals, by fame, or fortune, but we are to focus upon the Lord's will for us alone. Only in Him are we stabilized. We are never to give up on any task the Lord has set us. Remember Luke 9:62.
3. There are hard things in God's Word and we must just sit with them and accept the Lord's Word, and know that one day we will have the answers as to why certain things had to be done. The fate of the majority of the Canaanites was settled by their own actions and these could not, for some reason, be reversed by salvation. There would be exceptions, but they were few. These people were corrupt to a level we cannot fathom. Such was the Lord's determination to destroy these people, that those the Israelites were not able to dislodge were destroyed by the Philistines when they invaded the land around 1200 BC.

When we come across passages in the Bible that we cannot understand and find difficulty in accepting, we are challenged to accept them in prayer, affirming that the Lord will clarify these things one day. In such faith we are to press

on in our study. Advancing to maturity means building faith in the One who called you. This is a testing situation; accept the test and move forward through it to victory.

REFLECTIONS UPON THE HOLY CHARACTER OF GOD

1. Whilst God is three persons all three persons have exactly the same essence or character:

a) **SOVEREIGNTY**

The Father (Ephesians 1:11 , cf Isaiah 40:8, Matthew 6:10, Hebrews 10:7, 9)

The Son (John 5:21, Revelation 19:16)

The Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:11 , cf Hebrews 2:4)

b) **RIGHTEOUSNESS**

The Father (John 17:25)

The Son (Luke 1:35, Hebrews 7:26, 2 Corinthians 5:21)

The Spirit The Holy Spirit

c) **JUSTICE**

The Father (Job 37:23, cf 8:3)

The Son (Acts 3:14, John 5:22, Revelation 19:11)

The Spirit (Nehemiah 9:20)

d) **LOVE**

The Father (John 3:16)

The Son (Ephesians 5:25, 1 John 3:16)

The Spirit (John 16:7-11, 1 Corinthians 2:10)

e) **ETERNAL LIFE**

The Father (John 5:26)

The Son (Micah 5:2, cf John 1:1-2, 1 John 5:11)

The Spirit (Isaiah 48:16)

f) **ALL-KNOWING**

The Father (Hebrews 4:13, cf Matthew 11:27, 1 Peter 1:2)

The Son (John 18:4, cf Matthew 9:4, John 2:25, 1 Corinthians 4:5)

The Spirit (Isaiah 11:2, cf 1 Corinthians 2:11)

g) **EVERYWHERE**

The Father (2 Chronicles 2:6)

The Son (Matthew 28:20, cf Ephesians 1:23)

The Spirit (Psalm 139:7)

h) **ALL-POWERFUL**

The Father (Mark 14:36, cf 1 Peter 1:5)

The Son (Hebrews 1:3, cf Matthew 24:30, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Philippians 3:21)

The Spirit (Romans 15:19)

i) **UNCHANGABLE**

The Father (Hebrews 6:17, Psalm 33:11)

The Son (Hebrews 13:8)

The Spirit (John 14:16)

j) **TRUTH**

The Father (John 7:28, John 17:3)

The Son (1 John 5:20, cf John 1:14, 14:6, Revelation 19:11)

The Spirit (1 John 5:6, cf John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13)

REFLECTION UPON THE SPIRIT FILLED BELIEVER'S MENTAL ATTITUDE

1. Definition: Attitude or Mental attitude is the state of mind where the mind is set on a course of action on the basis of the whole function and thinking of the soul.

2. Every believer faces the inner conflict of divine versus human viewpoint. These two attitudes are at war in humanity in human history from the time of the fall. (Isaiah 55:7-9)

3. We are commanded to have divine viewpoint in our souls not the viewpoint of Satan (worldliness). 2 Corinthians 1:7, 10:5. (via Doctrine in the Soul).

Attitude determines both the life and character of a person - what you think is what you are (Proverbs 23:7)

4. As Christians we are commanded to have our thinking in tune with the mind of Christ. Gods plan for our lives calls for a new attitude in our souls, a new viewpoint, without any human viewpoint or mental attitude sin (1Corinthians 2:16, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 Romans 12:2, Philippians 2:5, 2 Timothy 1:7)
5. Fellowship within a church is based on believers all being in tune with what the Bible teaches. Philippians 2:2.
6. Knowledge of the Bible (the mind of Christ, 1 Corinthians 2:16) and control by the Holy Spirit renews the mind of the believer, giving divine viewpoint. (Romans 12:2)
7. The right mental attitude produces joy (Philippians 2:2), confidence (2 Corinthians 5:1,6,8), stability (Isaiah 26:3-4, Philippians 4:7, 2 Thessalonians 2:2), true giving (2 Corinthians 9:7), love (1 Corinthians 13:5)
8. Human viewpoint is called worldliness. (Romans 12:2, Colossians 3:2)
9. Evil is what you think as you are following Satan's policy. Matthew 9:4, Galatians 6:3. Mental attitude sins produce self induced misery. (Proverbs 15:13)
10. Without clear thinking there is conflict in the mind of the believer. Isaiah 55:6-9, James 1:7-8.
11. True stability of Character comes only this way. Philippians 4:7, 2 Thessalonians 2:2.
12. Giving is a mental attitude. 2 Corinthians 9:7. Love is a mental attitude. 1 Corinthians 13: Deuteronomy 6:5,10:12.
13. Worldliness is a mental attitude: It is all non-grace thinking i.e. Anti Gods Plan, Colossians 3:2.
14. Confidence in service and living generally flows from having "Divine Viewpoint" which has other advantages such as -
 - [a] Stability in life - James 1:8
 - [b] Prosperity of soul - Philippians 4:7
 - [c] Giving to the Lord - 2 Corinthians 9:7
 - [d] Spiritual rather than worldly - Romans 12:2, Colossians 3:2
 - [e] Purity rather than evil - Matthew 9:4
 - [f] No arrogance - Galatians 6:1-5.
 - [g] Inner beauty - 1 Timothy 2:9,10,15.

NOTES

CHAPTER 21**INTRODUCTION**

Moses train of thought continues in this section, relaying the orders of God in logical sequence. From the matters of warfare he moves to the matter of murder and the deaths of others in the land, including the teenage rebel against his God and his father. He also refers to the treatment of women captured in warfare. The rules he lays down are stark, blunt and form the biblical standards for action when the three situations mentioned here occur. While we may not be required to apply these rules today into our national or community lives, the principles behind them are applicable for all time and instructive to us as community leaders.

DEUTERONOMY 21:1-23

21:1 If one be found slain in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, and it be not known who hath slain him: **2** Then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities which are round about him that is slain: **3** And it shall be, that the city which is next unto the slain man, even the elders of that city shall take an heifer, which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn in the yoke; **4** And the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley, which is neither eared nor sown, and shall strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley: **5** And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the LORD thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the LORD; and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried: **6** And all the elders of that city, that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley: **7** And they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. **8** Be merciful, O LORD, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them. **9** So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD. **10** When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the LORD thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, **11** And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife; **12** Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house, and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails; **13** And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife. **14** And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her. **15** If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated: **16** Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn: **17** But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his. **18** If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: **19** Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; **20** And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. **21** And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear. **22** And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: **23** His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 4. When ever a body was found in an open field and the murderer was unknown. One town had to take responsibility for the investigation into the murder, and prosecution of the murderer when found. The closest town was the one to take full responsibility for the investigation and for the follow up to it. There was a personal responsibility upon that town to absolve itself of the blood guilt for this crime and make expiation for it. A formal measurement was to be taken to identify the closest town and then the elders of that town were to send for the Levites to perform the sacrifice of the heifer in an uncultivated valley close by to the site where the body was found. It was to be a valley with a stream of flowing water that was not worked, so that the blood shed upon the ground there in payment for the death would be “washed away” and not be able to enter the food chain in any way.

The blood shed took away the guilt of the innocent inhabitants of the town close by to where the body was found, and they were then to set about an investigation, it did not take away (expiate) the sin of the murderer, who was still to be executed when found. First the spiritual consequences of the murder were to be dealt with, and only then are the physical aspects of the murder to be addressed. The ceremony here did not absolve the town from responsibility to investigate and follow through upon their investigation, but it recognized that the guilt of this evil act was not theirs and would be dealt with thoroughly.

God's Law was to be followed everywhere, with no evil act covered up or ignored. The murderer was not immediately found in this case, and so his blood shed, through judicial execution, did not fulfil the Law, so the innocent heifer died in

the murderer's place until he was found and dealt with at some later time. Blood shed wrongfully was not to be left without action for even a week. The people were to value the life of the innocent and act to protect or avenge it. This thought is built upon with the next rules, which relate to women captured through warfare. Before we get to that issue though, Moses will strengthen the roles of the Levites in the matters of judgment after any murder.

Verses 5 – 9. The local Levitical priests are to be informed of the murder, either at the Tabernacle (if it is close by), or those who are off duty and living near by to the place of the murder. Their role is to bless the name of the Lord in the land, and they do that in the case of murder by dealing with all matters of expiation, judgment and investigation that flow from such an event. They are to attend immediately they hear of the murder. This may involve a day or two for travel. Their words are the words of judgment, and they are to be attended to.

The slaughter of the heifer is to wait until the priests have arrived from the neighbouring town, or the tabernacle. Then before the priests, the elders of the town that is closest to the body are to formally take oaths above the dead animal that they have not shed the blood of this man found by their town. They are to wash their hands over the bloodied body of the heifer and take this oath one by one.

They are then to pronounce Moses formal statement of innocence before the priests and all gathered. The shedding of all blood was to be taken very seriously by God's people and they were to treat every homicide as a personal insult against the Lord their God. They are to pray for their nation after the death of each murder victim, for the fact of the murder tells them that all is not well within the nation. Even though innocent of the murdered man's blood, all the people are to take spiritual responsibility for it, and they are to act and ask for the Lord's forgiveness for this evil act in their midst.

Today we are to pray for our nation and take responsibility as churches for the sins and evils done close by our closed doors. We are to feel the results of evil in our nation, and pray for God's forgiveness, and seek the Lord's face that we might daily play our part in turning such evil around, through the preaching of the Gospel. We are not to be callous and uncaring towards the crimes that surround us, but we are to feel God's pain at these evils, and pray for the Lord's forgiveness for our nation, and then set our face to do whatever the Lord requires of us to play our part in the salvation of our nation.

Verses 10 – 14. The next subject flows from this subject of murder and what flows from bloodshed, as it involves a female captive taken after warfare, where her remaining family may have been killed. If a woman was captured and a soldier fell in love with her beauty, then he was to take her into his own home, but not take her sexually as his wife at this point. For a woman to enter a man's home, and to sleep at his feet, was to betroth herself to the man. Ruth 3:1ff. The man was however to practise celibacy at this point and not have sex with her, nor force his attentions upon her, but allow her to mourn for her people, who she would see no more.

A woman's long hair was her beauty and she was to wear her hair long and beautiful as a badge of honour to her man, but in extreme mourning she would cut it off altogether. The captive of war was to mourn for her lost people for a full lunar month (28 days) and only then was the man to go in to her and have sex with her and so consummate marriage with her.

Remember, in this time marriages were recognized after sex and so the Israelite in the army was not to have sex with captives, but treat all women properly and respectfully. Sex involved either a marriage act or adultery, and penalty for adultery was death, for both the man and the woman involved. Adultery, Rape, and Murder were forbidden, and all punishable by the execution of the offender(s). Leviticus 20:10ff, Deuteronomy 22.

Warfare in the ancient world led to wholesale slaughter and rape of civilian populations and great evils were done by some armies. The Assyrian Armies were the worst, but many came a close second to them in cruelty and barbarity. The Israelite Army was to be different. They were to show care and consideration for non-combatants and take alive all who had not raised arms against them; the exception to this order was the determined pagan Canaanite population.

The death of captives was ordered only when the Lord specifically placed a people under a curse for their great evil, and outside that the rules of war were to protect the women and children.

The next case Moses describes here is when a soldier falls in love with a captive, but the attraction has been purely physical and there is not enough in common between them over time to sustain the relationship. Such a woman may not be a difficult or bad person, but there simply have been too many cultural or personal differences between them. Such a woman is very vulnerable in this situation, having been taken in war. Often such women in other cultures were cast aside by their "husbands" and were forced into slavery or prostitution.

Moses lays the Law down here to protect these war-brides. If the soldier marries the captive woman, but later finds he cannot live with her and the relationship breaks down for whatever reason, then he cannot treat her as a slave at that point, and sell her in the market place. She has been taken as a wife and she now has that status before the Lord and she is to be treated with respect, and formally divorced and to live as she wishes. No wife is to be made merchandise of by her ex-husband.

Verses 15 – 17. This issue of the female captured in war, becoming a wife, and then being cast aside, raises another issue for Moses that he comments on now. In polygamous families problems will abound (which is why this is

never God's best will for any family), but a specific problem is in Moses mind. The two women have children, but the woman who is "hated" by her husband in the end is the one with the oldest son. Even if the man hates his first wife, he is to honour his children by her and give them their place of honour in the family.

No child is ever to be treated on the basis of their mother or father's later behaviours. They are to be honoured and the oldest son is to receive the "double portion" as is right in the family. He is the firstborn and has the rights associated with that, no matter what his mother did after his birth to lead the father to hate her. The only exception to this was if the son himself was evil in nature, and this subject is the one Moses moves onto next. There is no "Four Generation Curse" in operation unless each generation "hates" the Lord and rejects His Word and will for their lives. Each generation is under grace and by good behaviour they establish their spiritual status, not by the reputation of their parents. Exodus 20:4-6.

Verses 18 – 23. The "rebellious son" here is more than just one who answers back at times. This case involves a young man who does not honour his father and mother, nor does he do what is right and good in God's sight. This young man is an active rebel against righteousness, hating God his heavenly father and his earthly father; holding the rules of both in equal contempt. This is a son, who having been told by mother and father to do what is good, does what is evil and will not accept rebuke from his parents. **Proverbs 13:24, 19:18, 30:11-17, Hebrews 12:4-13.**

The seriousness of this case is seen that the parents are at their wits end and even the threat to go before the elders does nothing to halt this young man's evil behaviours. From Solomon's words in Proverbs 1:10-19, and Moses here in Deuteronomy, we can see that this sort of case is far beyond simple juvenile delinquency; but is actually youth gang culture leading to murders. The boy in view in this section of the Mosaic Law is a teenager who has become a serious threat to his neighbours by "anti-social behaviour", but has not murdered yet.

Under Israelite Law the parents could take this drastic action before their son actually committed murder. Under our present laws we must wait until great evil has unfolded before we act and the evil is what we see upon the streets in youth gang culture where drug taking, robbery, rape and murder are commonplace. It is the evil that blights many inner cities that this law is designed to eliminate.

The young man was to be taken before his elders and there he was to be thoroughly questioned. His behaviour was examined, and by so doing his attitudes towards his own actions were checked out. He was challenged and rebuked, and at any time he could have repented of his behaviours and sought forgiveness for his past actions. Had he done that he would have been placed under a warning, but the young man in view here will have none of that, and is determined to be a follower of Baal and treat his neighbours with contempt; there is no care for others or repentance in his heart.

In addition to anti-social behaviours, and lack of respect to his parents, the accusation is that he parties and drinks alcohol excessively also. Once these things against him are proven, the men of the city are to take up stones and stone him to death. For parents to bring their son to the city gate when this is the penalty tells us the extreme lengths his behaviour has pushed them to.

Moses point here, is that it is better to bury a son before they have had to bury others as his victims. We are more lenient and that is why we have more casualties of evil/crime that we bury each week! Evil was not to be tolerated, but "put away". The drug culture and youth gang culture that grows today is a great evil in God's sight. It's source is pagan religion, and it flows from Satan himself. He is the destroyer of young lives and he delights in his work. Remember, Satan hates mankind, and he loves using drugs, alcohol, sexual exploitation, and violence to destroy all he can!

The young person determined to follow the path of evil will entice others to follow them, but it would be stamped out in a few weeks if these determined and evil young men were executed, and all those who were easily led could see that the end of such evil is death. This was the Mosaic Law and when applied, it worked!

Those executed were to be strung up on a tree afterwards for all the community to see and reflect upon. Now in pre-Israelite times great trees were used for pagan worship, and so the hanging of a person on such a tree reminded people that the root of the behaviour the executed person died for, is in pagan worship.

This form of execution, and the public display of the body made a double statement; firstly that the wages of persistent sin and evil was death, and secondly, that all evil has its roots in paganism. The body was not however to be left on the tree at nightfall, but was to be given proper burial. Evil men were not to be left to be torn apart by wild animals, but buried decently.

There was to be public humiliation for the evil person, and the speedy elimination of all evil from society. No evil robber, murderer, rapist, or drug/alcohol dealer was to be left to destroy another young life! Most modern people are shocked and offended at these passages in the Law of Moses, yet they will not face the fact of evil in their nation, and would prefer the slow deaths of many through drug addiction, and violent deaths nightly through street crime, to the quick execution of a few.

Moses challenges us to examine our hypocrisy and our moral weakness that we all too often pretend is moral strength. We say that we value human life, and will not execute evil men and women because of our beliefs, yet we will see many slain on our streets nightly because of our weakness and our refusal to call persistent evil for what it is before God. We need to value the lives of the young who are led astray more highly than the lives of the evil ones who destroy them.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Have we felt the pain of the Lord at the sins and evils of our nation? I have personally been rebuked by Moses instruction here, for I have never taken the sins of evil men of my nation as a thing for me to come before the Lord and ask forgiveness for. The Lord wishes us to take personal responsibility for the evil that is around us and claim His presence and solution for our nation. We need to do this every time we read of a murder in our local paper and cast our cares upon the Lord. 1 Peter 5:6-7.

2. We are also to pray for the pain and anguish of the families of the victims, and claim John 16:8-11 for them that they might be saved. We are not to despise the evil people of our nation and refer to them as "untermenchen", "swamp people", "Low lifes", "inbreds" or other names that put them down; we are rather to pray for them that the Lord may lift them up as His children.

3. Ex-wives are to be treated with dignity and not made merchandise of by the powerful and wealthy husband. A man's character is shown when it comes to looking after his ex-wife after a break down of marriage. Some women in such situations are greedy and we have seen some cases of women who appear to marry simply to rob their husbands of their money at the divorce time, but the teaching here is clear; all ex-wives are to be treated with respect and be provided for, never financially or legally abused in the divorce process.

4. Prayer is to be offered for the lost, and especially for the perpetrators and the victims of crime, but we are also challenged to come to terms with the execution of the criminal for persistent evil. When the Lord Jesus rules the earth these laws before us will be the Law of all nations. Come to terms with them now believer, for they are the words of the Lord. Face any liberal hypocrisy regarding the death penalty for the person who is determined to follow evil, and stop pretending you can protect society from evil any other way that eliminating those who are determined to follow evil. Let us pray for the move of the Holy Spirit upon all who practise evil in our land, and let us place ourselves in the path that the Lord has called us to walk, in order to make a difference. John 16:8-11.

5. Even the murderers were to be given decent burial. Execution was to be carried out, but no wild vengeance was to be a part of the process. The bodies of the evil dead were to be buried without hypocritical sermons over them, but the truth told, prayers made for the living, and then they were to be simply and decently buried. The person who dies in sin or evil has to await in hell the last judgment and their final date with the Lord, from where they go to the Lake of Fire with the devil and his angels. Luke 16:19-31, Revelation 20:10-15.

CHAPTER 22**INTRODUCTION**

This section of the book of Deuteronomy covers a wide variety of social laws that govern caring in the community, ecology, health and safety in building, marriage, divorce, and morality. The next chapters cover all manner of topics:

Chapters 22 – 26 Rules for domestic and personal relationships

Chapter 22	Various laws relating to all aspects of life.
Chapter 23	The world, the flesh and the devil.
Chapter 24	Divorce
Chapter 25	Punishment and protection issues.
Chapter 26	First fruits and thanksgiving.

DEUTERONOMY 22:1-30

22:1 Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother. 2 And if thy brother be not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again. 3 In like manner shalt thou do with his ass; and so shalt thou do with his raiment; and with all lost thing of thy brother's, which he hath lost, and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise: thou mayest not hide thyself. 4 Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again. 5 The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God. 6 If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young: 7 But thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days. 8 When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence. 9 Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled. 10 Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together. 11 Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together. 12 Thou shalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters of thy vesture, wherewith thou coverest thyself. 13 If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her, 14 And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid: 15 Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate: 16 And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her; 17 And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech against her, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. 18 And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him; 19 And they shall amerce him in an hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days. 20 But if this thing be true, and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel: 21 Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you. 22 If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel. 23 If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; 24 Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you. 25 But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die. 26 But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death: for as when a man riseth against his neighbour, and slayeth him, even so is this matter: 27 For he found her in the field, and the betrothed damsel cried, and there was none to save her. 28 If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; 29 Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days. 30 A man shall not take his father's wife, nor discover his father's skirt.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 4. There was to be a duty of care for others and their belongings in society. Exodus 22-23. All that belonged to another was to be respected as such, and restored to that person should it be lost. People were to go to any length to restore lost property to those who had lost it. If the ownership of a straying animal was unknown to him then he was to care for it at his own expense and await the real owner and then restore the animal to him at no cost.

All were to care for each other. All were to be "their brother's keeper". None were to look away when injustice was done, or accident occurred; all were to move quickly to assist and restore justice and righteousness. The animals of another person were to be rescued if in difficulty and no reward was to be sought. People were to seek to assist others, not work from the basis of self centeredness. The attitude of Cain, who murdered his brother, was not to be the attitude of Israel. The mental attitude that was to guide was, "Do unto others, as you would want them to do unto you". Genesis 4:9, Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 7:12, 22:37-40, Luke 10:29-37, James 5:13-20.

Verse 5. There are people in the fashion industry who have gone out of their way in the last hundred years to break this rule. This is a lasting principle however, and all believers ought to heed its doctrinal significance. Moses is speaking for the Lord here, and we are going to do well if we keep the distinctions the Lord intended kept. The homosexuals behind some of the fashion houses have an agenda and believers ought to stand against their satanic viewpoints. This verse doesn't mean women cannot wear trousers, for they and dresses have always been items for both male and female wear, but it means that if a form of clothing is associated only with women in your culture, then men ought not to wear that. If a garment is only associated with men in your culture, then no woman ought to wear that. The people of God are not to mix or confuse the sexes. When people see you they ought to think correctly about who you are, and what you stand for. Confusion about sexuality is to be called "confusion", not assigned a politically acceptable name as "normal".

Fashion is fine if it makes a person look good, but the believer must draw the line if it confuses the sexes, or if it amplifies sexuality, for both these things have their origins in satanic inspired paganism. We must remember Satan's strategy and tactics, for he focuses his attacks upon the divine institutions of marriage and the family. Everything he has ever done is centred around the assault on God's plan for mankind.

1. Divine Institution #1 – Free Will - Satan wants to break the free will of all by means of drugs and alcohol and manipulation of any form.
2. Divine Institution #2 – Marriage – Satan wants sex taken from the marriage bed and put anywhere else. He has launched sexualised religions like the ones that destroyed the Canaanites, and through modern media pushes all forms of sex, as long as it's not restricted to the marriage relationship.
3. Divine Institution #3 – The Family – Satan hates the concept of a functional loving family and his energy is spent in all societies trying to break down the family any way he can. If children are devastated in any way through their early years; if they are verbally, psychologically, sexually, or physically abused in their childhoods, they are easily led into all manner of evils later.
4. Divine Institution #4 – The Nation – Satan promotes all things that will break down the control of nations over their own affairs. Economic exploitation of poor nations by rich ones is equally a tactic of his to using internationalism to break down independence. Anything that builds the frustration of people and grows their desperation for a "world ruler" to take over is working in his direction. He desires chaos, for out of it he believes he can rule this world. He will fail to do so, for the Lord will return to rule this planet. 2 Thessalonians 2:3ff. The UN wont save the planet; The Lord will!

Verses 6 – 7. The Creator's care over the birds is commented upon by the Lord. Matthew 10:29. The Lord knows and values the sparrows, and so how much more does He know and value us? We are under the "much more" care of the Lord now as His children, than we were as sinners before Him, and yet as sinners He died for us. We are secure in His love! Ephesians 2:1-10, James 4:6.

With this principle in mind read the words of Moses here, for they are the words of God. God cares about the birds. When an Israelite was walking around he might come across a pigeon sitting on a nest in which were many young. By taking them all he could make a great pigeon pie, but the Lord warns them not to let greed destroy a breeding population. There were to be no extinctions due to the greed of man in Israel. They could take the young home and bring them up and breed from them and eat them, but the breeding bird had to be let go that there might be on going prosperity in the land. To fail to care for the environment was to insult God who made all things. Proverbs 12:10.

Verse 8. Here we have the building code by God. No building was to be built with any chance for children or adults to be hurt in the building of it, or the living in it. No roof was to be left without a high ledge around it to stop children falling and hurting themselves. The ledge was to be a "battlement" that was high enough to protect even a careless adult from falling over it.

The builder was to ensure that none could be hurt without being extremely foolish. No careless or thoughtless act by the builder was to endanger anyone else. People were to be thoughtful in all they did, and their building projects were to be safely done. Exodus 21: 28ff, 22:6, Romans 14:12-13, 1 Corinthians 10:32-33.

Verses 9 – 12. Species of grapes were not to be mixed, but pure varieties only sown together. This was not to stop crop improvement, but to stop the decline in the genetic quality of the grapes back towards the older but wilder varieties. Care was to be used to keep the grapes as good as they could be and not allow them to become "defiled", or wild and sour again. The pure ancient varieties of most crops are being sought again now. As most of our modern hybrid varieties are easily destroyed by pests and disease the scientists are trying to find older and stronger varieties to breed back into the gene pool to build resistance to the pests and diseases that sprays no longer deal with. God's rules here were protective for the crops, not trying to stop innovation.

The fringes on the clothing of the Israelites were to be a mark of national distinction to other nations. They were meant to stand out and be different to other nations. Every time they looked down at their fringes on their shawl they were to remember that they were the Lord's people and were meant to have different dress and different life standard to the pagans that surrounded them.

Animal welfare was also in view here with the order not to yoke an ox and an ass together, for they will pull in totally different ways with different strength, and so one or other animal will be hurt. God does not want men to hurt the creation or any creature in it without good purpose. Animals were for sacrifice and food, but they were to be honoured for their role upon the earth and never abused in the process.

Clothing was to be made of pure yarns not mixes of yarns. What had been created separate was to be kept separate. Pure cotton, pure hair, and pure wool were to be the garments, and in the hot climates of the Middle East these are healthy. It is of interest that in the Christian Leadership College in Tanzania that I have lectured in, the instructions for all new arrivals, is that they bring only pure cotton or pure wool clothing, no synthetic mixes. Synthetic clothing will sweat and cause diseases of the skin if worn in Africa. God's rule keeps us safe in harsh climates.

Verses 13 – 19. Moses now confronts some difficult situations in the marriage area. He addresses them within the context of the sanctity of marriage before the Lord, and from the fact that God hates divorce. Matthew 5:31-32, 19:3-12. A lot of foolish things have been written by Christian writers on the issue of divorce and remarriage. In God's sight adultery only ends a marriage, and adultery in this day ended the marriage and the life of the adulterer, who was executed. In the biblical world the innocent party was always able to remarry, because their unfaithful spouse was dead. If there is a biblical divorce there is always the entitlement to biblical remarriage, without any negativity towards the innocent party!

The man who did not work at his marriage, or had made a bad marriage to someone he shouldn't have married may seek to end his marriage. If he was honest he would have to admit he was at fault and not be entitled to a legitimate divorce, so he may turn on his wife and accuse her of infidelity, or of not being a virgin when they married. In that day to be guilty of adultery, or pre-marital sexual activity was the death penalty, and so such an accusation was indeed serious to the woman involved.

The wedding sheet upon which the couple first had sex was kept by the wife's parents, as evidence that the woman was a virgin, as her hymen blood would be upon it. This had to be produced by the family of the bride if the husband went bad later. It was to be brought out if there was any dispute, and the abusive husband was to be fined seriously for his evil accusation, and publicly beaten as well. The man was to be publicly humiliated, as he had tried to humiliate his wife. Once he had done such a thing he was never entitled to divorce his wife for all his days and he had to care for and support her always. She could leave him, but he could not leave her or desert her.

Verses 20 – 21. The penalty for adultery was death, because sexual relationships outside marriage were a sign of paganism in this day. To have sex casually was a sign of a person who had walked away from the Lord. To do such a thing was to insult God and the community. To "play the whore" was to act as a child of Satan, and for male or female was to place oneself beyond the standards of God. We tolerate infidelity and adultery today and wonder why we have such problems in our society, and so we feel this penalty was too tough, but the standards are Gods here, not ours!

The dangers in this day were of incurable sexually transmitted diseases that would destroy the fertility of the individuals and so destroy the nation itself over time. Today the scourge of these diseases has reached this point again and the old evils have become resistant to antibiotics. Sexual sin was both personal and national disaster and was to be seen as an assault upon the very foundations of God's plan for Israel and the world. Sex is designed by God for the robust enjoyment of a married couple, and it is not to be debased by any other relationship than that one.

Verses 22 – 24. There was no double standard in Israel. The man who had been found to have had sex with any other man's wife was to be executed with the guilty woman. Anyone breaking the sacred bond of marriage was to be executed. The word for adultery was "evil", for it was both sexual sin and evil. Remember an evil is an act that opposes and violates the standards of the divine institutions for mankind. Sin is an act that violates the general standards of God, but evil is one step further, in that it violates a foundational value element of God's created universe.

Acts of evil are direct assaults upon the very foundation of the plan of God. If the woman and man are found within the city limits having sex, she would be declared guiltless if she cried out, or tried to cry out, but the man would die. If she did not cry out, and could not prove she was unable to cry out for help, then she was guilty and died with the man.

Verses 25 – 30. The woman would always have a way out of any sexual charge if she had indeed resisted any rape attempt, and if she was raped in the open fields then she was declared innocent if she reported it, and the man alone was executed. Moses tells the people that bluntly, this is exactly the same sort of case that it is with murder, and it is put on that level by God, for it is the violation of the Free Will of the woman, and an assault on the future family.

The rapist violates both the first and second divine institutions, as the murderer violates the first also. The rapist was to die! No psychological courses were to be run in prison for them, or jail terms suffice; the rapist was to be seen as an evil man who despises God, despises God's Divine Institutions and his fellow human being, and was to die at the hands of the entire community.

The next case is the genuine seduction where the couple have agreed privately to marry, but enter into a sexual relationship before anything is agreed with their families. In such a case the man involved must take full personal responsibility for his actions and protect the girl, and request her hand formally and pay a hefty price for the right to marry. Once married he never has any right to divorce in such a case. They both escape the death penalty for sexual activity outside the bounds God has set, but only by standing by each other, and they must do this until their deaths.

The last principle is, that sex must never occur between the generations that blur the distinctions between a father and his children. No man is allowed to marry his step mother or mother. To have sex with one's father's wife is to blur the distinction between marriage and the family. All incestuous relationships come into this category and are forbidden. Leviticus 18:6-23, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Corinthians 2:5-11.

If a father needs physical care, a son ought not to be the one to give this care if in doing so he sees his father's sexual organs. This is more than just a sexual taboo; it is a privacy and dignity matter. The father's dignity is to be maintained, and the sexual boundary between generations here is not to be crossed. All incest, elder abuse, and child abuse, is an evil before God. We are to be more careful in matters of sex as believers than we have been in our western cultures.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Fashion is not to be our sole guide as to what to wear; morality and divine standards are to guide us. We are to be known by our dress and ensure we give the right messages to others from our dress and behaviours. Our dress and behaviour is to ornament our evangelism.

2. No believer should ever do shoddy building or other construction work where another person is hurt. We are to be known as careful people, who go out of our way to ensure others are safe around us. This means that we should not be guilty of doing foolish things that might hurt others, or might encourage younger ones to copy us and by so doing cause a tragedy. Many youth leaders need to learn this principle well!

3. Believers should be ecologically aware and not be responsible for denuding the environment of any species of plants or living creatures. We are responsible to the Lord for our care of the world He has made for us to enjoy. Let us enjoy it and protect it. Satan is determined to destroy it and he will have a good try at this in the Great Tribulation period, but he will not be successful and the Lord's return will lead to the world's restoration. Satan is the destroyer; let us ensure we do not act like him!

4. Marriage is until "death do us part", and anything short of this is in God's sight not good enough for believers. Adultery was the only bone fide ground for divorce, and although divorces occurred for all sorts of other reasons, this was the only one recognized by the scriptures. Let us be holy and keep the standards of the Lord, and if we have fallen in the past, let us make the barriers against falling again strong and stable. Let us not water down God's standards, but rather, lift our own!

Notes

CHAPTER 23**INTRODUCTION**

This chapter covers the rights to full citizenship within the nation of Israel as the Lord's Covenant People. Those who had any physical blemish associated with the sexualised pagan religions, or were born from adultery, incest or fornication, were banned from political membership of the nation. There were special rules of slaves and for those of other nations who entered the nation of Israel, and it was laid down by Moses how many generations they had to wait until they were recognized as full Israelites.

We will see in our discussion below, that the rules here were applied in a spiritual way, for at first sight even King David is apparently excluded by them as the great grandson of a Moabite. As we will see below, these rules were interpreted in quite a different way to the way some of the commentators take them, for spirituality evidenced by actions was always recognized as proving citizenship of "God's People". Fruit in the life was key. Matthew 7:13-23.

These rules are formally interpreted as a spiritual rule for national life by both King Solomon, and the prophet Isaiah. 1 Kings 8:38-43, Isaiah 56:3-8. Ezra and Nehemiah will also refer to them and apply them with rigor, as we will discuss below. They are further spiritually clarified by the Lord Himself in His meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well, **John 4:1ff**, and then later the meeting of Philip with the Ethiopian Eunuch, and Peter with the Roman Centurion. **Acts 8:26-39, 10:1-7, 11:15-18, 15:7-21**. It is in light of these interpretations of these rules that they will be read by our selves in this study.

DEUTERONOMY 23:1-25

23:1 He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD. **2** A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD. **3** An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever: **4** Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee. **5** Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee. **6** Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever. **7** Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother: thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian; because thou wast a stranger in his land. **8** The children that are begotten of them shall enter into the congregation of the LORD in their third generation. **9** When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing. **10** If there be among you any man, that is not clean by reason of uncleanness that chanceth him by night, then shall he go abroad out of the camp, he shall not come within the camp: **11** But it shall be, when evening cometh on, he shall wash himself with water: and when the sun is down, he shall come into the camp again. **12** Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad: **13** And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee: **14** For the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee. **15** Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee: **16** He shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him. **17** There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel. **18** Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the LORD thy God. **19** Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury: **20** Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it. **21** When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee. **22** But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. **23** That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth. **24** When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel. **25** When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn.

REFLECTIONS**Verses 1 – 2.**

As we read these verses we are initially shocked by them. Why is someone excluded from the tabernacle of the Lord because of their parent's sexual sin and evil? The child born as illegitimate, or a bastard, is without personal guilt in the matter, so why were they apparently excluded from fellowship with the Lord? Why is a man apparently excluded from the spiritual life of the nation if they have been forcibly castrated by their enemies after a battle? Both these categories of men were to be like lepers in the nation, apparently unable to come to the tabernacle and deal with their sins.

Now, I say, “apparently” in the former sentences, for that is indeed what the case is here. The situation for such men was not as spiritually hopeless as the English translations and commentators make out. The exclusion of such people from full citizenship was more for military purposes than spiritual, and it was through the spiritual route that full citizenship was obtained. Those who were not “fit to serve” by nature or act of others, were to wait upon the Lord, as lepers did, on the fringes of society, but still covered by the blood of the Day of Atonement. All were covered by that blood shed if they believed in it. Jesus story of the beggar Lazarus tells us that. Luke 16:19-31.

Moses has already identified that all men who have any physical deformity are excluded from being priests. Leviticus 21:16-23. This was vital because the priest stood before the Lord and represented the people as their mediator. The priest spoke of Christ, and so he had to be without obvious blemish, even though he would not be, as a mortal man, without all blemish, and certainly would not be without sin. Hebrews 5:1-4.

The Bible also identifies that the Lord accepts all mankind when they come with an open heart, honestly before their God, and bow their knee to Him. **John 4:23-24**. No person’s birth or any accident that befalls them can separate any man or woman from the love of God for them as their Creator and their Saviour. **Romans 8:24-39**.

All have sinned and come short of the standards of God; so all mankind stands, in all ages before the Lord, just as the lepers, eunuchs, and bastards stood outside the tabernacle of old. **Romans 3:23-30**. All are covered by the blood of the lamb, and that means all can be forgiven, if they accept the Lord’s sacrifice as for them. Leviticus 23:26-32.

Verses 3 – 6. The members of the nations who had opposed Israel, and especially had hired Balaam to curse them, were excluded up to the tenth generation from full membership in the nation. Numbers 22-24. The Israelites were not to seek their friendship, nor support them in any way, nor seek their blessing. These nations were over time destroyed by their paganism, and were absorbed into their conquerors nations. Their hatred of Israel ended their chance as nations to be blessed, and only individuals who believed in the one true God could be saved from amongst them. They are simply part of the Arab nation of Jordan now, indistinguishable from others within that nation. They come under the same rule now that all mankind does; all may come if they seek the Lord in truth. **Isaiah 43:11, Acts 4:12, 16:31**.

The case of King David helps us to biblically interpret these rules more clearly, because his lineage is clearly Moabite. Ruth 4:17-22. How were these rules of Moses then applied? The answer is seen in the story of Ruth. While those of other nations just living amongst them were excluded from the membership of the nation Israel, if they became proselytes and accepted Judaism, they were then entitled to become Israelites by being “born again” as such. They were then no longer considered Moabites at all, for their physical birth was wiped away when they joined Israel’s religious faith by their belief in the one true God – we are all “new” in Him. **Ephesians 2:1-10, 2 Corinthians 5:17-20**.

Those excluded from the life of Israel were members of other nations who had joined themselves to Israel for political or military reasons, or married into an Israelite family, but had not spiritually accepted the Lord as their God. Such people would later be rightly excluded by Ezra and Nehemiah as a danger to the heart of the newly re-established nation. Salvation status was the issue here, not simply physical birth. Ezra 10:2-44, Nehemiah 13:1-3, 23-30.

Notice in these passages that the key issue was the lack of interest of these women to learn to speak Hebrew and so read and understand the scriptures. They had been taken as wives for sexual reasons, not spiritual compatibility, and the men involved had to confess their great sin in this matter and bring sacrifices to atone for their evil.

These women were “strange” of nation, but they had not accepted the faith of Israel, and so they were “strangers” by spiritual nature also, and as such dangers to the spiritual life of their husbands and the nation. Divorce was ordered from all who were not saved, even if they had children to these women. The evil of marrying women who were unbelieving pagans was fatal to national spiritual life. It remains a spiritual law for all believers today; we are not to marry or join ourselves to unbelievers. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

The reasons for all these prohibitions are related to national security as Moses saw it. This becomes clear in verses nine and following. The presence of unsaved foreigners in the nation makes the entire nation unstable at its heart. The “mixed multitude” was the problem centre of the Exodus Generation, and it will be found to be at the heart of the problems for every other spiritual group since that day. Numbers 11:4ff. You cannot leave unbelievers in a believing organization without having the enemy at your back and the organization destroyed over time.

Verses 7 – 8. The Edomites were under the curse on Esau. Genesis 27:41, Malachi 1:1-3, Romans 9:11. They were however placed in a more favoured position by Moses, even though they had come out against Israel on their journey into the land. Numbers 20:14-21. These people were able to become Israelites by the third generation if they married into a Hebrew family. The third generation places them in the end of the four generation curse. Exodus 20:5-6.

The point is clear; if these people enter the family of Israel by marriage, they must also accept the God of Israel. If they hate God, their membership of the nation will be terminated at the fourth generation by the Lord God Himself. This would be the case with the family of King Herod, who was an Edomite.

Verses 9 – 14. The purpose of all the rules about membership of the nation centred in their military preparedness; for all male members of the nation were to be soldiers in the army. The Army must be absolutely undivided in its loyalty. There must be no doubt about whom the enemy were, and if Moab was the enemy, the soldier, who had Moabite ancestry must be absolutely Israelite to the core in his loyalty. Spiritual life will achieve this, for spiritual

power will alone overcome the ties of physical ancestry. David will achieve this and will lead Israel, even though descended from both a Canaanite Woman (Rahab) and a Moabite woman (Ruth). Salvation transformed both women and their descendent David is the greatest King of Israel.

When the Army marches out to war it must keep itself from all evil, lest the blessing of the Lord fail them. The individual soldiers must not take things associated with paganism for their spoil, and they must behave with devotion to the Lord in all things. No soldiers were to masturbate and emit semen in the camp, and even if they had spontaneous nightly emissions of semen they were to leave the camp and wash themselves. They were not to urinate or defecate without digging a hole with a spade and afterwards covering their excrement. Spontaneous seminal emissions, urinating, and defecating are all natural phenomena, and men have little control over these things, but they were to take personal responsibility and deal with all uncleanness that resulted.

Each and every Man was to take responsibility for all bodily functions and practise cleanliness and holiness. The two were to be bound together. Cleanliness was to be a priority for the Army of Israel; both moral and physical. Those who were unclean for any reason were to separate themselves voluntarily from their peers until they had washed and cleansed themselves. The camp of the Army was to be as holy as the tabernacle grounds.

If they kept the Lord's standards of holiness then they could march with focused purpose and expect to win, for the Lord would go before them, but if they were careless in matters of religious and personal cleanliness, or sexuality, then they would be defeated.

Verses 15 – 18. If a slave escaped a cruel master, then the town to which he fled was not to return him to the cruel master, but to keep them in a safe house in the town. This verse would be used by the abolitionists in both the United Kingdom and the United States as part of their campaign to eliminate slavery. Slaves were not to be oppressed or despised; they were to be treated as equals before God. While not mentioned here, the safe house was a refuge until the Judge determined the case and would rule on the treatment of the slave and the rights of the master.

No Israelite man or woman was to work as a prostitute. Prostitution and all forms of homosexuality were to be rejected as bone fide acts, and were to be seen as abominations before the Lord God. Money made from these things was unacceptable to the tabernacle. No money from prostitution could be accepted for the Lord's work and it still must not ever be accepted for Christian work. The devil is to be left with his profits; we are never to partake of his things.

No alliances with whore houses, drug dealers, or alcohol merchants ought ever to be entered into by any Christian group. The price of a dog was also banned from the tabernacle. Dogs were unclean in the ancient world and scavenged on carrion. They were sold as guard dogs, and their value could not be offered to the Lord in fulfilment of any vow. It was unclean and anything that was unclean was unacceptable to the Lord and for His work.

Verses 19 – 25. No interest was to be charged of any Israelite for any loan. The loan was to be repaid when due, but no interest was to be charged. Under such a situation why would you loan money? The answer was in the share of the venture if it was successful. If money was loaned, the principle was required back, but a share of profit made could be received. If the venture did not make a profit, then the money was due, but there was no interest ever charged to an Israelite. Interest was not to be charged and no way around it was to be found, by way of food, clothing or gifts of any sort! Israelite merchants were able to charge straight interest on loans to non-Israelites however.

If a vow was made to a man or to God, then that promise was to be met. A man's word was to be his bond. What was promised was to be paid. The Lord requires that the people who make a vow to Him pay that vow. There was no sin in not making a vow, even if others put pressure on you, but once you took it, then it was to be kept and kept 100%. Once you made a commitment to the Lord, then it was to be kept, even a "free will offering", once promised, was to be given, even if circumstances changed. The Lord was to be trusted to restore all things given by you over time.

The laws of gleaning are then referred to. As a person walked through the land they were able to take from any crop to sustain them as they walked. Wheat could be taken, grapes and other fruit could be eaten as they walked, but no formal harvest could be taken in any container, nor could any implement be used to harvest. To take and sell was theft, but to take and eat was God's blessing, and all were to share in the blessing of the land. Matthew 12:1-2.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. We are to give to the Lord with wholeheartedness. If we promise to do something for the Lord's work then we are to fulfil our vow to the Lord and follow through. Only the best is to be given to the Lord to fulfil our vows of service. We are not to withhold our best from the Lord and give our cast off time or goods.
2. We are to be pure in all things in the Lord's service. We are not careful enough in matters of cleanliness, both physical and moral. Let us ensure we are clean vessels for the master's service. Nothing that is unclean morally is to be given or received for the Lord's work. We are to reject all the works of the Devil and all the money from his industries.
3. Unless a person is genuinely born again, and a true child of God, certified by good works in their life, then they are not to be admitted to membership of any believing organization. To enter anyone who is "mixed multitude" into membership of a believing organization is to destroy that organization over time. Unless we can prove our parentage,

and certify our membership of the body of Christ by works that become righteousness, then we cannot be trusted!
Matthew 7:13-23.

Notes

CHAPTER 24

INTRODUCTION

Laws are simply tumbling out of Moses mind here, and this section again has all the hallmarks of a written speech, where Moses is trying to remind them of all the Lord has shown him. This is Holy Spirit inspired material, not his own thoughts – what “tumbles out” is God’s will for the nation. The subject of marital relationships continues and then a lot of miscellaneous laws tumble forth. They all centre round the subject of consideration for the needs and sensitivities of others, especially the poor of the land. Moses reminds the people in each of the laws he has repeated here, that the Lord hears the cries of those who are unjustly treated and He will answer their prayers for justice. The people are to fear the Lord and act as people who are personally accountable to the Lord; for they are personally accountable to Him.

DEUTERONOMY 24:1-22

24:1 When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. **2** And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man’s wife. **3** And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; **4** Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance. **5** When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken. **6** No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man’s life to pledge. **7** If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandise of him, or selleth him; then that thief shall die; and thou shalt put evil away from among you. **8** Take heed in the plague of leprosy, that thou observe diligently, and do according to all that the priests the Levites shall teach you: as I commanded them, so ye shall observe to do. **9** Remember what the LORD thy God did unto Miriam by the way, after that ye were come forth out of Egypt. **10** When thou dost lend thy brother any thing, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge. **11** Thou shalt stand abroad, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring out the pledge abroad unto thee. **12** And if the man be poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge: **13** In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee: and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the LORD thy God. **14** Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates: **15** At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the LORD, and it be sin unto thee. **16** The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin. **17** Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow’s raiment to pledge: **18** But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing. **19** When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands. **20** When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. **21** When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. **22** And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 4. Divorce was accepted as a right of the husband, if the wife did not sexually please him, or some outrage or disgrace was found in her behaviour. The Rabbis tells us that in early times this was interpreted quite strictly to mean two things. Firstly, that she did not sexually function in a normal manner, and either rejected her husband sexually, or was accommodating to his sexual needs but made him feel disparaged in sexual love making. A woman could also complain to the courts if her husband abused her in any way, and demeaned her sexual identity/integrity.

Secondly it meant some behaviour that brought shame or disgrace upon the husband, the wife, or the family name. This would be caused by outrageous behaviour, outrageous dress, public nakedness, or publicly insulting or abusing her husband to bring him to shame in the eyes of the community. Neither of these things were punishable by the local Levite or city court (held by the Elders at the city gate), but would be grounds for divorce, and the return of the woman to her family of origin, without the return of her dowry money.

As we have already seen, any woman or man who entered into pagan religious practises, or committed adultery was executed, and this was the other cause for the ending of marriage. Whatever the causes of divorce, both marriage partners were entitled to remarriage under the Mosaic system. It was not God's plan for them, nor was it the best for them, but the Lord allowed it at that time. The Lord makes it clear in His Sermon on the Mount, that this was not the best that God had for man, and there was only one biblically legitimate ground for divorce, and that was adultery.

The Lord's point, is that all issues, other than adultery, ought to be able to be worked through to a solution, and it was only "hardness of heart" on the part of the marriage partners that stopped that. All such hardness of heart is sinful, and that couple are responsible for their sinfulness in such a matter. Matthew 5:31-32, 19:3-12, Mark 10:2-9.

These words are the recognition by the Lord that the issue of adultery cannot be worked through by most people, because the betrayal and evil of it cannot be moved past. No marriage partner who feels this is to feel guilty about their divorce, as the Lord allows this, for such betrayal is unnatural to forgive and move past. In the power of the Holy Spirit couples can solve this, but it is very hard.

The Lord's words, as recorded in Matthew 19, and Mark 10, also refer to some people who ought never to get married, for they feel no real sexual passion, and for them to marry is to sexually frustrate their partner. This was a cause for divorce under the Mosaic Law, but the Lord's change to this law is modified by his words about those who are "Eunuchs", who ought not to marry at all. Paul will pick these words up in 1 Corinthians 7:1-17 and discourse further on them.

This principle means that if a person feels no sexual desire, or very minimal sexual desire, then they should not marry at all, for to do so is to sexually frustrate their partner who has higher libido and will be seriously physically and psychologically affected by their partner's lack of interest in sex. This is the cause of adultery in some cases and serious medical problems for others. Pelvic Floor problems in many older women and prostatic enlargement in men are both caused by lack of sexual orgasmic function in people who biologically need sexual activity with one safe partner.

The Lord's challenge to people who have no sexual desire is to accept their low libido, and consciously choose a single life of service to the Lord, rather than following societal norms and creating dysfunction for a marriage partner. Paul will reinforce this advice, and remind married couples that they should be having regular sex for their own physical and mental/spiritual health, and that for any married person to withdraw from regular sex is both a sin and an evil in God's sight, as it undermines the divine institution of marriage.

If we have any dysfunctional pattern in our sexual response, then it is our responsibility to deal with that and either eliminate it, or accept it. If it is eliminated, and we feel normal sexual desire again, then we are to marry, but if it is not, and we have no libido, then we are to take personal responsibility for that state, and not marry. We are not to foist our dysfunctions upon others and expect them to help us; marriage is not to be a counselling relationship, but a satisfying sexual, physical, social and spiritual partnership. If we cannot meet our partner's legitimate sexual needs we mustn't marry!

The point that the Lord makes through Moses, and later, directly in His earthly ministry, challenges all people to be very thoughtful and careful about marriage, and not to enter into it unless they are sure of the other person's compatibility with them for their life path. Marriage was not to be a casual or societal thing, but a deliberate choice before the Lord. People were to be sure that this was the right person and the right time for their marriage, and that the other person was on the same path in life, and had similar sexual libido needs.

Marriage was not to be treated lightly and entered into casually, on the basis that if it didn't work then you could divorce and start again. Moses then gives us a case of a casual attitude and makes it clear that this sequence of events he describes is a forbidden thing for God's covenant people. When a person marries, and then divorces, and then both marry again, and then the second husband divorces the woman, or he dies, the first husband is not to remarry the first woman again.

Note Moses words here; such a thing is an "abomination" before the Lord! Such an attitude "defiles" the land! The words here cannot be much stronger than this. Moses places this sort of behaviour on a par to adultery, but without the death penalty. Leviticus 18:20, Numbers 5:13-14. These rules were to ensure that the Covenant people Israel were holy before the pagan world and did not share their casual values towards sex and marriage. God's people were, and are, to be

different to the pagans that surround us. This means that the rules here do apply to the Church today, for we are God's Covenant people in the world today. We must tighten up our attitudes regarding marriage and divorce within the church today.

Now remember, what people have done as pagans is of no relevance in such matters, for they are now "new creatures in Christ Jesus", and once they are believers they are to have a totally different approach to marriage than they have ever had as a pagan. They may have been total fornicators as pagans, but as new believers in Christ Jesus, they can enjoy a biblical marriage and experience the joy of sex as God intended with their right person.

Too many pastors are biblically in error on both marriage and divorce; marrying people who ought never to be brought together, and accepting divorces amongst believers that are not bone fide. Before God we are responsible for a lot tougher pre-marital counselling course than we often do in our churches. The words of Moses, the Lord's clear teaching on this, and the words of the Apostle Paul, are serious reminders that we must take this subject very seriously, for we have the responsibility to model before the world the truth about what the Creator intended in a godly and sexually normal marriage.

If a couple do not have similar libido, they ought not to marry! If they are not on the same path in life, they ought not to marry. If they are not equal in intelligence, ability, energy, and focus in life they ought not to marry. In all important ways we must be "equally yoked", and that means we are "pulling the same weight". We are directly ordered by the Lord as pastors, not to unequally yoke people together, or we share the responsibility for their ultimate tearing of each other apart, and the resultant impact on any children born! No goofy prophetic words are to guide marriage decisions either!

Verse 5. The first year after a marriage was to be a year free of business worries and any military service obligation for the couple. The newly married couple were to focus upon each other and be free of other worries. They would still have to work, but new businesses were not to be entered into and the man was not to be called up to any battle. The sole focus for the new husband that first year was to be the sexual joy and fulfilment of his wife.

This is a very clear verse for all men; that they are to focus upon the joy and gladness of their wives, not their own sexual enjoyment. The man, in sex, is to satisfy his wife before he satisfies himself, and any man who cannot control himself to do that is unfit to be married, and needs to address the problem he has without any blame to his wife. Moses is very clear in the Hebrew here; the man is to gladden the heart and body of his wife, and he is to devote himself to so doing.

The man must take the lead here. Both are however responsible to give themselves to the other sexually, as Paul will remind us in first Corinthians seven, and failure of either to do so is both sinful and an evil, for it will lead to the break down of that marriage, and God's plan is function, never dysfunction. 1 Corinthians 7:1-17.

Verse 6. Moses now moves abruptly to the subject of thoughtfulness towards those who owe us money. Why this abrupt change? In Jewish thought all the details of life were on an equal footing. There was no distinction made between being fair and thoughtful in business or in a sexual relationship; they were the same before God. We are apt to treat some subjects as "special", when they are not to be seen that way at all. In all the details of life we are to be thoughtful of the other person, even if we believe they "owe us" something.

If a person owed money actions were not to be taken to "put pressure on them" to pay their debt. No action was to be taken against a debtor that would stop them feeding their family. To remove half their grain grinding wheel was to stop them making their daily bread, and such an action was an evil before the Lord. Any action that hinders the function of normal daily life is forbidden for any one who is owed money. The person who was in debt was never to be humiliated, pressured, nor were they to have their family threatened in any way by the person who was owed the money. This is explored further in verses 10-11. If they were hopeless with money, or unlucky in a deal, they were to admit it.

Verse 7. Slavery, or rather "Indentured service", was the institution for social welfare in Israel. As we have seen earlier in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, if a person got into debt and couldn't pay their debt they were able to sell themselves into the service of the person they owed the money for up to seven years to repay the debt. The rules for such a transaction were very fair and placed a great deal of onus upon the "Owner" of the servant to treat them well and provide for them and their family, and provide the weekly and yearly holidays for them. Exodus 21:2ff, Leviticus 25:1ff, Deuteronomy 15:1ff.

While the selling of a person's labour for up to seven years was allowed and encouraged as a means of repaying debts, the permanent selling of people as "things" was forbidden, and anyone selling their brethren as slaves was committing a great sin and evil against the Lord who had redeemed them from slavery in Egypt. Such things would occur in the days of the divided kingdom and would bring judgment upon the people who did such an evil thing as sell their relatives. Any slaver was to be executed – "people smuggling" wasn't to be a business for believers. Sadly slavery will exist until the Lord ends it at his return. Evil people are selling and buying slaves till the end. Revelation 18:13-19.

Verse 8 - 9. The rules regarding leprosy were many and specific. They are contained in Leviticus 13 – 14. Moses reminds the people that these are to be followed precisely. The need to follow the Levites rulings is paramount here, for they will assess each case and may order the expulsion of loved ones from society. The rules must be followed, even though a loved child or partner may be excluded from society because of them. The sacrifices for cleansing were also to be followed. Places and buildings associated with the plague of leprosy were to be dealt with as per the orders received

from Moses, and the people suffering from the disease were to be isolated as ordered. These things would be hard, but were necessary to secure society from this plague of the ancient world.

Verses 10 – 11. The Lord cared for those who had gotten into debt, and tried to make it easy for them to pay or work their way out of their debt. Debt was not wrong, but it had to be paid. We have some believers today who argue that all debt is wrong, but debt has always been normal in business, and it is all right as long as it is paid back. As already noted above, if a person was unable to pay the debt back they were to work for up to seven years for the person they owed the money to, in order for the loaner to be paid back in full.

A debtor was never to be embarrassed in front of the community or their family. This rule makes it clear that all debts incurred were private matters and no one else's business other than those involved in the transaction. The only time a debt became a matter of public humiliation was when a man had to sell himself as a bonded servant to pay the debt, but until that day he was to be treated with dignity by the one who had loaned him the money. This was a matter of righteousness before the Lord.

Verses 12 – 13. A pledge for a short term loan would involve an item of furniture or clothing being held as "security" for the debt. A cloak in the ancient world could be worth several weeks wages (several thousand dollars in our terms), and so it could be held as a security for payment of a smaller debt. If it was held, and it was winter, and the owner of the cloak was poor, and this was his blanket at night, then the person who held the cloak as security was to release it to his debtor each night so that he would keep warm. It had to be returned each morning as "security" for the debt, but would be able to be used each night to keep warm. No-one was to be abused or suffer unduly due to a debt incurred. This was also a matter of righteousness before the Lord, and those who did wrongly here were to expect to be judged by God.

Verses 14 – 15. Whether a hired servant was a local person and member of Israel, or a foreigner, they were to be paid before the sun went down so that they could go and buy food to feed their family if they were poor. Many people still live hand to mouth, and the poor will always be with us! Matthew 26:11. No employer is to withhold or delay wages from those who need money to pay their debts or buy food for their families. That means that an employer is not to force a new employee to borrow money at high interest to feed their family while they wait five or more weeks for their first pay check!

The practise in some countries, of making people wait for a month before their first pay, is wrong and is against God's clear directions here and elsewhere. No Christian employer can withhold wages from an employee if he is poor without incurring the wrath of God upon him or her, and judgment over their business. The Lord has concern for the poor, and seeks for us to open the door of blessing for them, not punish them for their state. To withhold wages from a worker or contractor is a sin/evil before God. **Leviticus 19:13, Jeremiah 22:13-18, Malachi 3:5-7, James 5:1-6.**

Verses 16 – 18. It was common practise in many cultures for the spouses and children of criminals, traitors, and rebels to be executed with their fathers. This has remained the case even to modern times in many places. Such things were not to occur in Israel. 2 Kings 14:5-6. Each person was to be held responsible for his own sins and not to be judged for the sins of another. **Jeremiah 31:29-30, Ezekiel 18:19-20.**

Justice was also to be equal between all people, with no favouritism, or bribes taken to pervert the course of justice. All who tried to pervert the course of justice were to be dealt with severely. Those who had none to stand up for them, (like the widow and orphan), were under the special protection of God and were not to be abused or taken advantage of in any way, or that person so doing was under the judgment of God. **1 Timothy 5:3, James 1:27.**

Verses 19 – 22. The poor were to be provided for, if they were prepared to go out into the fields to gather food, but not if they were not prepared to work to feed themselves. The sick were to be assisted in their homes, but all others were to be provided for in the fields, where they could come to collect food. Those not prepared to work for their food were to be left to the consequences of their laziness. If a farmer forgot to bring in a full sheaf of grain from a field, then he was to leave it in the field for a poor person to collect and take to their home. The corners of the fields were to be left for the poor to harvest, and any grain dropped by the reapers was to be left for the poor to pick up. The grape harvest was to be done once only, and anything left on the vine was for the poor to collect later and take home.

Up until the harvest people could eat as they passed through a field but not take anything home, but after the harvest all that remained could be gathered by the poor who were there in the fields ready to work for the food. When the olive tree branches were beaten to bring down the ripe fruit, if any remained after the first beating, it was to be left to the poor of the land to harvest and carry to their homes to make olive oil for themselves. All that the land provided had been given to the people of Israel and the owners of the fields were not to withhold anything from those prepared to work for it.

The welfare system of Israel depended on the poor being ready to work for their daily food, and all welfare systems ought to have this as their basic premise. Those not ready to work should not expect to eat! No believer should ever assist anyone not prepared to work. No church money should **ever** go into sending cheques to lazy people who will not work as well as they can for the money or food they receive. **1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13.**

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Let us be rebuked by the Lord about our attitudes to marriage today. Let us confess the sin of the churches in encouraging people to marry who should not, and in allowing and condoning divorce in situations that are not biblically correct. Let us teach these principles clearly and without embarrassment. If a pastor cannot speak plainly about these things they have no business being in ministry. Let us challenge ourselves on these vital matters, for we are meant to model successful marriages to the pagan world, not be a centre of marital and sexual dysfunction ourselves.

2. In business dealings we are to be fair and considerate to those who owe us money. We are to require payment and be serious about this, for that is right before the Lord, but we are not to place unfair or unrighteous demands or pressure upon people who owe us money. Let us be models in business as we are in our marriages.

3. Poverty eradication programs are foolishness unless they are built upon biblical principles. The first of these is that working for ones own food is vital for self esteem and dignity. The poor are to be provided for by all who love the Lord, but provided for with food that they can receive by their own work. All schemes to help the poor must empower them, not ever make them dependant on hand outs.

REFLECTIONS UPON POVERTY

1. God can raise the poor out of the poverty of their circumstances. (1 Samuel 2:8, Psalm 113:7)

2. There is a special happiness for those who help the poor. (Psalm 41:1, 2, Proverbs 19:17, Proverbs 29:14)

3. The poor are not only delivered by God from poverty but in the reality of their poverty they often see their need of salvation and respond to the gospel. (Psalm 72:12-14, Matthew 11:5)

4. Whilst charity is good and honourable, it can be abused. (Proverbs 14:30-31, 19:17) Charity is for the poor, but excessive dependence upon welfare makes the poor lazy. (2 Thessalonians 3:10-11)

5. There is a special curse for those who ignore helping the poor. (Proverbs 21:13, 22:16, 28:3). There is also a special curse for those who take advantage of the poor. (Proverbs 22:22-23)

6. Until the Millennium there will always be poverty in the human race. (Mark 14:7)

7. The poor are a target for hypocrisy and its victim. (John 12:5). They are also the victims of backsliders. (James 2:2-4)

8. Poor believers have the same spiritual privileges as rich believers.(James 2:5). A person can be poor in material things but rich in doctrine.

Notes.

CHAPTER 25**INTRODUCTION**

This section continues Moses spoken summary of many and varied social laws. It contains several rules that will have great significance or interest later in Jewish history. The first is the use of corporal punishment for all crimes that do not require the death penalty. Remember, there were no prisons in Israel until the days of the kings. Corporal punishment was to be used on a man who had broken a law, or violated a principle of the Law, but what was said or done fell short of a judgment worthy of the death penalty. For example, in the case of the husband who lied about his wife's morality, the woman faces serious consequences if her husband's false testimony is believed. This has been referred to earlier in Deuteronomy 22:13-18.

This issue is important, because the Law, earlier given in Deuteronomy 19:16-21, could be interpreted as requiring a death penalty for such a man who lied about his wife's morality, as such a lie brought her to potentially face the death penalty. Moses will provide clarity on this issue. Such a false accusation, emerging out of a marriage that has gone bad, is to be dealt with by "chastisement" of the man, but the full penalty of the Law is not to be applied, for he may repent of the evil in his heart, and be corrected in his mental attitude. Such an option is not open to the Judges regarding the coldly evil man who deliberately and falsely accuses another of murder, to try to get that person executed. This distinction between what is now called a "Crime of Passion", and cold blooded acts designed to kill an innocent person, is carried into some modern legal codes.

The concept of "chastisement" is the beating covered here of 40 strokes with a whip. The purpose was correction of a behaviour that needed correction, by experiencing severe judgment, but short of death. Paul would suffer this "chastisement" of his own people more than five times for spreading the message about the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 11:24. These were unjust applications of this Law, but Paul, and the other Apostles, wore his scars as medals! Acts 5:41, Romans 8:16-18, 1 Corinthians 4:10-16, Philippians 1:27-30, 2 Timothy 2:8-13, 1 Peter 3:14-17, 4:14-19.

The second law referred to is that on Leverite marriage. The Leverite marriage law will be used by the Sadducees to try to trip up the Lord, but the Lord will use it to teach about the nature of heaven, as against the nature of life upon the earth. Matthew 22:23-33, Mark 12:18-27. There are a couple of what appear to be random laws here also; about the oxen treading the corn, and the woman who grabs a man by his private parts, and then weights and measures. This section then ends with a reminder to destroy even the memory of the Amalekites.

While this still reads like a script, it has the features of an oral speech written down, corrected, and added to at some point later. It is clearly not a literary fiction, for a fiction would be more systematically organized. As we will see below there is again logical connection between the laws in Moses mind and they flow from him in an order that is very much his own. I still believe he writes this down first as a script and then reads from (and adds to) it.

Every chapter we have gone through makes me feel more strongly that he has done significant addition to his written script as he spoke. These apparently "random" laws that pop up bear the hallmarks of the sort of additions that a speaker would put into a talk as he has his memory of another related subject triggered by a written point. His secretary would then have to later add these into the main script.

DEUTERONOMY 25:1-19

25:1 If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked. **2** And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number. **3** Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed: lest, if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee. **4** Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. **5** If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. **6** And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel. **7** And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. **8** Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; **9** Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. **10** And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed. **11** When men strive together one with another, and the wife of the one draweth near for to deliver her husband out of the hand of him that smiteth him, and putteth forth her hand, and taketh him by the secrets: **12** Then thou shalt cut off her hand, thine eye shall not pity her. **13** Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. **14** Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. **15** But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. **16** For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the LORD thy God. **17** Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the

way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; 18 How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God. 19 Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. The purpose of Law is that the guilty are punished, and the righteous justified, and cleared of any infamy. Law must be seen to punish the guilty or it will be despised. If this is not done, the good people will live in fear, and the criminal will rejoice in his strength, and despise the weakness of the judges. When Law is perverted greater evil unfolds, and does so quickly in a State. Punishments were to fit the crime, but a limit was set of forty lashings, and the Jewish people stopped at 39, to ensure that by a miscounting of the number of lashes this law was not ever broken.

The man who had done something wrong, and was guilty of great sin was to be publicly punished, so that all would fear to follow him, but he was not to be humiliated to the point where he was debilitated, nor to the place where people might pity him, and so feel the punishment was unfair. These two dangers are the destroyers of the power of the Law. If punishment is too lax, or not carried through, the criminal will rejoice in their injustice, and the good man will despair of justice. But if the punishment is too great for an offence, the people may pity the criminal and see the acts of the evil man as a justified rebellion against an unjust law. The judgments of the judges were to be just and the punishments fair.

Verse 4. Moses connection of thought is seen here, as he is speaking of what is just and fair, and he ties together the animal and human worlds in this next Law. The care and welfare of the animals was a concern for the Lord, but also an important principle for men is reinforced by this Law, as Paul will later observe. 1 Corinthians 9:8-14, 1 Timothy 5:17-18. The oxen that does the work must be able to eat all it wants, for then it will work without distress, and be able to work all the day long without exhaustion.

The principle is applied by Paul to the payment for workers in the churches. If a pastor is to be paid, then they are to be paid whatever they need without any complaint about how much they eat! If they serve well and really teach the Word of God with power, then they are to be paid double the salary of anyone else. Very few churches through history have done this, but those who have done so with a mighty teacher have seen the ministry greatly blessed.

Verses 5 – 6. To be a younger brother in this day meant you took great interest in the family discussions about who the oldest brother should marry, because under this law you could end up with her if your brother died before he had a son. The Levirate Marriage Law didn't apply if the widow had bourn male children to the man before his death. She was then seen simply as a widow within the family. A widow was to be cared for by the family she had married into and bourn children into, but if she had no male children, then this law applied. The concept here was for the next youngest son to name, and raise up, the first male child born to his dead brother's wife in his older brother's name, to stand for his dead brother in the nation. Any subsequent children born to this wife were seen as his own.

If he already had a wife himself, then he was expected to take this woman as his second wife, in his brother's name. This was to be the only biblical exception to the command for a single marriage partner. The Levirate marriage caused problems for men who wanted to inherit their older brother's portion of the family estate, by becoming, through his death, the oldest son. Under the Mosaic Law, the inheritance of the dead brother's portion of the estate would go to his first born male child. Under the Levirate Marriage Law the first male born to the dead man's wife would now be seen as the "oldest child"; this boy would then be seen as the heir of the entire extended family, and would receive the "double portion".

If the wife of the dead brother was infertile, or only had girls, then the inheritance of the senior male of the family would pass directly to the second born brother. Some men wanted to inherit the double portion themselves and did not want to take the risk of their dead brother's wife having a male child, so they refused to have sex with her. Such a thing was to be dealt with seriously by the elders. It had already occurred in patriarchal history with Judah. Genesis 38:6-18.

Verses 7 – 10. If the man is more concerned about receiving the "double portion" and leadership of the family, rather than keeping his brother's name alive, then the wife of the dead brother was to take her case directly to the elders at the city gate. This woman was to rightly complain that the younger brother was not fulfilling his duty to his older brother, the family, and the nation itself. The elders are to rebuke the man strongly, and urge him to do what is right here, but if he stands by his decision, then the wife of the older brother is able to publicly humiliate him. He has clearly decided that he wants to have the double portion and be the oldest, and to love money and position that much, rather than honour God's will, was punishable by public humiliation.

The situation that is allowed for here occurs in the life of Ruth, and the little book that bears her name records the fact that other men were closer in blood than Boaz, and should have stepped forward and taken Ruth as their wife, and raised sons to her previous husband's name. Ruth 4:1ff. Boaz very specifically takes upon himself the duty to raise up sons in the names of the son of Naomi. Ruth 4:9-12. His first son is called Obed (meaning "serving" – as in serving the Lord in truth and obedience to the Law), and he is the grand-father of King David. Ruth 4:13-22.

Verses 11 – 12. If two men fight over any matter whatsoever, and the wife of one intervenes and grabs the other mans sexual organs to cause him pain and allow her husband to win the fight, then that woman is to be punished by immediate amputation of her hand. Women were able to offer the ultimate insult to a man (to spit in his face) only in

the situation just described above, of refusal to enter into a Leverite Marriage. If a woman assaulted a man in any other situations she was wrong, and if she sexually assaulted a man she was to be seriously judged. Whatever the rights or wrongs of the fighting, the woman was not to sexually touch any other man. Her husband was also to fight his own battles, and be able to deal with any assault upon himself without his wife's assistance.

Women were to stay well away from any conflicts between men, who were to sort out their disputes together, or go to the judges. Wives were not to set up battles for their husbands to fight, (and this is the sort of situation that may be involved here and remains common in the Moslem world), or interfere in their battles. The implication in this case is that the woman is behind the conflict, for there would be no other reason for her to be in the company of men in the ancient world. Women would not be out and about with their husbands, as the sexes conducted their business in society apart at this time of history.

This is a woman who has "set up" a fight in some way and then interferes in it with a sexual act that shows her malice. Most ordinary women would not even think to do such a thing as this. It indicates that this sort of woman has a habit of what we now call "game playing", and is a person who ignores social taboos and moral standards. The taboo against sexual contact with any other man was to be absolute, and seen as just short of adultery, which would have been punishable by death.

Verses 13 – 16. There were to be honest weights and measures used in Israel, not two sets of weights. It was a common con man's trick to have two sets of weights; one set for friends and relatives and another for strangers. To short change anyone due to trickery over weights and measures was to undermine the integrity of all business transactions. Ethical business is prosperous business, and so serious measures were to be taken by the judges of each city to ensure that all weights and measures were accurate and honest.

Look at nations that have a reputation for trickery in their business practises and corruption in their governments, and every time you will see a nation that is economically struggling. Corruption does not prosper any nation or business. God hates crooked business practises and all trickery in business is an abomination before the Lord. Dishonesty in business dealings is a serious matter before the Lord. James 5:1-9. If a believer cheats to make money, she/he puts himself in the place of judgment and can expect to receive great punishment from the Lord.

Verses 17 – 19. The Amalekites were a people who hated the Israelites and strongly opposed them. Exodus 17:8-16, Numbers 24:20. The initial attack was apparently upon the camp of Israel at Rephidim and it was treacherous and violent. From the Hebrew text the indication is that the elderly and the women and children were their initial victims. These people were evil and sadistic in their hatred of Israel. The army of Israel was untried in battle and yet under Joshua's leadership, and Moses prayer intercession, the Israelites formed their army up in good order and won a great victory after fighting all day. The extent of the violence indicated the great hatred of Amalek towards Israel, and the Israelites were to destroy these people, and never forget the treachery of their initial attack upon their camp and the sustained violence of the battle through that day. 1 Samuel 15:1ff.

There are some enemies we must keep lasting vigilance against. The Amalekites were one such people, whose level of hatred indicated a satanic origin for their actions. They were to be destroyed. There are some who oppose ministries who do so from pure satanic hatred, and such people, and their organizations, are to be destroyed when opportunity arises. No mercy is to be shown them, lest they treat others as they have treated you.

Believers can show mercy inappropriately at times. I have had to deal with such a man and his organization. He opposed God's work while preaching from a pulpit, and he did satanic work in his ministry, sexually abusing young women. When the opportunity came, with clear evidence of his evil deeds, I took strong action against him and the Lord enabled me to close him down and end his ministry. This was correct and godly action and was done in a manner that did not create bad publicity for the Church of the Lord, nor reflect upon the Lord badly. Mercy could not be shown to this man, for he was an "Amalekite"; he attacked the weak and helpless and made merchandise of them.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. When we face an "Amalekite" we are to take strong action and utilize all facts we have to destroy such a person and their "ministry", before their evil pollutes or destroys the weak and vulnerable. Any paedophile, sexual abuser, thief, financial con man, or false healer/prophet is to be seen in this category and the strongest and most decisive action taken against them. No mercy is to be shown in unmasking them and eliminating them from influence. We may wait to take action, but only in order to be more thorough and complete in our action. Delay is dangerous in such cases, as they will continue their abusive lives until stopped. Delay is only to ensure the evidence is sufficient to thoroughly and finally eliminate their threat to the innocent and weak.

2. There was to be no sexual contact between any man or woman who were not husband and wife. There were to be no shows of affection, nor sexualised "games", nor malicious actions of a sexual nature. Let us be sure that our actions are above reproach in all these matters in public and private places. Believers are too casual in this matter in many of today's churches. Full frontal hugs between the sexes, and any game playing actions that are akin to flirting, are to be avoided at all costs. Let us be holy before the Lord and before mankind.

3. Wives and husbands are to resolve their own issues in respectful communication, and are not to “game play” with each other, nor are they to “play power games” with others for any reasons. Our behaviour is to be honest and straight, without games being played. Our “yes” is to mean yes and our “no” is to mean no. Romans 12:9, Galatians 2:13.
4. Business dealings are to be ethical and moral in all matters. Our honesty in business is a major aspect of our testimony in the world. We are to be known as people whose business dealings can be trusted.
5. We are to support the rule of Law in our society and encourage the judges of our nation in their elimination of criminal behaviours from society. Believers are to be known as people who live and speak for righteousness. Let us be the people the Lord has called us to be.

Notes

CHAPTER 26**INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is the last in Section Two, and ends Moses' discussion of the social and community laws that support an ordered society. In this section Moses refers to the gifts that were part of the Mosaic Law to be given to the Tabernacle, and which were most closely related to family and farming community life. He covers here the Firstfruits Offering and what are called "the second tithes" for the social welfare of the poor and the stranger in the land. These offerings were easy to "trick" the priests over and short change God. Malachi 3:8-10. It was easy to hold back a portion of this tithe and use it for other purposes. Moses makes it clear that they are to formally give thanks with a prayer formula that reminds them every time they bring their tithes and gifts to the tabernacle, that their national blessing depends upon these things.

DEUTERONOMY 26:1-19

26:1 And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein; **2** That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there. **3** And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the LORD thy God, that I am come unto the country which the LORD swore unto our fathers for to give us. **4** And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the LORD thy God. **5** And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous: **6** And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage: **7** And when we cried unto the LORD God of our fathers, the LORD heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression: **8** And the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders. **9** And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. **10** And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O LORD, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the LORD thy God, and worship before the LORD thy God: **11** And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the LORD thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you. **12** When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; **13** Then thou shalt say before the LORD thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them. **14** I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away ought thereof for any unclean use, nor given ought thereof for the dead: but I have hearkened to the voice of the LORD my God, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me. **15** Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey. **16** This day the LORD thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. **17** Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice: **18** And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldst keep all his commandments; **19** And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he hath spoken.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 4. Moses again reminds them that the Lord is the One who gives them this land. This phrase in verse one, "When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God gives to you for your inheritance", is a standard Mosaic phrase that was to be remembered as Moses' prophetic word to the people. It would be the phrase that throughout the history of Israel, they could return to and remember that God kept His promises to their ancestors, and so He would keep His promises to each generation. Numbers 15:2, 18, Deuteronomy 5:31, 6:1-10, 7:1, 13:1, 9, 17:14, 18:9.

He will give it to them and bring them into possession of it, and so it is to Him that they must give their thanks. The Firstfruits of the land given to them is to be placed in a basket and taken to the place the Lord directs is the place of the tabernacle. Exodus 23:19, 34:26, Leviticus 2:12-15, Numbers 18:12-14.

They are then to recite the formal dedication of the contents of the basket to the Lord. This involves a recognition that they have come into the land that the Lord swore He would give to their ancestors. The recognition is one of doctrinal truth; that the Character of God is absolutely stable, and His word is sure and the promises are sure.

The basket is to be taken from the farmer's hand and placed before the altar of the Lord by the priest. This feast occurred on the first Sunday after Passover and all males of Israel were expected to gather at the tabernacle for this festival every year.

Verses 5 – 8. The Israelites were to remember that they were simply one of the Semitic peoples, descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who were “Syrians”, and they had been slaves. They lived in the land of Syria-Canaan, and then in Egypt as slaves, and had no right to claim to be special in any way, other than the fact that the Lord’s hand was upon them. They were not to get arrogant, nor forget that the grace of God alone made them special. Deuteronomy 6:1-25. The patriarch Jacob had fled to Egypt to avoid starvation and survived by the grace provision of God alone. The Lord God turned the evil of the brothers of Joseph into blessing for the whole family. Genesis 37, 45:4-13.

The hand of God was upon them in these early days, for they not only survived but prospered in Egypt and even after slavery became harsh there, they prospered still. They cried aloud to the Lord and He heard their prayer and fulfilled His promises to their ancestors and brought them out of bondage into blessing. Romans 8:28. God has turned cursing into blessing again and again for Israel, bringing victory out of certain defeat again and again. Moses reminds them of their history, because the evidence of history is the evidence of God’s loving grace towards them in all aspects of their national and personal lives. **Nehemiah 9:7, 9, 17, 26, 31, Psalms 105:1-15, Acts 7:6-10.**

God acted to deliver them and did so with mighty signs and wonders that were unique in history. The deliverance of Israel was with miraculous signs not seen again upon the earth. The wonders done were judgments upon the Egyptian gods and they were special indications that God was doing something very special with these people called the Israelites. Refer to the Commentary on Exodus chapters 7 – 9 for a full discussion of these unique events. The people, as they brought the first fruits offering were to recite these words here and they were to understand and believe in them. The ceremony of the Passover feast was where these were recited aloud as a family, even to the ceremony used in Jewish homes today, but these words were to be used aloud in the tabernacle on the morning of First fruits.

This is the day of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and this feast spoke of that in advance, so look at the words that Moses requires the people to say again, but in light of the reality of the resurrection. The greatest sign-wonder ever done by the hand of God in history is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. The Feast of First fruits celebrated the completion of the promises of God to the Patriarchs and the reaping of the rewards of the Lord’s work in the land of plenty. The resurrection is just that sort of sign also. It is the evidence that all that the Lord did in His ministry and upon the Cross has been the fulfilment of prophetic truth, and the work He was set is completed. The payment for sin was successful and sin and death are defeated.

The resurrection is the celebration of new life, as the Feast of First Fruits was the celebration of a new harvest in the land God gave them. We live now in the post-resurrection world, just as Israel lived in the land of milk and honey! This means we have gifts from the Holy Spirit, which are received because of the completed work of the Lord upon the Cross and the reality of His resurrection from the dead.

Verses 9 – 11. All gifts given to the Lord or His work ought to be given with these of similar words on the lips of the person bringing the offering. It is a reminder that all the good things we have are received from the Lord and all His goodness is to be repaid with glory and praise given back to Him. All good things are to be given back to the Lord in praise, for all we have we simply hold as a trust from Him that they might be used in the service of the Lord. Part of the giving back to the Lord, is giving to assist those who are poor, for whatever reason they have need.

The poor were to be helped, but as we have seen in the earlier volume of this study, not with the handouts that we have made popular with our welfare systems. The poor were to be able to take from the produce of the land for their support, and every third year there was a special offering taken up for the poor of the land and the Levites were to administer this in food to those in need. This arrangement was carried on in the church system of deacons. Deuteronomy 24, Acts 6:1-6.

All giving to the poor and needy was to be accompanied by rejoicing. Notice the order to rejoice in verse eleven. No one was to feel guilty for their wealth and prosperity, but rather they were to rejoice in their wealth, and part of their rejoicing was their giving to the poor. Giving is not to be a thing to do to protect against guilt, but rather a celebration of God’s goodness. Prosperity was to be seen as God’s blessing and with it came the obligation to support the needy amongst the nation. No-one was to preach or rail against prosperity, but to see it as God’s blessing and as such to recognize the obligation to pass the blessing on to others less fortunate. There was to be no self centred and selfish celebrations of wealth, but rather a national celebration of God’s goodness that overflowed to all in society.

Verses 12 – 15. After bringing the tithe in the third year for the poor of the land each person bringing their offering was to say the words Moses gives them. All the tithing money for three years was laid aside as a “hallowed thing”, a tithe set aside for the Lord. This means that every year a tithe was set aside and saved up in the house and they brought every third year to the tabernacle. The individual people bringing their offerings were to certify that the money had been given properly, and kept safely in the home, with nothing held back, or taken from it. It was a matter of trust before the Lord that people did not “dip into” their tithe that was set aside for the Lord’s work amongst the poor.

Nothing from the money set aside in the house as the Lord’s tithe was to be used for any personal purposes; even for funeral expenses of a close relative. All was to be accounted for within each home and used for the Lord’s work only. It was to be seen as the “Lord’s bank” until given to the tabernacle, and nothing was to be “borrowed” and then repaid from it, for clean or unclean purposes. This was a matter of trust between the believer and the Lord, as no-one would know if money had been taken for personal use, but each was to certify before the Lord that they had laid this aside for the Lord and not touched it. They were not to rob God. Malachi 3:6-10.

Verses 16 – 19. These words remind us that this is the written record of a spoken address. Whole hearted obedience was what the Lord required of His people. It was the reminder to the people that they were to devote themselves to the Lord and His rules for their own personal and their national life. The Lord certifies them as His special people, through these rules, for they are the Covenant signs that the Lord requires them to be "special"; set apart from all other people, with special laws as God's people. The Israelites destiny was to be "high above" all other nations. Israel will be the centre of the earth in the Millennial Kingdom of the Lord upon the earth.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Israel was to be a holy, called out people for the glory of the Lord. They were to be special and appear to all nations as different. This was the heart of the evangelistic role, for they spoke the truth about God's plan for mankind. All the commands and feasts and sacrifices spoke of God's holy plan for mankind and they were all to be kept as a sign to the nations that this was the "visited planet". Today, within the Church, we also are called out to be special before the Lord, the Lord's special people with an evangelistic purpose. Let us proclaim the truth of this by word and work.

2. When money is laid aside for the Lord's work it is "holy" and not to be touched for any purpose, no matter how pressing. This is a matter of trust and honour for all believers. Let us keep the Lord's trust with our money and give to the Lord for His work whole heartedly.

3. No-one is to feel guilty of their wealth, nor embarrassed of their poverty. Whatever the Lord has given we are to be thankful for and seek His path through this life. Jeremiah lost everything, and served in prison and in poverty most of his adult life. Daniel grew up in a wealthy family and after capture by the Babylonians was made a prince of Babylon and lived with great wealth. Neither prophet was superior, nor inferior to the other; each had been called to walk different paths through life. Let us accept the path we have been called to serve within, and glorify the Lord in all we do and let us give as we are able to the Lord's work.

4. There is no uncertainty in the Lord's work, or in our eternal destiny. We will come into the inheritance of heaven in Christ Jesus. Let us praise the Lord for our certain destiny in Him, just as the Israelites glorified the Lord in their inheritance in the land of Canaan.

REFLECTION UPON GOD'S PROMISES

1. FROM GOD'S VIEWPOINT

When a person promises you something the promise is only as strong as the character of the person making the promise. The character of God is perfect therefore His promises are totally reliable.

- a) Unchangeable - A promise in the Bible is the same for us in the 20th Century as it was to Paul.
- b) All-knowing - God knows all our problems so there is always a promise or doctrine to cater for our difficulties.
- c) Love - God will provide for His children.
- d) Truth - All the promises are totally true.

2. FROM MAN'S VIEWPOINT

- a) We must know the promises.
- b) We must believe the promises.
- c) We must want to trust in God.

3. THERE ARE ABOUT 7,000 PROMISES THAT DEAL WITH THE CHRISTIAN ON EARTH

4. TYPICAL PROMISES FOR VARIOUS STAGES IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

- a) Stage 1 - Salvation (John 3:16; Acts 16:31)
- b) Stage 2 - Christian on earth (1 John 1:9; Romans 8:28; 1 Peter 5:7)
- c) Stage 3 - Believers in Heaven (1 Peter 1:3-5; Revelation 21:4)

5. FOR THE CHRISTIAN ON EARTH - HOW DO WE MAKE THEM WORK?

- a) We must be a believer in Jesus Christ.
- b) Take every promise to mean what it says.
- c) Confess all your known sins using the promise in (1 John 1:9)
- d) If a promise says to do something, do it (i.e. pray, believe, confess etc.)
- e) Wait for answers, the Lord will answer in His time.
- f) Keep a promise notebook, learn the promises.

6. GENERAL SCRIPTURE ON THE PROMISES OF GOD (Hebrews 3:7 - 4:11)

- a) The geographical areas in which the Exodus generation found themselves can represent stages in the Christian.

- i) Egypt - unbelief.
- ii) Red Sea crossing - salvation by faith (i.e. leaving Egypt)
- iii) Wilderness - the carnal and immature Christian life claiming only some promises and failing regularly.
- iv) Jordan crossing - full realisation of God's favour by faith.
- v) Promised land - the mature Christian resting in God and only failing occasionally.

b) The author of Hebrews in (Chapter 3:7,19) exhorts the Jews at Jerusalem and us not to fall into the same traps as the Exodus generation in unbelief.

c) Questions And Answers on Hebrews (Chapter 4) refers to the Christian on earth.
Verse 1: What happens if we fail to claim a promise? - We lack peace of mind.

Verse 2: What characteristic of God does this verse highlight? - Unchangeable.
How are the promises made active? - By being mixed with faith.

Verse 3: Which came first, man or the promises of God? - The promises, God is all-knowing.

Verse 4: Why did God rest? - Because He had provided all things necessary for man.

Verses 5 & 6: Will any succeed in this area? - Yes, some will.

Verse 7: Are the promises still available today? - Yes.
What must we do? - Accept God's provision.
What must we not do? - Harden our hearts.

Verse 8: Jesus in some translations is, in fact, Joshua.

Verse 9: To whom are the promises available? - Believers only.

Verse 10: What choice have we as a Christian? - Human works or God's works and provision.

Verse 11: What is the great trap? - Unbelief. We should actively pursue the promises of God.

7. MAJOR PROMISES

Learn to claim these when:

- a) In difficulties (Romans 8:28)
- b) You have sinned (1 John 1:9)
- c) You are worried (1 Peter 5:7)
- d) You have been wronged (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
- e) Prayer (Matthew 7:7)
- f) You are lonely (Hebrews 13:5)
- g) You have doubts (Philippians 4:13)
- h) The Bible (Hebrews 4:12)
- i) You cannot sleep (Psalm 4:8)
- j) You are unhappy (Psalm 147:3)
- k) You are tempted to retaliate (Romans 12:17,19)
- l) You are in danger (Psalm 23:4)

Notes