

EVANGELICAL BIBLE COLLEGE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



COMMENTARY

EXODUS 14-27

**Life of Moses – Mentor of Humility and
Tenacity (Part 2 – Exodus Teaching)**

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INTRODUCTION

LEARNING AND TEACHING ON THE WILDERNESS MARCH

Israel has left Egypt but as we will see in the following chapters, they have come out in a highly emotional state, and as such they are unstable. When people face great events they will have emotional responses to them, and they can only be stabilized within the unique event by adopting the right mental attitude towards it. All leadership is about educating, correcting and encouraging the best possible mental attitude to stand upon facing all the various situations we may face on our life's journey.

Moses will mentor the right mental attitude to adopt to take the experience of "exodus" and make it powerful for the hard miles of wilderness wandering that are ahead of them. Leadership takes specific situations and mentors and teaches the best possible way to internalize the lessons and significance flowing from them. Leadership is always educational, as it is always focused upon the best for those who follow. If we are "set free" from something, we can and should rejoice in our deliverance, but we stabilize ourselves by walking in truth, and in our worship of the one true God, who set us free.

The alternative to powerful education about shifting mental attitudes through time is simple pre-occupation with emotion, and that tends to produce over a short space of time, a focus on self and self centred pleasure. If people do not discover that it is mental attitude that gives strength, they will relax into emotions that simply do not last. As emotional "highs" ebb away, as they always do, the people will become more and more unstable in their decision making, for it is only our thinking patterns that stabilize decision making, never remembered emotional experiences.

When we focus upon our thinking in situations we will shift our very foundation for decision making. We will not be thinking about our so called self centred "rights" but rather our new responsibilities; responsibilities that flow from the gracious things we have received. When we think in terms of grace we give thanks first, and we focus on the needs of others next, and we think of what we do only when these two issues are clearly in focus.

The Exodus Generation should have been focused first on worship, praising the Lord God who had saved them from inevitable death, but rather they began looking on their newly received freedom from slavery as something they wanted to relax and enjoy, when it needed to be fought for still. The emotional state of a person affects not just their stability, but their survival. If we do not adopt a "battlefield" mentality, the mental attitude of a soldier, then our ability to follow through and seize the final objectives will ebb away. Dynamic and resilient mental attitude requires control of emotion.

Emotional people do not fully face, or fully think through reality, but easily become side-tracked by feeling, fantasy, and their sense of entitlement to more happy times. Sadly this first generation of freed slaves will remain slaves to their emotions and never seize their final objective. The reason is simply because they failed to keep on following the commands/teaching of Moses, feeling that he was being "too hard/tough" on them. They wanted things to be easier, but the truth was, they were in battle for their lives every day of their march, and **they needed to face the facts**. They didn't, but Moses will keep leading and teaching, and their children got the message and believed it.

By application, and by way of pre-view of the next unfolding series of events -

[a] Uncontrolled emotions are likely to have wide swings, from one extreme to another, for instance from love to hate, from fear to joy. This is "normal", because without any strong thinking framework (in this case solid and stable Bible doctrine) there is nothing within the person to stabilize the emotional swings. We can often see this sort of thing in traumatic situations, eg, at car crash sites, and in narcissistic relationships with massive swings up and down.

[b] When emotions dominate, without habitual controls in place, there is no thinking taking place at all, and people will "wake up" later to actions that they have done which baffle them. When you concentrate on the gift, rather than the giver, and what the gift means for your future life, you are in serious difficulties. God had given the people the gift of freedom, and they had gone emotionally overboard enjoying the gift, without seeing what it meant for the next years. Moses is going to teach them through the wilderness march, but they will be slow learners, and only their children will actually "get it" and be able to move into the land of Canaan.

[c] The first of many crises is coming as they leave Egypt, with Pharaoh gathering his army to pursue them and bring them back to slavery. They will be challenged again and again, that blessing must be "held", and to remember that the enemy of spiritual freedom never rests from his malice towards us, and seeks to find any who he can enlist to upset and de-stabilize us. They have not faced the reality of the ANGELIC CONFLICT, even having seen it operate in the battle between Moses and the gods of Egypt. They have seen the events, but not understood their meaning then, and their significance into the future. All that we see must be internalized into "facts of spiritual life" that give guidance in decision making in the future.

[d] The Exodus Generation (and often ourselves) is yet to learn a vital principle for life upon this earth. Happiness does not depend on things or circumstances, it depends on relationships; first with God, then with your marriage partner, your children, and then with your community at large.

For us these people on their wilderness journey are a constant challenge to our own deeply held mental attitudes. If as a believer you can remain objective, fixed on the right "object", your life will be stable, but if you fail to stabilize your emotions upon biblical truths, you will be unable to even enjoy them after a while. Your emotions are designed by the creator to be the appreciators of your soul, but they always ebb away, like the daily tide. Let us stand like Moses and Joshua and Caleb, actively resting in truth through worship and fully armoured service daily. Ephesians 6:10-18.

There are times of sheer relaxation, when you do not need to do much thinking. These times of relaxation can be spent doing all sorts of things; you can enjoy music, art, sport, the garden, a quiet book, and the company of pleasant people. At these times of rest and recharge you can spend time emotionally appreciating things, but there is a need to keep this under the over all control of your mind, so that there is no danger to you in your relaxation. Otherwise we can say and do stupid things when relaxed too much in dangerous or vulnerable situations.

We are in the Angelic Conflict, and that means this present world remains a battlefield, and being alert to danger is important if you want to survive long. There are dangerous people to your health and life, and there are places you shouldn't go, and situations you cannot relax in at all with safety. There are also people with whom you can relax, but you need to be ready to witness at any second, and if you have the habit of too quickly stopping thinking and unwinding, you can miss opportunities and fail in your duty as the Lord's soldier.

Spiritual Discernment allows you to relax at times and recharge, but be always ready for the situation to change quickly, and then get your spiritual armour on. This requires the "Soldier's Mental Attitude" always in place, and this takes training under a good mentor and teacher. A time of rest will often end with a challenge in some way, and we must be alert to this reality, or we will be swept away into the dustbin of history!

To relax in times we can, we rest and recharge our depleted physical and mental batteries, and then in the following times of testing we do not become subjective and emotional. This is only possible however with a good and strong mental attitude of being a soldier at all times, even when relaxed. As pressure builds, without Bible doctrine stabilizing the soul, emotions can turn quickly from bliss to fear. Moses shows us through his recording of the Exodus Generation's failures that it is indeed dangerous ground upon which we walk mostly in this present world.

TESTING THE ISRAELITES

In Exodus 14 the Lord had given them a great deliverance, but one that was built upon great doctrine to stabilize their souls in the days to come. It was the truth that the Lord was ultimately in control of everything. They had believed the Lord's word to them and now this was to be tested by actions demanded of them. If you learn a doctrine you will be tested on it. Sometimes you will pass, sometimes you will not, but godly leadership encourages, teaches and mentors obedience, and keeps moving forward, so that the people may follow them and bring glory to the Lord.

Exodus 14:8-19. *"8. And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand.*

9. But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baalzephon.

10. And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.

11. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?

12. Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.

13. And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

14. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

15. And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward:

16. But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.

17. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

18. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

19. And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them."

They do not do well in this first test. When the chariot army of Egypt got close to the Israelite's camp their reaction was to call out, "Oh God, Oh God", panic completely, and then blame Moses for bringing them out of Egypt to be killed. The reason that people are panicking is that they are emotional; they are seeing the situation as a physical reality, without seeing the spiritual power issue involved behind the things they can see on the ground. They see enemies – not God.

They demonstrate lack of faith rather than true application of the truth God had previously revealed to them about Himself. The true reflection of faith in this situation would be in genuinely praying to the Lord. To pray in a crisis requires self control and clear thinking, that takes the thing seen to the One who is unseen, but known to care and be in control of

all situations. To fear is to sin, because it is not believing in God's Word, nor is it resting upon God's Character. 1 Peter 5:5-7. God's challenge to us today remains the same as it was to Moses; let the truth of the Character of God be more real than the truth of the reality of the fearful situation being faced.

Fear paralyses us and wastes time we could be spending in worship. When you get your eyes on to the details of life and what they might mean for you, then you lose your "divine perspective", and when a test comes you panic. Panic is the religious fruit of an emotional faith that is not resting upon a sound foundation of truth and stability. True stability only comes when we know the holy and dependable character of God, and the truth of God's Holy Word.

Those with emotional faith do not have the true joy of the Lord, nor do they know the genuine fruit of the Holy Spirit, for all they have is superficial. Emotional religion produces the fruit of that will always come from good singing, pleasant company, and no real trouble in the lives of the attendees at their services. The evidence of the genuine faith, that rests upon the certainties of the Character of God and the Word of God is that the Holy Spirit's fruit lasts under all pressure, but the "fruit" of slick psychology, emotional faith, and "easy believism" falls off the branch with the first gust of wind.

We must beware of being like the first generation that left Egypt. **Hebrews 3:7-4:12**. They were living on their emotional experiences but did not deepen their faith in truth. Today's superficial church attenders are in their camp, with emotions that have been well worked up by slick psychology and well crafted "worship experiences", but when trouble comes, they do not have the Bible doctrine in their soul to lean upon, nor the truths behind the doctrines to claim, and so they blame God for not giving them the "prosperity" their false teachers have promised them.

The modern "prosperity gospel" preachers speak of "Canaan blessings" without reminding people that it was the second generation who inherited them after the first one died in the wilderness, and that they came through many hard fought battles and forty years of hard marching. These preachers are like the false prophets of old, and they remind us that Satan's main tool has always been false teaching, and he loves the prosperity/emotional religious experiences of the fake churches, for they open the door to people losing their minds.

There were wards in mental hospitals full of believers who could not cope with the reality of the Angelic Conflict, and who finally found their emotions let them down. When the crises came they cracked up and their minds and lives fell apart. If you walk in the Spirit in the light of God's Word, there is no way that you will crack up permanently. You may have a nervous breakdown like Jeremiah, but you will not fall apart, and the breakdown will be simply the start of the building up of better coping power in God. If fear gets hold of you however, then you will fall apart. Faith not fear must guide us!

Only Holy Spirit taught Bible doctrine, heard, believed and applied into daily life in the power of the Holy Spirit will save us in the testing times we will all face in this world. As we will see in this chapter, as the dust of the Egyptian chariots filled the sky the Israelite people panic. Moses told them not to worry, but to stand still and watch the deliverance of the Lord. He told them that the Egyptians they saw that day would not be seen again. The lessons Moses taught from the Lord here are lessons we all need to learn thoroughly today.

Moses gave four orders – orders directly received from the Lord and repeated throughout Scripture -

[a] Do not fear, [b] Stand still, [c] Look, [d] Hold your peace – think, don't emote.

This is what you have to do when you are counselling someone who is falling apart. Sadly they are all too often a disobedient person who has ignored God's Word and spent their time living solely in their emotions. If when a crisis comes you start weeping and wailing, you are expressing your normalcy as a frail human being. If you stay in fear however, you are sinning against God. Our God is able to save, and we claim the Word of Truth and stand upon it.

In this life you are either standing on the sure foundation of the Character of God and the promises of God, or showing a lack of knowledge of the character and plan of God, or even a fatal lack of belief in the Lord and His Plan. Before we enter these next chapters, it is advisable to turn to the New Testament and read **Hebrews Chapters 3-4**, for these chapters are a Spirit Filled commentary on this section of Exodus.

TESTING BY WATER

There were three water tests in the desert through which the Lord tries to teach the Israelites something; namely, that He has the power to not only get them out of Egypt but also to keep them in the desert places on their long march to Canaan. This is what I call the "Logic of Redemption". If the Lord has the power to save you, then logically He has the power to keep you! If He loved us so much that while still unbelievers that he died for us, will He now fail us?

He went to the Cross for us as unbelievers, then now as believers, surely you see that He will not do less for us! We are His responsibility, his ambassadors, for we were purchased with the precious blood of Christ. **Psalms 49:8, 72:14, 116:15, 1 Corinthians 6:20, 1 Peter 1:7, 13-20, 2:4-7, 5:7**. These verses should be reflected in our response to pressure situations, which are all seen in the light of the Lord's teaching below.

Matthew 6:28-31. "28. And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

29. And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30. *Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?*

31. *Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?"*

The initial tests the Exodus Generation faced are:-

- [1] The Yam Suf (Reed Sea), where there was **too much** water – chapter 14
- [2] Marah - the **wrong type** of water - chapter 15
- [3] Rephidim - **too little** water - chapter 17

These three tests sum up the majority of testing situations we will ever have in this short walk through space-time that is our very brief earthly life. Reflect upon this question. 'Is the Lord going to forsake you?' No, He cannot do that! He loves you and is going to keep you. If He died for you when you were an unbeliever, what is He going to do for you now that you are a believer? **Ephesians 2:4-10, 5:14-21**. He had saved Israel from the Egyptians, and logic, drawn from the doctrine of the stability of the Character of God should tell them, that He was not going to allow them to be captured by the Egyptians. God was able to solve any apparently impossible situation, be it at the Reed Sea or in the wilderness beyond, for they were under God's direct orders in the Exodus, not fleeing from Pharaoh's wrath. **Psalms 2:1-12**.

These people were viewing almost a play before their very eyes; the drama of the events would have had a dream like quality to it, from the plagues over a period of up to six months to the fear filled atmosphere at the Yam Suf. They were part of the movie of their lives that was demonstrating that their God could be trusted. They could see God's power being demonstrated again and again; all they had to do was watch, learn, and obey when ordered to act. When this is done by believers, the largest of problems pass away before our eyes.

A TIME FOR ALL THINGS

In Exodus 14:15 the Lord says to Moses not to talk to Him, but to get them moving and do what He has told him to do. As we see many times in the Scriptures, there is a time for calling a prayer meeting, and there is a time for moving. When you should be moving, and you are stopped and praying, you are not in the Lord's will, unless you are praying as you are moving. It is therefore not always spiritual to sit and pray. There is a time for speaking, a time for doing, and when the Lord says "go", you are wise and spiritual if you "go".

James draws on this principle in his short letter in the New Testament. If you have a brother or sister in need, and you have genuine spiritual care for them, then you look after them, rather than just pray about them. **James 2:15-20**. If you do not practically help your brother, and say "amen" with Holy Spirit directed work, then you are a hypocrite. We keep praying for blessing upon people, but we always do so with our eyes open to possible ways to help them. Prayer is not offered in lieu of action, it is the handmaid of action, and the Lord at times expects us to be very active.

If you get this balance between prayer and charitable/helpful action right, you are able to witness to the unbeliever and point them to Christ, for they see the love that believers have towards one another. If the person in need is an unbeliever the church is not required to help them materially, although we may do so, but we are required to tell them the truth about the One who can meet their needs. **2 Corinthians 6:14-18, 1 Timothy 5:3-8, 1 Peter 1:22, 3:8, 1 John 3:13-16**.

Moses tells the people what to do, and he sets the example by first obeying the Lord. As he steps out in obedience he sets the leadership example and magnifies the Lord, and so God gets the glory as it is He who does the work. We must follow this example as pastors of God's flock today. God does the work and gets the glory, and we get the benefit as we step out in faith. The gauge of all so called "spiritual work" is who gets the glory? Is it God, or man, or a church, or an organisation? If God gets the glory it is His work. If individuals get glory then it is not God's work, nor is it truly spiritual at all; spiritual work is done in the Spirit's power alone and God always gets the glory. **1 Corinthians 3:1-9**.

In verse 31 of this chapter before us Moses records that the people saw the great work that God did and believed in Him, and also believed His servant Moses. This sounds good but what is happening is that they are going from one emotional swing to another. They have believed, but their belief does not deepen into love and trust in the Lord. The fear of God here is not a godly fear that produces the genuine relationship that God seeks to have with them.

As we will see as we advance with them on their journey, in Exodus 15:23 they could not drink of the water at Marah, as it was bitter, and they mirrored the water in their bitter complaining to Moses. Moses called to the Lord who showed him a tree, and he was told to throw the tree into the water. When they did so the waters became sweet. Many times we will be exactly like the children of Israel, and we could summarize our attitude, "why trust God if you can moan or panic?" The truth we need to learn from Moses is that God has a solution to every situation He has led us into, for that is why He led us into this place. This principle is spelled out in 1 Corinthians 10:13. He can always make the bitter sweet through faith and obedience.

The tree that is thrown in the bitter water in our case is the Cross. In our lives we are going to have many bitter situations as we advance down the path of this life, but we should see the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the bitter is then made sweet. Every difficulty that we ever have can be faced by our understanding and relying on the truths of God's loving plan, illustrated by the Cross. Are you going to have your eyes on the Cross or are you going to have your eyes on circumstances. The Cross and the reality of the empty tomb will make all the bitter things of this life sweet.

Exodus 15:26 is often quoted out of context by enthusiastic believers. This specifically related to those of the Exodus generation who would not have the diseases of the Egyptians. It was specific to them, but the principle still remains, that if you are obedient, God will bless you with the good health you need to accomplish all he has called you to do. This was fulfilled wonderfully as Moses states in Deuteronomy 8:4, where for forty years their footwear and clothing did not rot, their feet did not swell, nor did they have skin diseases so common in desert places. Their clothing and footwear lasted for up to forty years wandering in the desert. We must remember the source of our help and depend upon Him not ourselves. Proverbs 1:1-7, 2:1-15, 3:1-8.

In Exodus 17 they go to a place called Rephidim, and there is no water. The people again complain. Water was not the issue, trusting God to provide on the path that He has directed them to take is the issue! Just like us at times, these people were tempting God by their unbelief, and they were not just robbing themselves of eternal rewards, but were making themselves liable for Divine discipline. The Lord gives us a certain number of chances to be blessed in obedient walking through this life, but if we refuse persistently and consistently to follow the plan, then God will judge us.

God can provide the answer where there is too much water, the wrong sort of water, and no water. Our challenge is to have faith in His character and plan. Read the following selected texts in one sitting and see the vital nature of living, active faith for success in this life! Romans 1:17, 4:11-19, 14:23, 1 Corinthians 16:13, 2 Corinthians 5:7, Galatians 5:5-6, 1 Timothy 6:10-12, Hebrews 4:2, 10:38, 11:1, James 1:3-6, 2:14-26, 1 Peter 1:5-9, 2 Peter 1:5. How many times have we faced the shortage or something and learned from the Lord's provision that the issue is nearly always timing – for God will provide for all the situations he has led us into. Psalm 37 – don't fret, don't fear, don't panic!

When these people looked back they should have been able, on God's past record with them and their ancestors, to say that they knew God had the water there, and wait for it, believing it was just a timing issue until it was provided by the Lord. The water was in the rock all along, and the New Testament tells us that the rock is Christ. God now tells Moses to go and stand up in front of these people, who are wanting to stone him, and to take with him the elders of Israel, and his staff. He was told to hit the rock and the water will come out of it. He did it and they all drank.

Christ was the One who was smitten for us, and there is life in no other than the Lord Jesus Christ. John 3:36, 10:10. There was not only enough water for them but for their animals as well. Praise God's holy name, that God will always bless us according to His riches of His grace, not according to the extent of our faith. **Matthew 17:20, Ephesians 1:7, 2:7, 3:8, 16, Philipians 4:19, Colossians 1:27.**

Moses called this place Meribah, because of the grumbling of the people. **Hebrews 4:1-4.** As we advance through these next chapters we will be challenged again and again, that we must make sure that we mix our faith with action, and claim God's promises into our daily life, otherwise we may fail like the Exodus generation, and be subject to Divine discipline.

Lack of belief in the Word of God is a sin/evil which the Lord will judge. **Romans 14:23, Hebrews 3:12.** We simply cannot achieve anything for the Lord if we do not trust his words to us. It is insulting to God to have a believer fail to believe in the Holy Word of God. God is gracious with these people, as He is with us, but the time clock eventually runs out for us all if we do not "get with" the Lord's plan for our life. God's graciousness is seen in his forty year patient time frame with these people. The Lord truly does not rush to judge us. He always seeks our blessing, but there is no blessing to the wicked, and it is truly "wicked" in God's sight to fall into the "evil of unbelief". **Isaiah 28:11-22, 57:20-21.**

CHAPTER 14**EXODUS 14:1-14**

14:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea. 3 For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. 4 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so. 5 And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us? 6 And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: 7 And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them. 8 And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand. 9 But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baalzephon. 10 And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. 11 And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? 12 Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. 13 And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever. 14 The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

REFLECTION

Refer to the Biblical Archaeological Review, Volume 33 Number 1 (January-February 2007) for an article and discussion of the fortresses and the route north of the Israelites from Succoth, and/or refer back also to the commentary in volume 1 of our study on Moses, to Exodus chapter twelve, for a full discussion of the places we will meet in these next verses.

Verses 1-3. When a believer has a need the Lord will speak into their heart through many means. To Moses the Lord spoke directly, but as we have noted above, that is a very rare thing at the level it was to Moses. If a person is treated like Moses was, then their role is equal to his. To most of us the Lord may speak through his Word, other believers, or by dream, vision, or the Holy Spirit's prompting in the soul (a word of knowledge that could not have been known any other way).

The orders the Lord gave are interesting in the light of the recent archaeological discoveries of the fortress system that stretched from the coastline through to the Great Bitter lakes region. The Israelites are told to camp within sight of several fortresses and the great mariner's pagan temple to Baal, and with their faces towards the Sea of Reeds. They are told to camp in what militarily would be called by the great Chinese General Sun Tzu, "Dying Ground".

They have been placed here in a militarily impossible place, where they must either fight or have deliverance open up the seas miraculously. They are facing military might and the very symbols of the paganism that God has judged in Egypt, but the lights are still burning bright in the pagan temples. Satan does not give up, and neither do his servants, and so it is only the tenacity of the believers standing in the truth of God's Word that stabilizes them.

From their fortress of Migdol the Egyptians can watch them and relay information to Pharaoh by flashing mirror code system within minutes, for there was a complex of fortresses stretching right back to the capital. This was the front line of Egyptian defence against Hittite or Canaanite-Arab invasion, and the children of Israel are literally camped in "no-man's land". Will they follow their mentor and leader Moses, or panic and follow their emotions and surrender – pharaoh believes the latter is probable, and brings his chariot army out to receive their surrender and their return in chains to Egypt.

The Lord has ordered them into an impossible situation, and it is the experience of many servants of the Lord, that this is what the Lord does to those who have great things to do for Him. The Lord wants us to learn to trust Him, not our eyes, and to see that what is humanly impossible is what God delights in doing. Matthew 19:26, Mark 9:23, 10:27, 14:36, Luke 18:27. We are to learn from history and practise faith in our own time, in our own humanly speaking impossible places. Deuteronomy 31:19-22, Psalms 139:1-14.

Psalm 62:5. *"My soul, wait only upon the Lord. My expectation is only of Him."*

Psalm 4:6. *"Many say that God will not help us. Prove them wrong O Lord by letting the light of your face shine upon us."*

Psalm 91:2. *"I will say of the Lord, He is my fortress and my refuge. He is my God in whom I trust."*

"When God is doing something wonderful he begins with difficulty, but when he is doing something spectacular, he begins with impossibility". Dr De Haan.

They are told to make their camp, sit, pray, and wait by the Sea of Reeds, and watch the Egyptians who are watching them. During this “delay” there is time to seriously pray, for Moses to teach, and for their officers to organize and train the men in military arts, but they are camped in a hemmed in position; there is no human escape from here. God has constrained them and the reason is always to be seen in such situations long afterwards. The constrained and “narrow” places are the best focused teaching opportunities for the Holy Spirit. Matthew 7:13-23.

They cannot fight their way out, and they must see 100% that this is not possible, for the Lord must deliver them. There is no third option other than surrender to the Egyptians and that is slavery and certain death – and yet some will seek that gullibly believing that “all will be OK”. They are camped here to teach them lessons in faith, but they are also there to challenge Pharaoh for one last time. In impossible situations God is normally trying to reach both the oppressed and the oppressor. Remember – God is always gracious – even to the most evil oppressors of the sheep. He will have none of them without excuse before the last judgment at the Great White Throne. Isaiah 14:9-11, Revelation 20:10-15.

The information about the camp of Israel will be relayed to Pharaoh. We do not know how many days they are stationary here, but it is long enough for the Pharaoh to get really worked up again about their departure from his land, and for him to forget the messages of the great plagues he and his land have suffered at the hands of the Lord God. He will not accept defeat by Almighty God, but in his arrogance will still seek to defeat the Lord God and enslave again his people.

Verses 4- 6. The battle between Pharaoh and God is a primal battle between arrogance and self centeredness, and the humility that is demanded of the creature towards his Creator. Isaiah 2:10-12, Daniel 4:27-37, Romans 9:16-24. Moses is careful to note that not just Pharaoh got angry when he heard that the children of Israel were camped ready to make their escape from the land, but all his advisors also. They all resent the loss of so many servants, and the death of their sons, and the joint desire for their easy life with their slaves back again, and they want revenge.

This is important, for the Pharaoh alone cannot be the cause of the death of so many later. The Lord is not unjust in this matter. They all expected the Israelites to break camp at some point and then rush the forts, and break through the line on the coast, and so to counter that threat they gathered their “ready reaction” mobile forces; chariots and cavalry to harass them on the open ground there.

Verses 7 – 9. Remember the word “hardened” means that the Lord put enough pressure upon Pharaoh for him to have to disclose his true desires and decisions. This man hates the Israelites and their God, and he seeks to defeat the God of Israel by enslaving his people again if he can. He hopes, against hope, that he has exhausted God’s power in the plagues and that the Lord God of the heavens and earth has run out of judgment for him. The Lord never is short of power however, and He never sleeps, nor fails His people in their hour of need. **Psalms 121:3-4.**

This man gathers his rapid reaction force and rides out at the head of this powerful mobile army to round up his slaves and drive them back to slavery. The use of this quite small but professional army is the clue that the number of Israelites is probably in the 20-30,000 area, not the millions of the LXX translation of the 3rd century BC. Remember the numbers in the KJV come from the Septuagint (LXX) which mistook “eleph” in Moses day for thousand, but that is what the word had come to mean 1200 years later, but **not** when Moses used it.

Pharaoh had been rebuked by God through the plagues, and he had asked for forgiveness, but he had not changed his life and followed the true God, so when regrets built up he returned to his previous evil and was more determined to follow it than before. **Luke 11:24-26, 2 Peter 2:20-22.** If we do not face the truth the days will darken further for us, and we will place ourselves in graver peril by the day. Denial does not improve survival chances; our chances of survival decline steadily by the day, as we fail to face facts.

Verses 10 – 14. The army of Pharaoh draws near the Israelite camp within a few hours. They can move quickly and are well practised as a rapid deployment force, and so can suddenly appear in large numbers. They create fear amongst the Israelites whose camp is not ready to resist a frontal assault from such a destructive and powerful force. These Egyptian soldiers are the best chariot forces in the world of their day. Humanly speaking the Israelites are lost and without human hope, and that is exactly how God wants them to think and feel, and then look upwards for help. Now as you can see, they do use God’s name, but sadly it is in vain, for their faith is skin deep! Matthew 13:3-23.

They apparently pray, but it is just vain words, for in their panic they immediately blame Moses for bringing them into the desert area so that the Egyptian forces can kill them more efficiently and easier. We are challenged to take our fears to the Lord in prayer, and leave them there. Matthew 14:24-33, 1 Peter 5:5-7. In verse twelve we see the terrible truth that the majority of the Israelites were quite content in their slavery, because it was all they had known, and at least they could depend on things happening as they always had.

Many people are like this, and stay in an inferior position, when they could have lived a far better life with more power in it, and legacy flowing from it. We are not called to live boring and quiet lives, but follow the Lord where He leads us, and to do what He orders us to do. We are called to “go for the gold medal” in the contest that is this life; to actively seek the rewards and crowns that await those who love and serve the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Moses mentors true leadership here, and he takes charge and orders them to stand still, and have faith replace the fear in their hearts. He rebukes them and challenges them to stand before God and express the faith the Lord has called them to live within. Numbers 14:9-12, Deuteronomy 20:1-4, Psalms 27:1-3, 46:1-3, 10-11, Isaiah 41:10-15.

Moses has a promise of the Lord regarding the Egyptian Army, and he relays this to the people; that they will all be destroyed, and that they will be seen no more as a threat ever again. Moses does not mention when he receives this revelation or prophetic word, but it may have been any time from when they left Succoth until he was told by the Lord to camp in the trap that they are now in.

Tradition tells us that Moses had been a general in the Egyptian Army and so he knew strategy and tactics and would not have camped in such a place unless he had direct revelation from the Lord as to what the Lord was going to do there with the people. This is the first test for them all, and that means Moses as well. He has learned that he must lay aside his military logic and be obedient to revelation, even when it goes against the "best manuals".

Sadly the Israelites have failed this first test, and they have moaned and complained and panicked, but Moses gives them the truth anyway. They are to stand still and see the Lord fight for them. The Lord will fight for them until they have learned enough military skills to fight for themselves, but always only in His power. The Lord does not call us to do things we cannot do! Isaiah 31:1-6, Romans 8:26-39, 1 Corinthians 10:11-13. We do impossible things however, only with the power of Almighty God, and under his specific direction. They will later fail at Ai by forgetting this fact.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Fear is defeated by focus on the character, power, and the specific called plan of God for our lives. No situation we have been led into can be bad for us if we walk in obedience and faith. The Lord will not lead us into any situation that He has not a way through to His glory. Let us walk in the light and power of God and rest secure in His provision for us each day as we face the testing circumstances that may come.
2. Emotions are to be enjoyed within a framework of doctrinal based thinking that ensures they are safely enjoyed and do not lead us into disaster. God has made us well and if we go with the plan we have times of refreshment as well as times of great battle. Let us walk in the light of the Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit, and so we will enjoy the Lord's fellowship in the quiet as well as the difficult places.
3. Impossible places in this life are simply God's opportunities to work His power and allow us glimpses of His glory in this world. When we find ourselves in impossible situations we are called to relax and trust in the Lord our God, for He will bring us through to bring glory to His holy name. In all things we are called to pray, trust, and obey the Lord and He will open the path through the seas of difficulty we face.
4. At times the impossible situations are to teach us and our oppressors, and so in prayer we are to pray for our enemies, that the Lord may accomplish his purposes with them, as well as deliver us. All who "despitefully use us" are to be prayed for in the name of the king of kings and Lord of all lords, for he seeks their salvation.

REFLECTIONS UPON THE BELIEVER'S BEST 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) or weak and fallible men. 2 Corinthians 1:7, 10:5. (We get Divine Viewpoint through Bible Doctrine in the Soul).
3. 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. Great Fellowship within a church is based on believers all being in tune with what the Bible teaches, as then their unity is Holy Spirit formed in the Truth of the Word. 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.

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) UNCHANGEABLE

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)

REFLECTIONS UPON THE NATURE OF MOSES' FAITH

1. The Christian life can be divided into three sections or stages.

a) Stage 1 - Salvation.

b) Stage 2 - The Christian Walk

c) Stage 3 - The Christian in Heaven.

2. Man has three earthly means of obtaining knowledge:

a) Faith - to believe or trust that something is true

b) Reasoning - using human logic to deduce that something is true

c) Experimentation - to test and prove something to satisfy yourself that it is true

3. The only acceptable method of gaining grace is by faith, since this means depending upon God without our human merit.

a) Stage 1 - Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved - salvation (Acts 16:31).

b) Stage 2 - Trusting in the promises and principles of the Word of God - the Christian walk.

c) Stage 3 - Trusting in God's provision - Heaven.

4. To illustrate belief and unbelief we follow the Israelites from the plagues in Egypt to crossing the Jordan:

Incident	God's Promise	Scripture	Response	Result
Last plague	Passover Lamb	Exodus 12:21-30	Trust	Jews spared last plague.
Egyptian Army	Red Sea Crossing	Exodus 14:1-31	Trust	Moses leads Jews over Red Sea.
No Water	Water	Exodus 17:1-7	Trust	By striking rock (Christ) water obtained.
Gold Calf	God's Doctrine	Exodus 32:15-28	Distrust	Sons of Levi (Priests) slaughtered for leading
Quails	Manna	Num 11:10-33	Distrust	Many deaths due to quails
Giants	Enter Canaan	Num 13:1-14:38	Distrust	Death of fearful spies. Wandering in desert
No water	Water	Num 20:2-13	Distrust	Moses strikes rock in disobedience. Will not enter Promised Land.
Wanderings	Cross Jordan	Joshua 3:1-17	Trust	Israel crosses Jordan on dry ground

5. Salvation faith is the complete trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, who died for your sins and rose from the dead to give you eternal life. (Acts 16:31, Romans 4:20-25)

6. Anything added to becomes works, and therefore nullifies faith. (Romans 4:4)

7. Faith is shown outwardly by confession with the mouth. (Romans 10:9-10)

8. Since faith does not depend on our own abilities, anybody can believe; even little children. (Matthew 18:2-4)

9. Assurance is by faith in the Character and Word of God. (Hebrews 10:22)

10. Faith is trust which does not ask to know all about God, but believe all that God has said. Faith intelligently recognizes that we are creatures in a space-time universe, and that this side of eternity we cannot know all there is to know about God, for we cannot even understand eternity or infinity!

11. Salvation faith receives Christ as Saviour and Lord. (John 1:12, 3:16, 3:36)

12. The Faith of Salvation is the complete trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, as having been the one who has delivered us from our transgressions and raised again for our justification. (Romans 4:20-25)

13. By Faith God gives the soul assurance of the reality of things never yet seen by the natural man. (Hebrews 11:1-3)

14. The triumphs of faith in daily life are illustrated for the believer in Hebrews 11:1-39. Abel, Noah, Moses etc.

15. Faith comes from hearing and hearing from the Word of God. (Romans 10:17)
16. Faith is the only non meritorious means of understanding things the other being rationalism and empiricism.
17. To become like a little child is an analogy to faith as a young child only has faith. (Matthew 18:2-4)

REFLECTION UPON THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

1. God's faithfulness is based on his unchangeability - Hebrews 13:8
2. God's faithfulness is renewed "every day" - Lamentations 3:21-24
3. His promises are sure. - Hebrews 10:23
4. The faithfulness of Christ continues even when we are unfaithful. - 2 Timothy 2:13
5. Christ is a faithful and merciful high priest - Hebrews 2:17
6. God is faithful to forgive sins - 1 John 1:9
7. God is faithful to keep us saved - 2 Timothy 2:13
8. God is faithful to deliver us through temptation - 1 Corinthians 10:13
9. God is faithful to keep His promises to us - Hebrews 10:23
10. God is faithful to us in suffering - 1 Peter 4:19
11. God is faithful in fulfilling His plan for us - I Thessalonians 5:24
12. God is faithful to strengthen us - 2 Thessalonians 3:3
13. God is the faithful partner of our union with Christ - 1 Corinthians 1:9
14. Christ is a faithful and merciful high priest - Hebrews 2:17
15. Jesus Christ is synonymous with faithfulness - Revelation 19:11

REFLECTION UPON THE BELIEVER'S GOAL: TO WIN ETERNAL REWARDS AND CROWNS

1. Rewards and Salvation are carefully separated in the scriptures. Salvation is a free gift from God, rewards are for meritorious service accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Salvation - a free gift to the lost. (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 6:23, John 4:10) – it is an everlasting possession. (John 3:36, John 5:24, John 6:47)
3. Rewards - to the saved who faithfully work for the Lord. (1 Corinthians 9:24, 25, Revelation 22:12) - distributed at the Judgment Seat of Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:11-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 14:10) This takes place after the Rapture of the Church. Revelation 19:7,8.
4. Rewards are often pictured in the form of crowns:-
 - a) The incorruptible crown - for faithfulness in exercising self control. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)
 - b) The crown of glory - for faithfulness in suffering. (1 Peter 5:4)
 - c) The crown of life - for faithfulness under trial. (James 1:12, Revelation 2:10)
 - d) The crown of righteousness - for faithful testimony. (2 Timothy 4:8)
 - e) The crown of rejoicing - for faithful service. (1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20, Philippians 4:1)
5. Rewards are able to be won after you have entered into the Plan of God through regeneration, and they are won in time through your persistence in your assigned tasks upon the earth. They are rewards for faithful Spirit filled service and all believers are eligible for them, not just pastors.
6. Rewards are based on the use of all grace provided "divine operating assets" including the filling of the Holy Spirit, the whole counsel of God's Word, fellowship of others, and the teaching and mentorship of the local church. It is as we operate as God has called us that we receive all God has for us in time and rewards in eternity. So may sell themselves short in time by not following through, and so they rob themselves of eternal rewards also.

7. You can lose the rewards you would otherwise have received, due to disobedience, and not following through in faith, but never lose your salvation. 1 Corinthians 3:14-15, 2 Timothy 2:12,13

EXODUS 14:15-31

15 And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: 16 But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. 17 And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. 18 And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. 19 And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: 20 And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night. 21 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. 22 And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. 23 And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. 24 And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, 25 And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians. 26 And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. 27 And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. 28 And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them. 29 But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. 30 Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. 31 And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses."

REFLECTION

Verses 15 – 16. Moses is a humble man, and he is a real one, with all the weaknesses and fears/worries that we have also. Real men and women break under pressure and moan at times, and Moses cries out to the Lord in sheer frustration at these people. The people have moaned at him and he takes it to the Lord, which is the right thing to do. Do not think that getting frustrated disqualifies you from blessing, it simply proves you are human!

Moses gets a little growling from the Lord, but he gets the answer, and he gets the words to say to these people next time they complain. We may be rebuked by the Lord for failing to walk in the Spirit as we should, but we will always be encouraged in the rebuke, for the Lord wants us walking in the Spirit, not limping along in our own strength. The Lord will win great renown by His actions on this day when the sea parts and the people are able to walk through on dry land where once over 2 meters of water ebbed and flowed. Nehemiah 9:7-12.

The miracle will occur over a period of time, and the Lord will miraculously undertake two works simultaneously to deliver them; the cloud and fire will keep the Egyptians at bay, and during that time He will divide the sea, and it will stay divided until the children of Israel have all passed through the sea highway. Moses is told the mechanics from his side; he is to lift up his staff over the sea and he is told it will divide. He is also given the script for the people, and they are told to be silent before the Lord, and stop their complaining, and they are to move forward in expectation of the sea dividing.

They are to move forward in faith in marching order. The entire nation must be in marching order, ready in ranks from the time Moses lifts his staff over the waters and the wind begins to blow. They must be ready and organized or they will not pass through the sea in good order and with speed in the time required, but they must wait until the path is opened before them after several hours of the Lord's wind blowing. There are at least 30,000 people plus animals, and to move such a group is a test of organization at the best of times, and this is the "worst of times".

The people are just getting used to marching in ranks, and accepting the orders of their new captains, and they are to practise these things as they march towards a vast reed sea at least 2 or more meters deep in places. They must trust and obey and express their faith with their feet. God wants us to act upon our faith, and walk forward in worship and service, not just singing of our faith. Ezra 10:4-5.

Verses 17 – 18. The Lord makes it clear to Moses that He is not finished with Pharaoh either, and that Pharaoh's own actions will lead to Pharaoh's judgment and that of his entire mobile army. The Lord will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that the deep hatred he harbours towards Moses will be expressed to the extent that he will order his whole "rapid deployment force" across the temporarily dry sea bed of the Sea of Reeds after the Israelites. As we will see its not a channel between two towering walls of water, but a vast expanse of dry sea bed.

The hatred of this man will overflow into a suicidal course of action that will lead to the death by drowning of his entire elite army. They will honour the Lord God of Israel in their death; for they will see, too late to save themselves, that they have fought the God of the universe.

The Roman Emperor who tried to return Rome back to paganism after many years under Christian Emperors was called Julian the Apostate, and he like Pharaoh tried to fight God. He died fighting on the frontiers of the Empire and his last words were, "Thou has won, oh Galilean!" The Lord always does, and Pharaoh will know this, as will his entire nation this day. 2 Corinthians 2:14-17.

Verses 19 – 20. The Angel of the Lord, is, as we have seen early in Genesis, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord's presence keeps these moaning people, just as He keeps us safe in all we do today. He is with us always, Matthew 28:20, just as the Holy Spirit is in us, John 14:17, and a guardian angel is with us, watching our back. Hebrews 1:14.

We are challenged to walk closely to the Lord and to heed the words of God and so draw nearer through the days rather than further away. We are called to learn from the past so we do not need to repeat the lessons. **Psalms 106:6-15, 114:1-8, Isaiah 51:9-15.** We always need to be reminded of them however, as human memory is not dependable. This is why repeating studies of the great biblical books on faith benefits God's people greatly.

The Lord moves to position Himself in the place of greatest vulnerability for the Israelites; at the rear of their camp, between them and the mobile army of Pharaoh, blocking his advance. This is the signal to Moses to give the order to "move out". The Lord forms an impenetrable barrier between the Egyptian forces and the Israelites camp. At this point Moses has given the order for the people to "break camp – move out".

I do not think that they had pitched any tents, but they would have had to unpack some things to prepare food, eat and rest upon the ground in their family groups. They are now to stand and get ready to move out under the order of Moses as the sea divides. They are to be told exactly what the Lord is going to do in advance, so that as they obey and it occurs they can praise God for His actions as they unfold, as well as just afterwards. The people are to boldly approach the Sea.

It was a vast area at this time and used by the Egyptians as part of their defence system, as none could cross it on foot. The front of the Israelite host may have been several hundred people across. They can be lined up, at 30,000, in a mass about 400 – 1000 meters across a broad front and about 2000+ meters deep. This sort of group could cross a set point in under 3 hours. If we double that time for animals as well, we have a group of up to 200,000 people and animals crossing a set point in under ten hours. It also tells us that the waters are blown back leaving at least a mile wide gap!

The Pillar of cloud and fire was in position behind them all that night, blocking the Egyptians in. This tells us the time frame for the crossing – it is six to ten hours, and occurs at night. They must head into the darkness and the unknown, but have faith in the light/fire behind them for protection, and know that this is the path God has opened for them, and so it is for glory, not for death. Like us at times, they cannot see where they are going but know who leads them.

Verses 21 – 22. Moses lifts up his staff over the sea when the people are standing in their ranks before it. The people are ready to move, and now Moses acts, for the Lord's work will begin only as he lifts his staff. At that point the people are to move forward as the waters divide in front of them to the left and to the right. This is a good faith in action illustration, and it is how the Lord works through history. If the prophetic word is received we are to stand ready to obey, and then the Lord will move to deliver.

It is told of the great missionary to China, Hudson Taylor, that on one voyage to China the ship was attacked by Chinese pirates in the South China Sea. The missionary's ship was becalmed and the pirates were rowing closer and closer. The captain asked Hudson Taylor to pray, and he first looked up and asked the captain to set every piece of sail he had. The captain said to Taylor, "but there is no wind". Taylor's response was swift, "My God will send the wind, you set every piece of sail, for I will not pray for wind until you are ready to receive it". The captain got all the crew aloft and set all the sail they had, then Hudson Taylor kneeling on the deck in front of them all prayed. The wind then blew and they escaped the pirates.

This is what God demands of us; specific believing prayer, with appropriate actions already taken to be ready to receive what the Lord is going to do. This is the story of the establishment of our own college also. We walked by prayer and we prepared to move well before the buildings were provided to teach in. Lectures were ready, books identified, and tables and chairs ready to accommodate the people the Lord would bring in, and the Lord moved in His timing.

The Lord called me to be ready, and that meant having 530 hours of lectures ready to go **before** there was a building to teach in, money to pay expenses, or even the full student body to teach. My job was to be ready, and so when the Lord answered our prayer for the building, within weeks, after the painting and plumbing work was done, we were in action teaching. The Lord expects us to pray believing that He will answer in accordance with His will. Matthew 21:21-22, James 1:5-8. We must be ready to march forward with no last minute scramble to get what is required ready.

Verses 23 – 24. The wind was an easterly wind, and yet the waters went both ways, and in effect, "piled up" away to the left and right of the host as it passed. It was not a natural phenomenon, but a supernatural one. Do not seek natural explanations for this, for there are none. This was a supernatural event, and a unique one at that. The Pharaoh was able to see what was happening, and yet he did not halt and consider the meaning of the events unfolding before him. He was so possessed by hatred and so were his officers that they were readying themselves to follow the Israelites.

This is inconceivable – that they would follow a host across a previously water covered area in chariots and with horses. Ground that will carry people will not, if reed covered wet sand, (and also now covered in animals droppings from the flocks and herds), carry the weight of horses and chariots. They will certainly get stuck and be unable to manoeuvre quickly at all, and with water on either side they have the constant awareness that it is supernatural forces holding those waters back, and those supernatural forces are **NOT** friendly towards the Egyptians!

Pharaoh has plenty of evidence that it is unwise, even suicidal to follow the Israelites. God is NOT with him, but he is possessed by such satanic hatred of Israel that he ignores the truth and advances forward at full gallop. The source of our emotions is shown by the fruit of that emotional power waves we feel. **Galatians 5:16-26**.

If the front was up to 1000 meters wide he could get his chariot forces into full attack formation and charge in a broad front across the wet and now softened sandy surface. As they advance the Lord “troubles them”; that is they find the going difficult, as horse/chariot forces do over well trodden and now well “manured” ground. Psalms 77:10-20.

Verses 25 – 26. The chariot wheels apparently bogged down, and even fell off many of their chariots, and the Egyptian forces panicked and drove their horses trying to drive broken chariots harder to get out of the sea bed that they then saw was a trap for them all, and would be their grave. They realised that they were fighting God and that the God of Israel was superior to their gods. They had already known this from the ten plagues, but their hatred had blinded them, and this time it would be fatal for their entire elite “Ready Reaction Force” army.

It appears from the text that Pharaoh himself did not lead his forces in the charge, but watched them advance. He and his staff may live to testify to the loss of their army, although it was the Egyptian Pharaoh’s practise of never mentioning any defeats in their literature. We can be sure that the people will not be told the truth about this disaster; only that the army drowned.

Moses is instructed to lift his hand up from the other side of the Sea now and bring the waters back over, upon the Egyptians. It is a close run thing here, with the last of the Israelites leaving the sea from one side as the Egyptians advance steadily across the sea in the middle area. They are doomed, for the ground is now well trodden by people and then later fouled by the droppings of the multitude of their animals; such ground was a death trap for all mounted forces.

Verses 27-28. The Israelites have been crossing all through that night; they begin around 9pm to cross and as dawn approaches the cloud lifts from over the old camp site and the Egyptians have advanced in a broad attack formation across the sea bed. It is between 5 and 6 am when Moses lifts his arm and the wind changes to the west and drives the waters back across the sea bed in a vast Tsunami like wall of killing water. Of the men who entered the sea bed, not one returns to Pharaoh, who has had to look at his army as it advances and then is drowned before his eyes. The Israelites can see the destruction of their enemies and can rejoice in the Lord’s provision. Habakkuk 3:16-19.

Verses 29 – 31. The vast army of Pharaoh is washed up along the sea shore on the Israelite’s side. The Israelites can then strip the dead of their weapons and gain more armour and weaponry, and they can rejoice in the deliverance of the Lord, for this army was not even able to draw their weapons against them before they were destroyed. God has delivered them totally, and provided all their weapons for Israelite use later. All they had to do was advance across the dry sea bed as they were told by Moses. Obedience has delivered them in the power and plan of Almighty God. It is a testimony to the person and work of God and the leadership of Moses.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. It is not wrong to moan at times, but it is always right to moan to the Lord directly, and seek His face and path through the trouble. 1 Peter 5:7. Moses pours his heart out to the Lord and receives instructions. Let us cast our cares upon Him and so receive instruction also for any troubles we may face. Remember the late Dr De Haan’s words, “When God allows impossibility to be faced it is because he is going to do something spectacular”.
2. Stepping out in faith means to be ready to act before the Lord has provided what is being prayed for. Faith means we expect the Lord’s provision, and so we step out to meet it with our hearts set steadily upon His will for our life, not any lust based desires. We pray believing, and if we cannot do that on any matter, we need to give the will of the Lord in that matter more consideration, and then pray again when we are sure of what we are asking.
3. The Lord goes before the people in the wind and after them covering their backs with the cloud and the fire. The Israelites are “hemmed in” yet it is the Egyptians who will be trapped. The Lord turns the events expected on their ear. The Israelites are challenged to walk before Him in spirit and truth, and stand with courage, and march with precision and energy across the sea bed. The Lord provides deliverance all the way, and protects them all the way, and He continues to do this with ourselves today.

REFLECTIONS UPON THE LORD JESUS AS THE ANGEL OF JEHOVAH

1. The Angel of Jehovah is identified as Jehovah. (Genesis 16:7-13, 22:11-18, 31:11-13, Exodus 13:21 cf 14:19, Judges 6:11-23).

2. The Angel of Jehovah is distinguished from Jehovah. (Genesis 24:7, Exodus 23:20, 1 Chronicles 21:15-18, Zechariah 1:12-13).
3. The Angel of Jehovah is therefore a member of the Trinity - the same as Jehovah, but distinct from Jehovah.
4. God the Father and Holy Spirit cannot be seen by man face to face. (Exodus 33:18-23; John 14:17).
5. Therefore, the Angel of Jehovah is the second Person of the Trinity: the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ.
 - a) Jesus Christ identifies Himself as Jehovah (I AM) (John 8:58)
 - b) The Lord Jesus Christ is the visible/manifest member of the Trinity (John 1:18, 6:46, 1 Timothy 6:15-16).
 - c) The Angel of Jehovah never appears after the Incarnation (John 1:18, 6:46, 1 Timothy 6:15, 16, 1 John 4:12)
 - d) Both the Angel of Jehovah and Jesus Christ are sent by Jehovah (the Father).
6. The Angel of Jehovah appeared only in the Old Testament.
 - a) He wrestled with Jacob. (Genesis 32:24-30)
 - b) He redeemed Jacob from all evil. (Genesis 48:16)
 - c) He spoke to Moses from the burning bush. (Exodus 3:2)
 - d) He protected Israel at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:19)
 - e) He prepared Israel for the Promised Land. (Exodus 23:20-23)
 - f) He reassured Joshua (Joshua 5:13-15)
 - g) He commissioned Gideon (Judges 6:11-23)
 - h) He ministered to Elijah. (1 Kings 19:5-7)
 - i) He saved Jerusalem from Sennacherib. (Isaiah 37:36)
 - j) He preserved Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego in the furnace. (Daniel 3:25)

NOTES

CHAPTER 15**INTRODUCTION**

The song of Moses is a doctrinal poem that he sang, and I suspect taught the Israelites to sing. Songs are easier to remember than text, and their words can then be recalled quickly and affirmed loudly with gusto as they are sung aloud. The Song of Moses here is one song named as being sung in heaven with the Shepherd Psalms. Revelation 15:3. For any super spiritual saint reading this who doesn't like singing; just learn these songs and be able to sing this one, because it is on the agenda for your time in heaven! Moses wants the people to remember and like all good communicators he seeks the best medium for retention by the people; and he selects song.

From the testimony of scripture, the two song writers who are the greatest in history are Moses and David, for their songs are sung forever. Great truths are summed up in great hymns, Psalms and spiritual songs, and this is a great way to affirm the truth every morning and evening. Psalms 5:3, 59:16, 65:8, Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16. In the days of the Tabernacle and the Temple there were special singers and musicians whose job was to sing the songs, like the one before us in this chapter, and make their words heard in a beautiful way so that the people rejoiced as they sang of doctrine. Psalms 33:1-3, 40:1-3, Isaiah 5:1ff, 12:2, 42:10.

The sons of Korah and of Asaph were such men who led the singing for the people. 1 Chronicles 25:1-7. When the new Temple was built the sons of Asaph once again were set aside for such worship and supported as they rejoiced in the Lord and led the people in joyful doctrinal worship. Nehemiah 12:45-47. The named songs of the sons of Korah are, Psalms 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 84, 85, 87, 88, and the songs of the sons of Asaph are Psalms 50, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83.

Now people have different taste in music and prefer different ways of singing. No believer should ever fall out with another over the way worship in song is conducted, for each person has a slightly different temperament nature to the next one and each one will have different musical preferences. The Jewish people sang at times with music and without. What ever moves you TO PRAISE in holiness the Living God, and helps you to remember the words of scripture; that do with all your heart and soul! Refer to the BTB study on CHURCH – WORSHIP AND PRAISE, MUSIC. Let us often, with Moses and the Psalmist, take the “wings of the morning” and sing praises unto the Lord who has made us to bless and praise His holy name. Psalms 139:7-14.

EXODUS 15:1-14

“15:1 Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. 2 The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. 3 The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name. 4 Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea. 5 The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. 6 Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. 7 And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. 8 And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. 9 The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. 10 Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. 11 Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? 12 Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. 13 Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation. 14 The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina.”

REFLECTION

Verses 1 – 2. Moses sings a song filled with doctrinal truths to honour the Lord and bring praise to God, but also to remind the people that it is the Lord their God who lifts them up, not any power or strength they have alone. The reasons Moses gives to praise the Lord are interesting in themselves; for he has “triumphed gloriously”, he is “my salvation”, and he is “my God”. The three key aspects of worship are wonderfully captured here, as Moses praises God for His character, His work of salvation, and for the wonder and joy of the relationship of the believer with the Creator-Saviour.

The response of worship is preparation for the believer to build the Lord a house, firstly in the heart of the individual, and then within the worshipping community. This will be the song of the Tabernacle and later of the two Temples. The reality of the presence of the Lord is our “strength and song”; in the Lord only do we stand and fight our way through this life. He is our salvation, or we are the authors of our own doom in the Angelic Conflict. In this present world we walk with the Lord alone to victory.

Proverbs 3:1-8. *“1. My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: 2. For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.*

3. *Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:*
4. *So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.*
5. *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*
6. *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*
7. *Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.*
8. *It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones."*

Moses will sing his song of three verses to the people, and it will become their focus for worship as they move away from the Reed Sea and enter the wilderness march. If they heed the words of the song they will be more ready for the next test on the journey to Canaan. Sadly for all the adults, they will not thoroughly heed the words and meditate upon them, but their children will. It will be the under twenty year olds who will enter the promised land finally and they will be singing this song all the way through the next forty years as they prepare themselves for the task ahead of them.

Moses rests upon the truth, the power, and the plan of his God and his "father's God". He can look back at the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Levi, and see what God did with those men, and know that He will do no less with him in his own day. Worship is his strength training, as weight lifting is the strength training of the athlete. This is to be our way of growing in power and confidence also. Let us worship the Lord, whose plan stretches back before time, and is certain in it's fulfilment now and forever. The Lord our God reigns! Psalms 34:1-11, 99:1-9, 145:1-13.

The Lord is indeed "our strength" in this world, or we are without enough power to stand in the Angelic Conflict. We lean upon the Lord's Character, His Plan, and our part in the plan; and as we do that we draw upon His strength to deal with the pressures we face in the battles of this life. We are to learn to "wait upon the Lord", for His love never changes, nor does His power ever fail towards us. Psalms 18:1-3, 27:1-3, 28:6-8, 59:16-17, 62:5-8, 118:1-16.

Let us sing with the Psalmist of the strength of the Lord, which is always sufficient to deliver us in all things. Let us remember, as Habakkuk does, that even if the fig tree doesn't blossom and there is little or no food, yet we can wait upon the Lord, for He will deliver us in His plan. **Habakkuk 3:16-19**. The challenge of all the scriptures is to walk in faith, and so, as the grace, love and mercy of God is revealed over time, we grow in faith, and come to the place of being "fully persuaded" that He is able to keep us to the end and bring us home with glory. **Romans 8:38, 2 Timothy 1:12, Jude 24-25**.

Verses 3 - 5. We can find these words a little hard to take after so many years of sloppy liberalism, but we forget the judgment of the Lord at our peril. The Lord judges evil and He does so thoroughly, but only after maximum opportunity for the evil men to be saved. 2 Peter 3:9, Revelation 18:2-3, 20-24, 19:11-19. Pharaoh had received every opportunity to bow before the Lord God, be genuinely saved, and then worship the One True God and forsake his proven useless gods. His nation could have been transformed and blessed through their release of Israel rather than cursed by their Exodus.

It was his persistence in evil that led to the destruction of his army. It was malice and sheer blood lust that drove that army into the sea bed of the Yam Suf, and that caused them to whip their horses on, that they might catch and slaughter the Israelites; they lusted after blood to shed. Pharaoh had wanted to recapture his slaves, but when he ordered his men across that expanse of sea bed he had slaughter in his mind, and so did his men. It was God's grace and mercy towards the Israelites that delivered them, and the only way they could be delivered to life, was that those who sought their life were delivered unto death. 2 Thessalonians 2:8.

Moses celebrates the death of the evil men who had tried to kill the Israelites, and before you criticize him remember that this song will be sung in heaven. God is not offended by this slaughter of evil men and neither ought we to be now. The final judgment of those who chose of their own free will to join Satan will be an occasion for rejoicing, not sadness, for as we stand with the Lord on that day we will see all the facts, and we will understand the malice that is behind all who reject the One who went to the Cross for them. Matthew 18:2-7, 25:31-46.

Verses 6 – 8. It is good to remember in worship the goodness and greatness of the Lord our God. It is good to recall His glorious deeds and remember that the Lord is in charge of history and those who oppose His will and stand against His person are on the wrong side of history. Psalms 89:8-13.

To remember the mighty power of God is to put into the right perspective the problems of mankind, for we allow our own troubles to grow in their power in proportion to our withdrawal from the conscious reality of the Lord's power. We are to draw near the Lord so that the remembrance of His power and plan might cause the worries we can have to flee from us.

Read the prayer of David in this light. As he dies he gathers the leaders of the people around him and gets them to pray with him in a way that brings them near the reality of the Almighty God who truly rules over the heavens and the earth. 1 Chronicles 29:10-20. The great prophet Isaiah also sings of this truth, and so ought we to sing. **Isaiah 51:1-10, 52:1-10**.

It was in the "greatness of the Lord's excellency" that He acted and destroyed the enemy of His people. When our concentration is upon the enemy and the problems that come to us in this life, then they grow in apparent power, but when we see the Lord truly as He is, then we glory in His excellent power! What will we focus on today; our problems and allow them to grow, or the Lord and his majesty? Moses will later record his prayer, that was to become the prayer of Israel. Deuteronomy 33:26-29. Truly as we walk through this life in the plan of God for us, then we can always say, "Underneath are the everlasting arms". Psalms 24:1-10.

Verses 9 – 11. In case anyone should say the Lord was unfair in His judgment of the Egyptian army that followed after the Israelites, the Lord gave Moses their thoughts, or they got so close that he was able to hear their shouts. The latter may be the truth; for the enemy were very close to overtaking the Israelites and their bodies were washed up onto the shore line by the Israelite camp which tells us that they were far closer to that side than the one they started from. They had consistent malice against God and His people and so they paid the price for this evil. They made their free choice and they received full payment for their evil and their sins. The wages of sin is death, and if you select that road, then the wages that are due are always paid in full. **Psalms 74:10-23, Romans 6:23.**

These verses remind us of the truth illustrated in the miracles of Christ; that the Lord Jesus Christ is the creator God and all the powers of nature obey Him. He is the Alpha and Omega, and He has complete power, even while upon the earth. There is no power like the Lord. The enemy Satan, would have his followers, and those he attacks, believe that he has equal power to the Lord God, but he has not any such power.

Satan is able to be resisted, and any believer walking in the power of the Holy Spirit is able to deal with him. Read the following passages and meditate upon them and draw strength from their combined teaching of the power of the Holy Spirit filled believer over the enemy of man. **Matthew 6:25-34, James 4:6-10, 1 Peter 5:5-11, 1 John 4:4, 17-19.**

The Lord is a wonder working God, and the Lord remains able to work any miracle required to meet the purposes of the plan. We are not to become pre-occupied with the miraculous, nor fool ourselves into thinking that a miracle will change people's minds about the Lord, for it will not. We seek the Holy Spirit's work upon evil people. John 16:8-11. Remember the Lord's parable in Luke 16:19-31. Having said this, it is not wrong to seek for the Lord's direct action in history, and if it is in accordance with His plan we can be sure He will act in mighty power in answer to prayer. Isaiah 64:1-8.

Verses 12 – 14. The purpose of the Lord in His miracles, was both the deliverance of His people, but also the warning of judgment upon all who would persist in standing against the Lord's purpose and plan and power. The Lord is not mocked by man's arrogance, but is gracious and patient towards man's foolishness, right up until there is no option left but to judge and destroy that evil man, and then the Lord will destroy him and all who stand with him.

The two acts of God go together; His gracious deliverance of those who serve Him, and the judgment of those who oppose His servants. We are challenged to remember the gracious deliverances of the Lord in the past and rest upon the certainty of deliverance now. Let us "fear" to fall short of faith in this matter, lest we fail as the people of old did, even having seen the great wonders of God manifested before them. Psalms 77:13-20, 78:50-53, 106:6-15, Isaiah 63:11-14, Hebrews 3:7 – 4:5.

In the Lord's mercy He led the people forth to the land of Canaan, and He leads us through each day of our earthly walk in the battlefields of the devil's world. We are led because we are redeemed, for we are now the Lord's; the price is paid and we belong to Him, and so He has the responsibility to lead us and protect us. It is this lesson that is the big one for the Exodus generation, and I believe for our own. **1 Corinthians 6:20, 7:23, 1 Peter 1:3-7, 18-19.**

The people of the Lord are led and guided to the Lord's place for them. The Lord has a place and that involves both an operational will and geographical will for each believer. We are called with a purpose and a plan, and the Lord has committed to bringing us through to the destination. Jude 24-25. We are here at this point in space and time for a specific purpose. We were not meant to be born and live through any other time than this one – there is one plan only.

The people of the land of the Philistines had heard of the people of Israel well before they arrived in the land. They had heard of the plagues of Egypt and their defeats of their enemies in the desert wanderings. The fear of the Lord was upon the people of the land as they entered it. Joshua 2:10-11. The reputation of the Lord's mighty deeds has gone before the people and their enemies are already defeated as they think of opposing a people who defeated an Egyptian Army in the strength of their God alone.

Their sorrow is the result of their trust in their pagan gods, who have already been defeated by the Lord in Egypt. There is no hope for the pagan nations and they know it, for they fight the Lord of all, yet still they determine to fight! They hold to their pagan beliefs rather than submit to the Lord as God. The saddest thing in this life is seeing the lost cling to their pagan viewpoint rather than bow their knee to their creator and Lord.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. The Lord is our strength through this world, or we rest upon the powers that we can muster ourselves. If the Lord is our strength and shield we are safe indeed in the midst of all that the enemy can throw at us. We must learn to rest upon the Lord in this, just as the Israelites had to learn these things. Worship is protective and educational, but it is always meant to lead to action.
2. As we worship we affirm the truths of the power, plan and person of the One who died for us and rose again as our King and Lord. Moses sings of the Lord's grace, mercy and power, and so ought we to worship in song and prayer, and actions of service. As we read Moses song we are to remember that it will be sung in heaven, and so it is a good song to learn now and sing now. Let us rejoice in the gracious deliverance of the saints and the judgment of those who hate God and his people.

3. Let us rejoice that there will be justice in the last judgment. We are the Lord's and we are safe in his arms. He protects his own, for we are all bought with the price of his precious blood and we will not be left to the enemy as prey. Let us advance in whatever task he has given us with confidence in his perfect person, his eternal plan, and his mighty power

REFLECTION UPON THE NATURE OF WORSHIP AND PRAISE

1. The Hebrew word used in worship is "Shoko" - to bow down. Submission is in view.
2. The Greek words are as follows:-
 - a) proskueo - prostrate yourself. (1 Corinthians 14:5)
 - b) sebomai - lack of arrogance. (Matthew 15:9)
 - c) sebazomai - stand in awe. (Romans 1:25)
 - d) eusebeo - act with devotion. (Acts 17:23)
3. Worship is the mental and spiritual attitude of the believer when he approaches God in awe, fear and respect. (1 Chronicles 29:20, Matthew 22:21, Romans 13:17)
4. We should never be casual or flippant with God. (John 13:13, Hebrew 10:19-21)
5. Worship is an expression of bible doctrine that a believer has in him and is applying. All expression of doctrine is worship. (Nehemiah 8:6-10, 9:3)
6. We must worship the Lord in spirit, controlled by the Holy Spirit, and in truth, reflecting doctrine accurately. (John 4:23-24)
7. It is therefore of critical importance that we worship in accordance with biblical doctrines. This is especially important in singing as because of pleasant music it is easy to forget or ignore the meaning of the words being sung.
8. People worshipped the Lord Jesus Christ. (Matthew 2:11, 9:38)
9. People who do not worship God will end up worshipping demons. (Deuteronomy 8:19-20, 11:16, 30:17-20, Romans 1:25)
10. All will eventually bow before Jesus Christ and acknowledge Him as Lord, either for blessing or before they are judged eternally. (Isaiah 45:23, Romans 14:11, Philippians 2:10)
11. In eternity there will be perfect worship as there will be perfect knowledge of doctrine. (Revelation 4:8-11)
12. Worship begins at salvation. (Mark 5:1-10, 18-20)
13. Worship expresses a believer's concentration on his Lord. (Psalms 29, 66, 96, John 12:1-11)
14. The song of worship that sums up all these things was that of Solomon in 1 Chronicles 16:7-36.
15. We worship through many activities:-
 - a) Reading God's Word. (Colossians 4:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:27, 1 Timothy 4:13)
 - b) Studying God's Word. (2 Timothy 2:15, 3:15)
 - c) Teaching God's Word. (Acts 2:42, 6:7, 12:24, 18:28, 1 Timothy 4:6, 2 Timothy 1:13, 2:2)
 - d) Preaching God's Word. (2 Timothy 4:2)
 - e) The sacrifice of our praise. (Hebrews 13:15)
 - f) The sacrifice of our good works. (Hebrews 13:16)
 - g) The sacrifice of our bodies. (Romans 12:1)
 - h) The sacrifice of our substance. (Philippians 4:18)
 - i) The receiving of His Son. (John 1:11-12)
 - j) The keeping of the Ordinances. (1 Corinthians 11:2)
 - k) Through the singing of Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs. (Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16, James 5:13)
 - l) Prayers, Intercessions, Supplications and Thanksgiving. (Acts 2:42, Ephesians 6:18, Philippians 4:6, Colossians 4:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 1 Timothy 2:1-2, 8)
16. Praise
 - a) Praise and thanksgiving are linked in worship. (1 Chronicles 23:30)
 - b) When they praised the Lord at the dedication of Solomon's Temple the glory of the Lord filled the house of God. (2 Chronicles 5:13,14)
 - c) Praise always glorifies God. (Psalm 50:23)
 - d) When Paul and Silas praised God by singing hymns in prison God acted for them. (Acts 16:25)
 - e) The Jews were delivered when they sang praises to the Lord. (2 Chronicles 20:21,22)

- f) Praise is important in missionary work. (Psalm 96)
- g) Praise is a feature of the Godly home. (Psalm 118:15)
- h) Jesus Christ praises God in the midst of the Church (Hebrews 2:12)

REFLECTIONS UPON THE LAST JUDGEMENT: “THE GREAT WHITE THRONE”

1. The judgment of the Great White Throne is the last judgment. (Revelation 20:11-15)
2. Only the unsaved are judged at the last judgment as there is no judgment for Christians. (Romans 8:1)
3. The last judgment occurs at the end of the Millennium. (Revelation 20:7-15)
4. The unsaved are judged according to their human works from the Books of Works (Revelation 20:12)
5. The judgment is to show that the Human works of man cannot satisfy the justice of God. God is totally fair and shows that he is only satisfied by "The Good Work". The death of Christ on the Cross.
6. The lost are "lost" because they have rejected and despised the work of Jesus for them, and so have depended on their own good works to save them. In their arrogance they have believed they didn't need a saviour. In perfect justice the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit have allowed them to exercise their choice – their own works to be weighed against the work of Jesus for them on the Cross. Having shown the unsaved they have failed to satisfy the holiness/justice of God, and that their works are all "filthy rags" in God's sight, the condemned are cast into the Lake of Fire with Satan, who also in arrogance believed he was superior to the demands of a holy God. (Revelation 20:15)

EXODUS 15:15-27

“15 Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. 16 Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased. 17 Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O LORD, which thy hands have established. 18 The LORD shall reign for ever and ever. 19 For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea. 20 And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. 21 And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. 22 So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. 23 And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. 24 And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? 25 And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, 26 And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee. 27 And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters.”

REFLECTION

Verses 15 – 16. Well in advance of facing these great warrior peoples, the children of Israel are told that these great and fierce people are in fear of them. Battles are often won in the belief systems and mental attitude of the combatants rather than any superiority of strategy, tactics, numbers or weaponry. This encouragement is given to the Israelites at this point and then again later. It tells me that they were in fear and trembling about their ability to seize the land, and an army of over half a million men would need fear no-one.

It is another reason behind my belief that the numbers of the people are less than the Septuagint, 1200 years after Moses, translated them into Greek, and the English Bibles continued with. Remember the discussion in a previous chapter about this, where the counting of an ancient pre-Hebrew word “eleph” for “families/groups” as “thousands” gives us 600,000 men under arms, whereas it could likely be read as around 6000 men. That number could be fearful!

The more I reflect on the facts of the Exodus from Moses, as I go through these chapters before us, the more I come to the belief that the smaller figure is the most likely on several counts. **Firstly** the area of Goshen would not handle 2.5 million people supported by agriculture in that day with Egyptian neighbours also present. Exodus 12:30-36. **Secondly** the army Pharaoh sends out to bring them back is his ready response mobile army that was quartered in the Delta capital and would have numbered no more than 10,000 men, possibly only 6,000.

Had the Israelites been 2.5 million people with 600,000 men capable of fighting, then Pharaoh would have had to mobilize all reserves and Moses does not tell us he did that, rather he pursued them with his “ready reaction” force of 600 chariots, (men required = 1200 charioteers/archers), with supporting cavalry only (between 5 – 10 cavalry to support each of the chariots 3500 – 6000 cavalry). A captain over a chariot would co-ordinate the cavalry there to support him and ensure he was able to escape from any enemy forces that might surround the chariot. Exodus 14:6.

The **third** reason for the smaller number being the likely one for the Exodus is before us here. If the number was 600,000 men, it would be a host capable of “walking over” any defence system by sheer numbers, and there would have been no human reason for fear on Israel’s part about an invasion had they had that many men under arms. Even in later centuries the nation of Israel fell to Assyrian armies of under 200,000 men and they were huge by world standards in the 7th century. Alexander the Great would conquer the entire Persian Empire with an army of between 30,000 and 60,000 men and take major cities with this number.

The reason the Israelites feared is that they were a small group incapable in their own strength of triumphing over so well defended and great adversaries as they faced. As we go through the battles later and look at the casualty lists in some places we will see they are more in keeping with a group of around 6000 men under arms.

Another military aspect of this is the conquest of Canaan itself. As we get to the city of Jericho we will see that about 6000-10,000 men would completely surround the city by marching as Joshua will order them to do, any larger numbers simply wouldn’t fit around that city. Also the conquest was not completed by the tribes in the days of Joshua, a fact that is inexplicable if the numbers were 600,000 soldiers, for they could have surged over every fortified place and taken the land in a few months, but they don’t. Their numbers were simply not sufficient to achieve it in their own strength, and when their courage and faith in the Lord failed, they failed to complete the job, because they needed strong faith to do the task before them. The Lord had ensured that their numbers were not enough to achieve the goal in human strength alone. **Hebrews 3:7 – 4:6.**

The **fourth** reason that will unfold as we go through the next chapters is the area of the sites of the camping grounds they will use and the water supplies the Lord will provide. The camp sites are incapable of having 2.5 million people there, but would handle up to 30,000 people (4-5 family members for each soldier). Single sources of water as the Lord provides them could also handle this smaller number, but would not handle the larger numbers at all.

The **fifth** reason is the manna collection each day that we will see later. For a vast camp of 2.5 million (we have a glimpse of such camps in the one million people size in the Rwanda Emergency several years ago) the distances the individual families would have to walk to collect the food in the desert would have been so great that the sun would have risen on the food and dissolved it, whereas 6000 family heads spreading out into the desert would have been able to gather the manna in the distances and times which we will see are described. Exodus 16:15-21.

The **sixth** reason is related to the judging of the people by Moses. The maximum numbers of households that could be dealt with by one man to judge disputes in the traditional manner would be around a hundred, so that no more than an hour or two a day was utilized in judging/solving disputes. If there are 6000 households the number of 70 judges that are finally assigned at Jethro’s suggestion would give each judge about 85 households each to deal with. Exodus 18:13-26. This would work, whereas the task to deal with 8570 households (from a figure of 600,000 with 70 judges) each would be impossible, just as Moses found with the 6000 that I believe he tried to handle.

The **seventh** reason I believe the lower figure is the correct one is the physical teaching that Moses does to the whole people at one place and time at various points in the Exodus. 30,000 people can gather and be spoken to at one place without any audio systems, using natural acoustics of hills, and the words will still be clearly heard, but any more than this and Moses could not have spoken to the entire people at all at any point. The physical spaces involved would also hold this sized crowd, so that all could see Moses, and be co-ordinated by their tribal leaders, so that discipline was able to be maintained. Higher numbers would render these things impossible.

The lower figures make sense, the higher ones are clearly, from the facts Moses gives us, in error. Remember the error is **not in the Scripture**, but in the mistranslating of the term for “families” (eleph) in the Septuagint (LXX) over a thousand years after Moses wrote, and the error has been perpetuated in English translations following the Septuagint authors. Our task in study is to seriously examine the facts and see what does make sense, accepting the facts that Moses gives us, not just uncritically accept that the surmising of the Greek speaking Jewish scholars of Alexandria in the 3rd century BC Septuagint was right.

As a result, I strongly suggest, on the basis of the facts that Moses gives us, that the lower figure of 6000 fighting men/family groups, makes the most sense, although earlier in my studies I had thought it could be as high as 60,000. Further reflection in these last chapters brings me directly to the lower figure as the most likely one. Now I repeat my point from the earlier chapter here; that I will not fall out with anyone who opts for a higher number, but I would challenge you to fit them into the places Moses will describe as we go on in the journey.

This “lower figure” of 6000 soldiers, with a total of the whole people at around 30,000, is still a significant number of people on the march and in camp, and requires considerable administrative skill and teaching, and Moses will be equal to the task in God’s strength, and the people will be challenged to trust the Lord to bring victory, even though there numbers for war are small. He mentors good administration and coordination, and good selection of leadership.

Another point to reflect upon has just come to mind here. The Egyptian army is described as being washed up on the shore. Exodus 14:30. If the Israelite army numbered 6000 men, and the Egyptian force was between 5000 – 10,000 men, their bodies would have fully equipped the entire Israelite army! This makes sense to me as an example of the Lord's perfect provision for the people, who as slaves would have been short of real weapons of any sort up until that point. To kit out 60,000 men would be impossible in the Arabian area, let alone 600,000, but with God's provision every man of the 6000 has equipment at one point if I am correct in the points above. God always provides enough, and this would fit with the 6000 man army, for they now have everything they need.

The specific groups that are mentioned by Moses as being "amazed" are the distant relatives of the Israelites, and the pagan Canaanites amongst whom Abraham had lived 600+ years before. The Dukes of Edom, Genesis 36:40ff, are the tribal leaders of the civilization that inhabited the area of Sinai, which was in this day a fertile area with numerous towns. The Moabites were the descendants of Lot, and they had become overlords of the area to the East of the Dead/Salt Sea. Genesis 19:37-38, Numbers 22:1-12.

They had strong fortifications in "impregnable" places and yet they felt fear as they heard that God was with these people leaving Egypt. It was not the size of the host of Israel that was feared, although there were enough of them to eat everything in the fields and overwhelm most cities one by one had they wanted to; it was the fact that God was with them that made the future enemies fear these people. They felt the flow of history moving against them as they reflected upon the judgment of the Egyptian gods. They could see that the Lord was with His people Israel. Isaiah 43:1-7.

All nations in this region feared the power of Egypt, and if the Israelite's God defeated an Egyptian army, and the cream of their army also, then these people were clearly walking with God and His will was to give them the land. They could look at the devastation of Egypt and see what happened to anyone who stood against the will of God. Even forty years later the peoples of the land of Canaan are in fear of Israel. Joshua 2:9-24.

Those who attack this section of Scripture as if it is "mythic history" miss the point that the events described were not done in a corner, but on the stage of history, and so open to the caravan routes and easily reported amongst the peoples. Acts 26:23-32. Had the people of Canaan wanted to destroy these new arrivals they could have gathered a confederate army, or even asked for an Egyptian or Hittite one to help. They took no such action, for the Lord paralysed them with fear.

They sat and waited, like men awaiting their doom, until the Lord was ready to order the Israelites forward. These people could have stood with Rahab and the Gibeonites, but they preferred the lies they were comfortable with to the uncomfortable truth about the real God. Moses led the people forward to their date with destiny and battle with these evil men. Our job under the pressures of the battlefield is like Moses, to lead our people forward to our date with destiny.

Verses 17 – 18. The Lord's power will bring the people of Israel into the Promised Land, and they will be brought to dwell right in the holy mountain; the heart of the land. It will not be until the days of David that Jerusalem finally falls to the Israelites, but Moses prophetically foresees their seizing of all the land and sees that it will be in the greatness of the Lord alone that this will happen, not their own strength. Psalms 78:54-72, Isaiah 5:1-7.

The kings of men have their day, but only those who live for the Lord, and walk in His plan have an eternal destiny. The only king who rules forever is the Lord Jesus Christ, who made and delivered this creation, and His ruler ship is forever. Those that stand against him should be in fear, for they stand as fools before their Maker, and as insulters of his grace and love. Even insults can be forgiven, as we see with the thief on the cross beside Jesus, but his lordship and saviourhood must be accepted.

The Canaanites, Moabites, Ammonites, and finally the Midianites all "forgot" the facts of the Lord's mighty power, and so all opposed Israel in the end, and so they put themselves as enemies of Almighty God. Their judgment became sure at that point. Psalms 146:1-10, Isaiah 57:13-21. "There is no peace for the wicked", as Isaiah says in this passage, and this is Moses' point about all these people who will oppose the Israelites. They have forty years of grace in which to repent and they waste them praying to gods which are no gods, rather than turning to the one true God and being saved.

Verses 19 – 20. The arrogance of Pharaoh is mentioned here. The indication is still that he was wise enough not to go into the sea bed himself, but he orders murder and swept his hand forward, and all his cavalry and chariots plunged into the now well trodden, animal dung covered, and fatally soft sea bed, and they all got bogged down and were swept away by the returning sea. It is arrogance alone that brings men to judgment, and finally it is their arrogance that places them in the lake of fire with the father of lies who they have followed. Proverbs 21:29-31, Revelation 20:11-15. I am struck by Jesus words in **Matthew 7:13-23**, that so many will be shocked and baffled in the end, that they thought they were OK, even casting out demons and doing miracles in Jesus name – but HE never knew them!!!

The response of the people to Moses song of praise is now given with the actions of Miriam, Aaron's sister, who is referred to as a prophetess. Now Moses is eighty and so Miriam must be in her nineties by this stage, so don't picture a young woman here. This is not Hollywood. It is not sexual dancing but praise to the Lord. She leads the women in worship with song and dance with the music of the hand held instruments of the Israelites (like our tambourine).

All the older women of all the families surge forward and dance a number of dances before their families in praise and worship at the deliverance of the Lord through Moses. Once again we see that the number of the women involved would

most likely be around a few hundreds for this to occur in a co-ordinated way, without chaos or injury to all involved! It is a large gathering, but still able to be co-ordinated from the centre by Miriam and the female leaders of the tribes.

Verses 21 – 22. Miriam urges all the people to sing unto the Lord the song of Moses and she is the song leader for the people as they sing the words of Moses aloud again and again. This is a real worship service, and it is led by Miriam, who sings the song written by her brother. Moses involves others in his leadership as often as the situation allows and the occasion permits for the glory of God. Moses did not need to hold centre stage – he had written the song, but he is overjoyed that it is Miriam who sings it aloud and leads the congregation in worship and praise. There is great joy in the Lord here, and everyone has a wonderful time in their worship, but they find out very quickly that while emotions are to be enjoyed, they do not last long. The camp breaks up the next day and after three days there is no good water found.

Verses 23 – 24. Moses is not leading them by his own plans and direction, but he is following the cloud and pillar of fire. There is a clear indication that all can see as to the direction to be taken. All can look and see that this is the Lord's will and direction for them. If the Lord has led them into a place where there is no water, then the Lord's responsibility is to find the water and release it for His people. 1 Corinthians 10:13.

This is the second major "water test" of faith for the people. At the "Yam Suff" (Sea of Reeds) there was too much water, but here in the desert there is no water sufficient for such a host of 30,000 plus people. The people start to grumble as they feel the thirst on the third day and their water has run out. They are three days from their last good water, and so cannot return, or in the heat of those days would die of thirst. They are trapped as they were before the Sea, just by thirst for water, not a water barrier, but they are still in the plan of God, and they need to claim the leading of their Lord and Saviour. 1 Corinthians 10:13.

There is water at Marah, but it is so bitter that no-one can drink it without being violently sick. The place gets its name of "bitter water" from the nature of it. After three days with dwindling water supplies people psychologically become quite fixated upon water, and when a well is identified the hopes and joy of the thirsty people rise. When at that point they are disappointed their disappointment is great, and it is with these people. They are seriously upset at the nature of the water, yet they can look up and see either the cloud or the pillar or fire. The one thought the people have is, "what shall we drink?" The Lord allows them to suffer and feel pressure before they have their prayers answered.

Parents look at their children and wonder what will happen to them all, but they do not tie together their previous deliverance four days before with their present situation. Before we judge them, let us all pause and reflect how often we moan at the Lord about our troubles, and yet the Lord's goodness is just a few days away. He seeks our faith that we will be blessed again and even more than before as we trust Him and keep on advancing down the assigned path. Matthew 6:25-34, James 2:14-26, 4:6-10.

Verses 25 – 27. Moses does the right thing. He lays his burden before the Lord, for he does look up and see the cloud which has guided them to this place. **1 Peter 5:5-10.** He cries out to the Lord, and that is not a bad thing to do. Many feel Moses was a "saint" of such great faith that he calmly went about everything, but he felt great frustration at times like this. He did not operate always in calm faith and patient gentleness; he "lost the plot" and cried aloud in anger often. Moses humility is such that he tells us that he cried aloud to the Lord in frustration.

It is not wrong to weep and wail as long as it is to the Lord, and it is with expectation that there will be a solution to the problem. Godly leadership isn't perfect all the time, it is human and flawed, but growing daily in grace and Holy Spirit strength. God doesn't expect us to win over emotional surges every time, but he expects us to spend less and less time on the ground feeling depressed about our failures. God wants us to bounce back faster and faster, to the point where we barely sway under pressure at all.

God shows Moses a tree, which when it is cut down and cast into the water, it neutralizes the acidity, and the well becomes fresh and able to be drunk from directly. This is a miracle and natural explanations fail at this point, for local Bedouin know this bitter spring and know of no such tree today to assist in making the water drinkable.

This event became a teaching point and a doctrinal illustration for the people and was seriously taught to them here and later by Moses. The principles are, that the Lord makes the bitter sweet through the prayer of faith, and that the Lord will never guide us to a place that He has not glory to accomplish within, and that there is not a way out of. Our final destination is heaven, and so the Lord has a plan for all the places into which He guides us in this life, and there is learning in each.

Moses mentored the "journey motif" – he made it clear to the people daily that they were moving towards the glory of the Lord in giving them the land. They were there to worship, learn, serve and teach their children along the way. They were to focus on drawing all joy and worship from every situation they faced. They were to see the hard places, and difficult situations like the Egyptian copper mines that dotted the Sinai hills, hard places to be mined for precious joys.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. The Lord goes before His people and paralyzes our enemy with fear. The result is that the psychological battle is won well before the Israelites enter the land. Just so with us, when we walk in faith. The enemy is defeated well before

the battle is joined, for the Lord's Plan calls for it, and His power achieves it. Let us advance in the plan of God and enter into all the Lord has for us in this next week.

2. Songs of praise are bone fide for all ages to sing, and those who have the gift are entitled to lead the worship, be they male or female. There will be nothing sexual in the worship of the Lord, but in the culture of Israel all people danced to celebrate, and so dance was appropriate worship for them. Before you start to dance before the Lord, just make sure that the dancing is culturally appropriate for you and meaningful to those who watch or participate.

3. After great times of worship there will often come testing situations. The no water test the Israelites face is just one of many on the journey. Sadly they will fall short of the Lord's purpose for them and moan, rather than cast their cares upon the Lord and seek the Lord's solution at the hands of the Lord's prophet. Let us ensure as we face the "no water" tests in our own life, that we take the problem to the Lord in prayer.

REFLECTIONS UPON BELIEVING PRAYER

1. We may know the provision of God but we must communicate with Him in order to obtain this provision.

- a) Prayer is the believer's means of communicating with God.
- b) The Bible is God's primary way of communicating with man.

2. Promises Involving Prayer

- a) Matthew 21:22 - We should ask believing.
- b) Matthew 18:19 - The power of corporate prayer – we join with others to pray.
- c) Psalm 116:1-2 - God is always available to hear our prayer.
- d) Isaiah 65:24 - God will answer while we are yet praying.
- e) Matthew 7:7 - We are commanded to pray.
- f) John 14:13-14 - We can ask for anything in His name.
- g) Philippians 4:6 - All prayer should be offered up with thanksgiving.
- h) 1 Thessalonians 5:17 - We should pray without ceasing – with very few times in the day without prayer.
- i) Hebrews 4:16 - We can come boldly to the throne of Grace – for we stand on blood soaked ground.

3. Prayer is Divided into 4 Segments – and each is important to be emphasized in public worship especially.

- a) Confession of sins. (1 John 1:9)
- b) Thanksgiving. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
- c) Intercession for others. (Ephesians 6:18)
- d) Petitions for one's own needs. (Hebrews 4:16)

4. The Power of Prayer is seen in two great studies to encourage us today.

- a) Individual - Elijah and the burnt offering. (1 Kings 18:36-39)
- b) Corporate - the release of Peter from prison. (Acts 12:1-18)

5. One Prayer that could not be Answered - The prayer of our Lord on the Cross. (Psalm 22:1-18)

6. To Whom are Prayers Addressed?

- a) Directed to the Father - (Matthew 6:5-9)
- b) In the name of the Son - (Hebrews 7:25)
- c) In the power of the Spirit - (Romans 8:26-27)

The Son (Jesus) and Spirit are interceding for us so we do not address them, as they back up our words.

7. Prayers can be Divided into Petition and Desire.

- a) Petition - What you ask God for (e.g. a new car).
- b) Desire - The desire behind the petition (e.g. happiness because you have a new car, or service in that car).

8. Four Possible Combinations of answers to prayers.

a) Petition answered - Desire not answered. Psalm 106:15 - The quails of the Exodus generation. 1 Samuel 8:5 - A King to reign over Israel.

b) Petition not answered - Desire answered. Genesis 18:23 - The preservation of Sodom. 2 Corinthians 12:7 - Removal of the thorn in Paul's side.

c) Petition answered - Desire answered. 1 Kings 18:36-37 - Elijah requests fire for the offering. Luke 23:42 -The penitent thief's prayer. Type c) represents the perfect prayer.

d) Petition not answered - Desire not answered. Type d) unanswered prayer has 8 main reasons which are shown in paragraph 9.

9. Reasons for Unanswered Prayer that the scriptures mention – a good audit list for us to meditate upon.

- a) Lack of belief. (Matthew 21:22)

- b) Selfishness. (James 4:3)
- c) Unconfessed sin. (Psalm 66:18)
- d) Lack of compassion. (Proverbs 21:13)
- e) Pride and self righteousness. (Job 35:12-13)
- f) Lack of filling of the Spirit. (Ephesians 6:18)
- g) Lack of obedience. (1 John 3:22)
- h) Not in the Divine will. (1 John 5:14)

Most of the reasons for unanswered prayer, centre round some form of sin in the life, which can be solved by confession of known sins under the truth contained in the command/promise of 1John 1:9.

10. Intercessory Prayer

a) This is one of the four aspects, or stages in a prayer, which are:-

- i) Confession of sins
- ii) Thanksgiving
- iii) Intercession for others
- iv) Our own needs brought before the Lord.

b) The power of intercessory prayer is taught in (1 Kings 18:42-46) the principle being found in (James 5:16-18)

c) The power of prevailing prayer is shown in (Acts 12)

d) The prayer for the unbeliever (Romans 10:1)

e) Prayer for an unknown believer (Colossians 1:3-11)

f) Prayer for the known believer (Ephesians 1:15-23)

Notes

CHAPTER 16**INTRODUCTION**

What do we want from the Lord? Do we want His will, or do we want the things that seem best to us? Do we seek the perfect will of the Lord, or are we looking for some “quick fix” that will resolve our immediate problems? We see things in terms of the immediate problems we face, whereas the Lord sees things in terms of His complete plan for us. He sees from the end back to our entry into the plan at the point of salvation. We see from our problems into a yet, to us, unknown future. Our challenge, as we face difficulties, is to trust the Lord’s plan to deliver us the best He has, rather than worry and moan about our pressure situation that overwhelms our hope today.

I initially wrote this chapter (in 2007) on a small lap top computer, as my main computer had two serious problems the week before, the last of which apparently “killed” the power system. This was a week in which we also faced two failures of vehicles requiring towing and garage repairs, a broken water pipe, two breaks to our power supply cables, and the discovery that house and garage wiring done by a previous owner was illegal and dangerous. Urgent repairs in the back yard required the removal of all the old paving, laying a new storm water pipe and sump, and the digging up of all power lines. Simultaneously the World Financial Crisis hit, and my business took a serious financial down turn and the money supply ran out. We faced then, and continue to face now (2014, and still in 2020-2021) a financially impossible situation.

My wife asked, with some understandable hurt in her voice, “why has the Lord let this happen, when you are serving Him so faithfully, and under such extreme pressure already?” As a family we have faced in the last twelve weeks the deaths of both her parents and the sickness with dementia of both my own. The answer to all pressures we face is found in this next section, and in the Lord’s timing I start this study now, when I need to be reminded of these truths, just as you all also need this encouragement. In 2011, 2014, 2020, 2021, as I reviewed this section these words encourage me again, as I see the Lord’s faithfulness, but also recognize I am still facing impossible financial pressures, but remain able to do the Lord’s work, and that is always the right response to pressure situations – work and walk through them. We don’t sit down and moan as soldiers of the Lord’s army, we stand, put our spiritual armour on and advance into the path he has called us to walk, trusting for guidance as we advance, not before we advance. **Ephesians 6:10-18.**

I am not one to blame Satan for things that happen, but the concentrated number of bizarre things that have occurred in recent weeks in 2007 made me point the finger in only one direction, and when the Lord allows the enemy to attack, it is because He wants us to be tested, use our spiritual armour, be victorious, and bring a sacrifice of praise to His Holy Name. I am engaged in spiritual warfare in the writing of this material, and I was in 2007, teaching the Certificate in Theology to a number of Polynesian pastors in the Bible School, training them to be leaders of their communities; in light of that, can I expect the enemy to sit by and let me serve without attack? I must rejoice in these attacks, and leave my solution with the Lord, for if the work we are doing is producing this level of anger by the enemy, then it is the right work!

The right approach to this sort of demonic attack is to say, “Let us advance and really upset him”, and simply turn up our prayer life and that of others to cover us. Worship and witness in spiritual work defeats the enemy, as we praise God in the midst of pressure situations and bring glory to His Name in our praise when others around would despair. Securing prayer support is also important and last night I called on our Bible College network to pray for us, for protection, work to come in for my business, the safe completion of the house project, it’s sale, if that is what the Lord wants, and our advancing in ministry. 7, and 13, 14 years later, in 2014/2020/2021, the Lord has kept us here, and still teaching and serving, against all human odds, but in his almighty power. This last Covid year of 2021 has seen more pressure than ever before, yet great blessings! **Romans 8:28.** Moses mentored me through these years – let him mentor you today.

It is this sort of victory that the Lord sought from Israel through the tests they faced, and even though they failed to grasp the lessons, they are still blessed. We have a good God, and He is Lord of all our situations. Stabilize on the truth that if the Lord has placed us in a situation, then he will bring us through that situation, 1 Corinthians 10:13. These people faced great pressures, from thirst and hunger, and the Lord let them feel it for a while to test their faith in His provisions, just as He at times does with us.

This is not punishment, nor is it unfair and unjust; it is designed as “resistance training”, to build faith and strength in us. We do not complain in the gym when the trainer does this with us, for it builds and tones muscles. That is exactly why the Lord allows these pressure situations into our life – to tone and strengthen our spiritual walk. We express this by worship and service. My faith is expressed in my writing and my service in teaching, as well as in prayer, song and praise. Let us praise the Lord in our adversities as we advance into this chapter.

EXODUS 16:1-17

“16:1 And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. 2 And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: 3 And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. 4 Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. 5 And it shall come to pass, that on

the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily. 6 And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt: 7 And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD; for that he heareth your murmurings against the LORD: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? 8 And Moses said, This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD. 9 And Moses spake unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before the LORD: for he hath heard your murmurings. 10 And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. 11 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 12 I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God. 13 And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. 14 And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. 15 And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat. 16 This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents. 17 And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less.

REFLECTION

Verses 1 – 3. They are hungry and there is no solid meat-type food for them except the milk from their animals and any left over grain, although the indication here, is that all the grain has been used up by now. They have been one month and fifteen days into the Exodus. They had food for six weeks, expecting, no doubt, that the Lord would take them the coastal road, and by this time they would be there. The Lord has led them, and they are sure that they are where He wants them, but they are running out of food. They have seen His deliverance three times now, with the three “water tests” to date, yet they now fear they will starve to death. Why would the Lord give them water one day to starve them the next? The truth of the Doctrine of the Character of God protects us from this sort of false logic, but often we do not use it in a crisis.

They are on a vast plain on the sandy table lands of the Sinai peninsula here. It was open pastoral land in this day, but had only a few good watering places. It may have been that the milk supply from the animals was failing under the drought conditions of the time, although that cannot be assuredly claimed, given the distance in time from us and the totally different climate of that day. The area is called the “Wilderness of Sin”, but that does not mean it was desert then as it is now. The name “sin” means thorn bush, and describes the shrubs of the land, but does not mean that in that day it didn’t have grass growing better than it does today, for that is what climatologists tell us.

They do not appear to be starving, nor do they complain about their animals being in any difficulties. Notice that they are not desperately asking for anything that would indicate starvation; they are quite specific in their longing for the pleasant meats and delicacies of Egypt. They say they will all die, but that is not the case, or their animals would have died already if there was no pasture, and they have the milk of the herds, and also such a thing is to insult the plan and character of God. The Lord will not let them die here! He has not delivered them from Egypt for death in the plains of Arabia or Sinai. Numbers 33:1-12, Psalms 106:7, 13-15, 25.

The Lord would not, and does not judge us for asking for necessities, but we can expect some discipline if we are constantly asking for dainties and luxuries. Our modern prosperity gospel gets it’s rebuke here, although the preachers of this falsehood do not take it! God is still gracious, even to the false preachers and foolish followers of prosperity teaching. These people here before us are not at this point judged for asking for luxuries, and the Lord will give them the meat of the quails to feast upon.

He is patient with them as He is with us when we are young in faith, but we must grow up, and the Lord will not be so patient with them next time they moan and ask for this food. Numbers 11:1-10, 31-34. The Lord will judge, but in this journey we will see that He is longsuffering towards His people. Exodus 34:6, Numbers 14:18, 2 Peter 3:9. We are called to manifest this fruit of the Holy Spirit ourselves, for it is a God like quality that the Spirit produces within the believer who is obedient to Him. **Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 4:2, Colossians 1:11, 3:12, 2 Timothy 1:7, 3:10, 4:2.**

Verses 4 – 6. The Lord directly tells Moses what He will do to relieve the people of their distress and frustration, and probably it is best labelled as frustration. They have left Egypt, where even though they were slaves they ate well, as the Delta region was lush and fertile. They would all have had their own little gardens and were used to going outside and picking plenty of fruit or vegetables and they got used to making their life as indentured workers pleasant by eating very well with spicy and nourishing meals.

The boredom of the march through the Sinai pasture lands and the lack of any herbs and spices, fish or meats would have grated upon them and the sameness of each day grew tiresome to people who were used to distracting themselves with food as in our day people distract themselves by radio and television. We all can distract ourselves by activities which are apparently harmless, but these things can become addictive, and we can in the end depend upon these distractions for our happiness, rather than draw our happiness from the worthy tasks that the Lord has called us to do.

These people are called to seize the land of Canaan, but they are preoccupied by luxury and the things associated with it. They want the joys of Canaan but they are finding the hardships of the march difficult. Let us examine ourselves in this matter; are we people who desire the pleasant things, but are not prepared for the hardships of the march to get there?

These people do not have it too hard. Certainly they are living in tents for forty years, and they sleep upon the earth, but their beds in Egypt were no more plush or luxurious. The problem they have got into is that they have already started to day dream about their Canaan blessings, and dreaming of seizing the land and cities and houses. They have been dreaming of a decent house of their own, their own land, own vines and olive trees, and ample pasture for their flocks and herds.

They are like people who day dream about winning a lottery, and who stop working to get these things, waiting for “lady luck” to drop their winnings into their lazy laps! The Lord’s words upon those who are not ready to work hard in this world is clear; they are condemned as lazy and unfit for eternal reward. We live in a world of thorns and the demand is that we work for our bread. **Genesis 3:17-19**. In His grace, the Lord is going to rain down bread from heaven upon these people, but they will still have to rise before dawn and walk out to gather it. They must exercise faith, and deal with this very natural human tendency to laziness. **1 Thessalonians 2:9-12, 5:6-8, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13**.

The giving of the manna will test and prove these people in the manner of their faith. It was a grace provision, but also a faith test at the same time. They had to believe that the Lord would do it daily and learn that the supply would not fail them. They had to learn to gather twice the amount on Friday, as on Saturday (Sabbath day) the supply would not be there at all. They would learn obedience to the Lord in this, and yet some would disobey and collect more than they needed from greed and doubt, and others would try to gather on the Sabbath day.

The people know that the Lord has brought them out of the land of Egypt, but the giving of the manna is the daily reminder that there is no going back there. They are not to return to Egypt for food, for the Lord will provide it daily, and every day as they gather the food they are to be thankful, and by praise of the Lord, render to the Lord their worship for His deliverance. They are to stop moaning about the things they do not have, and give thanks for the things they have received, and keep on receiving each day. The joy of the Lord is our strength, (**Nehemiah 8:10**) for it is as we praise His Holy Name that we receive more grace and strength to carry on in our walk through this world. **Deuteronomy 8:1-6, Psalms 59:16, 65:8, Isaiah 63:7-9, Lamentations 3:23**.

Verses 7 – 8. These people are bitter about the conditions on the Exodus march, and they long for their boring predictable lives of slavery back in Egypt. The Lord has to keep them in tents for forty years to eliminate Egypt from their psyche. They desire the stability of slave labour, rather than the hard work of freedom, because they want certainty, and cannot stand to walk by faith each day. This remains the challenge to the people of God, for we desire stability and certainty by nature, yet the Lord calls us to His service, and that means we need to be ready to move out and do new things in new places at any time. Those who follow the Lord need to be ready to forsake the comforts and certainties that their culture and their neighbours value. **Matthew 8:19-22, Luke 9:54-62**.

The people are told bluntly that to murmur against Moses and Aaron is to murmur against the Lord Himself, for these men are the Lord’s servants. These people will moan again and again, and finally they will receive their judgment, but the Lord is incredibly patient with them. He gives them a year of wandering to toughen up and take the land, and yet they will fail to do so and so they will die in the desert places and have no marked graves. **Numbers 11:1-10, 14:1-10, 26-29**.

The truth makes a challenge upon those who hear it; will they obey or ignore it’s demands? When we hear the Word of the Lord we face this issue just as the people of the Exodus and the Lord’s day did. The people of the Lord’s day heard His words and yet also rejected Him. **John 6:41-48**. Paul warns the believers in Corinth to take the demands of the Lord upon them seriously and serve the Lord with focused energy and step out in faith. Paul makes it very clear that the Exodus story is recorded for us all, that we might learn from it, and not repeat the errors of these people.

When we face testing circumstances we are challenged to see the Lord’s path through the trial and so strengthen our faith in the process. **1 Corinthians 10:1-13**. Like Moses, Paul calls upon the people he leads in faith to follow him and step forward in their service of the Lord. **1 Corinthians 4:8-16, 11:1, Philippians 3:12-19**. **Habakkuk 2:4** – “The just shall live by faith”.

Verses 9 – 10. The people must be brought near to the Lord that they might understand the consistency and stability of His nature, His power and His plan. Aaron calls the people to come near the Lord and the entire congregation moves forward into the open space outside the camp and there they see the Lord’s majesty revealed in the cloud that stands before them from sky to the ground. This is another reminder that the numbers here are around 20,000- 30,000, as any more would not be able to achieve this and hear the words of the two men in this place and see the cloud with understanding.

Verses 11 – 14. The Lord could have judged or rebuked these people at this point for their murmurings against Him and His men, but the Lord in grace will give them their dainty food this time and the manna every day, except the Sabbath from this time onwards. They are recipients of the grace, love and mercy of the Lord their God. They seek full stomachs, and so they will have full stomachs, and they seek pleasant plump birds to eat, and so they will have them fall amongst them. What God desires from them is that they seek full fellowship – then they will handle all hardship that may come through their earthly walk.

The Lord brings a great flock of quail from other lands, just as He brought the locusts upon Egypt, and the birds will fall and cover the camp and every pot will be filled with birds for food. That night they will eat the birds and the next day they will eat the manna. Another indication of the numbers here is in their cooking, for this number of people could be fed by the burning of the constantly replaceable thorn bushes, but 2-3 million would denude the land of trees by their cooking in a few months.

Verses 15 – 17. The people are told how much to gather by the number of adults in each of their families, but some try to gather more, others less. The people are not good at following instructions here and this will be the hall mark of this group, whereas their children will learn obedience and hence be able to inherit the land. The manna is described here and as we have seen in **Numbers 11:7-9**. It was like a small piece of curdled milk, the size of a severe frost and could be picked up in the fingers and gathered.

People had to work hard to get it, and gather enough to feed their family. If they took too much it stank by the following day. Only on the Friday (before the Sabbath) would the bread made from it be fresh for two days. It was to be God's perfect provision for them and it has no natural origin in Sinai or anywhere else. It was a supernatural provision of the Lord and we needn't look for explanations of it in the natural world. It had every mineral and vitamin needed for life and the right balance of protein and carbohydrates for perfect health outcomes. **Deuteronomy 8:1-6, 16-20, Psalms 78:24-25, 147:12-18.**

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Let us be sure that we seek the Lord's will, not the dainties of this world. **2 Timothy 4:9-10**. The Lord has no part of praying for luxuries, as if we are here to relax and enjoy them. We are here to serve and accept the path the Lord has for us, whether it is without a home like Jeremiah, with a mud hut like Ezekiel, or living in a king's palace like Daniel. Their houses did not make them spiritual, and houses and cars do not make us spiritual today either. Let us dismiss the so called prosperity gospel for what it is; a satanic lie and deception.
2. We will have enough in the Lord's work, and need no help from our lusts to get extras. All extras will evaporate with the days passing, like all that is of this world. Let us not be side tracked by things, but focused upon service, using whatever things the Lord has provided to serve Him.
3. We are urged to put our spiritual armour on daily because we fight in a battle, not rest in a resort in this world. We are here to march and fight, not relax in a deck chair. Let us build the mental attitude of the soldier and fight our way through the day, with faith, truth and the peace of God keeping our heart.
4. Let us not be complainers about the harshness of the march the Lord has called us to, for this is our path and He will provide all we need to complete our course. Let us run the race with patience. **Hebrews 12:1, James 1:3-4, 2 Peter 1:3-7.**

REFLECTIONS UPON BELIEVER'S SUFFERING

1. Ultimately, all suffering is a result of the sin of Adam.
2. God is sovereign and allows even undeserved suffering to come upon the world for a reason (Romans 8:28).
 - a) To bring people to a point of helplessness where they call out to Him.
 - b) To test and develop faith, so bringing glory to Himself.
3. There will be no suffering for believers in eternity (Revelation 21:4).
4. Unbelievers will suffer forever in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:12-15).
5. Suffering can be caused by:
 - a) Discipline for your own sins
 - b) The effect of the sins of others on you - gossip, war, crime
 - c) Self-induced suffering as a result of your own actions – e.g. sickness from smoking, poverty from poor stewardship
 - d) The sovereign will of God - health, weather.
6. God's revealed Premise of Suffering that is to be claimed as we walk through this world:
 - a) All suffering is designed for blessing in the Christian walk. (1 Peter 1:7, 8, 4:14)
 - b) Even discipline is designed to restore fellowship. (Hebrews 12:6)
 - c) Suffering follows the principle of grace. (Romans 8:28, 1 Thessalonians 5:18).
7. There is Purpose in the midst of each believer's Suffering:
 - a) To receive discipline for carnality or backsliding. (Psalm 38)
 - b) To glorify God. (Job 1:8-12, Luke 15:20, 21)
 - c) To illustrate doctrine. (Book of Hosea)
 - d) To learn obedience. (Philippians 2:8, Hebrews 5:8)
 - e) To keep down pride. (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

- f) To develop faith. (1 Peter 1:7, 8)
- g) To witness for Christ. (2 Corinthians 13:4)
- h) To demonstrate the power of God. (2 Corinthians 11:24-33, 2 Corinthians 12:7-10)
- i) To manifest the fruit of the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 4:8-11)
- j) To help others who suffer. (2 Corinthians 1:3-5)
- k) From indirect action - because other believers get out of fellowship. (Romans 14, 1Corinthians 12:12, 13, 26, 1Samuel 21, 1Chronicles 21).

8. Dealing With Suffering - Applying Spiritual Daily Orders:

To be a believer is to be associated with suffering. It is not a strange thing, it is our duty, and we are to take it as a soldier takes the rigours of a long campaign; without complaint, and with dignity and strength.

The five "**Daily Orders**" for the battle against the adversary, to be applied in the church age, in the power of the Holy Spirit are found in **1Peter 5:8,9**. They will protect us against the cunning of the "lion".

a) **Be Sober!** - At all times be self controlled, not under the control of any emotion, or any other substance(drink or drugs), but only by the Holy Spirit. Romans 13:11-13. 1 Thessalonians 5:6 -8.

b) **Be Vigilant!** - At all times, stay awake to danger, don't relax your guard, don't get careless.

c) **Resist! - Stand up to**, resist, oppose everything he stands for. Zero tolerance of evil is to be the standard for our lives. Also refer, Luke 4:3-12, Ephesians 4:27, 6:11-13, James 4:7.

d) **Be steadfast** in the faith once delivered to the apostles! Be unbreakable, stand as a solid mass of soldiers resisting attack. Stand with the apostolic doctrines, and their practices. As a local church be united, stand together, tight and committed to each other.

e) **Keep on knowing you are not alone!** All believers suffer pressures when they stand for their Lord.

REFLECTIONS UPON THE NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF MANNA

1. Manna came down every day where it was to be gathered from only. (Exodus 16:4,5, 16:22-27). God provided manna every day except Saturday. God gave the Jews double on Friday. If extra was kept during the week except Friday it stank and bred worms. CONCEPT - some techniques and doctrines are used daily, some are more specialized and used periodically, but all doctrines in the Word are to be internalized/applied/used.

2. Those who gathered a lot of MANNA did not have more than those who gathered a little MANNA. The amount of MANNA matched your capacity for MANNA (Exodus 16:16-18, 2 Corinthians 8:15). This is the law of equality. God always matches our capacity. Those who gathered a lot of manna did not have more than those who gathered a small amount. God matched their capacity. Everybody has equality in Christ but each believer does not have the same spiritual experience. God will never fail your capacity. As we grow spiritually we build capacity to understand and use more truth and serve through the truth in more places.

3. Manna spoiled but it did not spoil. (Exodus 16:19, 20). If it was kept overnight it spoiled but kept overnight on the sixth night it was preserved. In order to enjoy provision man must follow God's directions and plan.

4. Manna spoiled if it was kept overnight but it was preserved indefinitely in the ark of the covenant. (Exodus 16:19, 20, Hebrews 9:4, Exodus 16:33)

5. Manna melted but it did not melt. (Exodus 16:21). Only manna that had been collected withstood the rays of the sun. Only bible doctrine absorbed into the soul can help in time of pressure or prosperity. Un-gathered manna is like doctrine left in the Bible that is no use to anyone. Only the manna of God we gather is useful.

6. Manna tasted good to some and bad to others. (Exodus 16:31, Numbers 21:5) This illustrates positive or negative attitude towards the Word of God. The Holy Spirit will always enliven and enrich God's Word to the spiritually hungry believer, but if we seek entertainment, we will find the truth unpalatable.

7. Manna came as a result of a complaint from Israel. (Exodus 16:2-4) It was therefore a Grace provision, the Jews neither earned nor deserved it (Psalm 78:18-25). God was faithful in providing the manna. (Exodus 16:35)

8. The rejection of grace manna resulted in divine discipline. (Numbers 21:5, 6). God blesses the believer under grace, when he decides to move away from grace he falls from grace. (Galatians 5:4) Failing to live in the sphere of God's grace is to rob yourself of God's provision, direction and eternal blessing. (Hebrews 12:15)

EXODUS 16:18-36

“18 And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating. 19 And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning. 20 Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them. 21 And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted. 22 And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. 23 And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake today, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. 24 And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. 25 And Moses said, Eat that today; for today is a sabbath unto the LORD: today ye shall not find it in the field. 26 Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. 27 And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. 28 And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? 29 See, for that the LORD hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. 30 So the people rested on the seventh day. 31 And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. 32 And Moses said, This is the thing which the LORD commandeth, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt. 33 And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations. 34 As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept. 35 And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan. 36 Now an omer is the tenth part of an ephah.”

REFLECTION

Verses 18 – 21. The gathering of the manna was to be a daily faith test for the people; would they trust the Lord to provide it, and provide enough of it? It was also an active test, in that they had to get up before dawn each day of the year (the Sabbaths excluded) and walk out from the camp to gather the manna, and it had to be gathered before the sun shone with full heat upon it. So by around 8am the gathering had to be completed and the people be heading back to their tents to cook the food. Each person was to gather around an Omer in weight, and some gathered much more and some much less. It didn't matter, and most came to the right amount that they needed and learned to leave the rest.

Greed is an interesting thing, for it makes people gather to themselves more of “free” things than they need. The Lord wanted the people to relax within His provision for them and not act in any way that would be greedy or take from another what they needed. Each had to rise early and gather for his family. Lazy people starved, but greedy people were condemned. **Proverbs 6:6-11, 20:4.** Expressing thankfulness to the Lord by just taking enough was the faith-rest education the Lord intended from the daily manna provision.

There was always enough, and the extra evaporated away as the sun rose upon it in full strength. Moses made it clear that the manna was to be prepared and made into bread that very day, and if it was the Sabbath the next day, twice as much was to be baked, and the Lord would always ensure that twice as much was provided. The manna had to be dealt with immediately or if it was kept it would rot overnight.

There was a twelve hour life to it, and it was to be taken and made into their daily bread every day. It was a picture of spiritual provisions for the soul of the believer; each day we need to build up our spiritual provisions of Bible doctrine and we need to “bake” the principles into our life. If we do not apply what we have learned into our life, then our life will “stink”. **Hebrews 4:1-6.** Feeding on the Word of Life is required daily, with faith-rest application, or our lives will stink...

Verses 22 – 25. The Lord's provision was for the Sabbath day, which from this time was to be kept as a special remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt and the provision of the Lord for their wilderness journey. The Sabbath was not kept as a holy day before this time. Up until this time the patriarchs and the Israelites in slavery did not keep the Sabbath. It would be a special day for Israel as a nation in freedom and be celebrated as a special distinctiveness that set them apart from all other peoples. Exodus 20:8-11, Deuteronomy 5:12-15, Nehemiah 9:9-17, Mark 2:27-28, Luke 23:55-56.

There was no specialized priesthood either at this time, with the Levites only being assigned the duty of priesthood later, by the Mount of God. Moses at this point has not received any sacrificial instructions, and so any sacrifices offered at this early point will be in the Abrahamic model. They operate under the knowledge that they have received to date, and as the unfolding drama of redemption is revealed they are to apply all they learn. While all revelation is given today, we learn it progressively and are to apply it day by day into the fabric of our lives.

Verses 26 – 30. Moses made it very clear, yet still some went out on the Sabbath to test the Lord and see if there was any manna there. There was none and these people were specifically rebuked personally by Moses. This is

another reminder that the numbers here are not that great, so that Moses was able to oversee the entire camp and deal quickly with people who headed out of camp on the Sabbath. Psalms 81:13-14, 106:13-15, Ezekiel 20:10-20.

Verses 31 – 36. The name of manna and its meaning is disputed by modern scholars, although Moses tells us clearly that it means, “what is it?” The name is in effect a joke on the people who cried this aloud when they first saw it and gathered it. It was perfect food for them and in difficult conditions they had good health, and only died because of their sin; their children grew on this food and they went on to conquer the land in the strength they drew from it in the forty years that it was the staple diet. The manna was another example of God’s gracious provision and the people were rightly appreciative of the Lord’s mercy and grace.

The manna would last until they left the river Jordan and entered the land. They would eat this divinely provided food for forty years and they would be healthy with it. Aaron was commanded to keep a container of this manna, that later would be placed in the Ark, but at this point was kept by him as a testimony of the Lord’s faithfulness, and this pot never went off and stank.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. The manna speaks of the perfect provision of the Lord for us all, and He made it clear that it spoke of Him in John 6:47-63. He is the bread of life for us, and His words are the things that we need to take in daily and apply into the fabric of our lives.
2. God will not see us short, and there is no need for greediness or jealousy in the Lord’s service, for none will have too little or too much of what they need in Christ Jesus. We are to be ready to rise before dawn and work for the Lord, but we are to be sure all through our life that He will provide for us.
3. The Sabbath was a sign for Israel. It was one of their marks of being a special people before the Lord. They were to keep it and serve the Lord in obedience to the commands given. The people who went out to collect manna on the Sabbath soon learned that the Lord does not provide for commandment breakers. We also need to learn that what the Lord says, He means, and what He says He will fulfil. The challenge to us is to trust and obey!

REFLECTION UPON THE SABBATH AND THE “LORD’S DAY”

1. Sabbath means Rest.
2. Salvation is the eternal Sabbath. (Matthew 11:28) - we must trust in God to save us, apart from our own works.
3. Trusting in the promises is the daily Sabbath. (Hebrews 3:11) - we must trust in God to provide all our needs.
4. The original Sabbath (Genesis 2:2, 3) God finished His work of creation on the sixth day and rested on the seventh.
5. The Sabbath of Israel. (Exodus 20:8-11, Deuteronomy 5:12-15)
 - a) In the Old Testament, the Jews were commanded not to work on the seventh day. They were to trust in the finished work of God to supply their needs.
 - b) The Sabbath (Saturday) was the remembrance day of the old creation, of the old covenant. (Exodus 20:10-11, 31:12-17, Hebrews 4:4)
 - c) Legalists burdened the Sabbath with many hundreds of extra-biblical commandments and regulations.
 - d) Under the Mosaic Law the Jews had a sabbatical year; they were supposed to rest every seventh year. (Exodus 23:10, 11)
 - e) Because they did not take their sabbaticals they endured the 70 years of Babylonian captivity. (Leviticus 26:33-35, 2 Chronicles 36:20, 21, Daniel 9:2, Jeremiah 25:11, 12, Jeremiah 29:10)
6. The Sabbath spoke of the Old Creation Exodus 20, 31 and Hebrews 4 - the Lord’s day speaks of the New Creation Saturday belongs to Israel, the family of God, Sunday belongs to the Church the royal family of God. Matthew 28:9, Galatians 6:15, Hebrews 9:15, 10:20
7. The Lord’s Day
 - a) The Lord’s Day (Sunday) is the remembrance of the new creation, the resurrection life of the Church in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15, Hebrews 9:15, 10:20)
 - b) In the New Testament, all days are as unto the Lord. (Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 4:1-3)

- c) There is a moment by moment Sabbath for the believer in the Church Age. (Hebrews 4:1-3)
- 8. Why is Sunday so important?
 - [a] Sunday is resurrection day Matthew 28:1,
 - [b] It was also the day of the first meeting of the disciples John 20:19,
 - [c] It was the first day they received instructions from the Lord Luke 24:36-39
 - [d] It was the day the church began as the day of Pentecost was always on a Sunday Acts 2,
 - [e] It was the day the early church met Acts 20:6-7
 - [f] It was the day to give offerings 1 Corinthians 16:2.
- 9. This day has been blessed by God. If the church was wrong on meeting on a Sunday the Lord would have pointed it out before the Seventh Day Adventists came on the scene.
- 10. There is no such thing as a Christian Sabbath Ephesians 4:1-3, Romans 12:1,2 -every day should be lived as unto the Lord, lived in the filling of the Holy Spirit. We meet on the Lord's day when we celebrate our new birth, the Lord's victory, the birth of the Church. There are no particular rules, a day of joy, rejoicing and celebration.
- 11. The concept of the moment by moment Sabbath is illustrated in four passages in the Old Testament
 - a) Moses at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:10-14)
 - b) Abraham (Romans 4:17-21, Genesis 22, Hebrews 11:17-19)
 - c) The bones of Joseph (Hebrews 11:22)
 - d) Caleb and the Giants (Numbers 13,14, Joshua 14:6-14, 15:14, Judges 1:20)

NOTES

CHAPTER 17**INTRODUCTION**

The testing situations come thick and fast through these first months in the “Wilderness of Sin”. The people have faced over the previous two months, too much water at the Yam Suf, then the wrong sort of water at the bitter well of Marah, and then shortage of food. They then marched onwards, under the guidance of the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, and they face their next test; they face the test of no water at the camp at Rephidim, and then the first direct attack upon them by a hostile enemy army.

In all the tests to date they have been delivered by the actions of God, and in these tests before us here they will also be delivered by God, but He seeks their expression of faith and trust in Him. The Lord seeks their growth spiritually, to the place where they can advance into the land in the strength of the Lord and in confidence in His ability to deliver them the victory. Numbers 33:1-15.

They will have victory over the enemy here, and it will be by the prayer of Moses. They are being taught the lessons they need to learn to seize the land. They must trust God, not their own strength, and they must depend upon the power of prayer, not their own power. They must learn to pray, and not to moan or complain. They must learn that a test of their faith is for their benefit, not their pain.

They must see that the Lord seeks their good, not their judgment. They have been delivered to serve and praise Him, not to die in the wilderness. In all our testing situations we are to claim the same principles as they must learn to here. They fail, and the challenge to us, is not to follow them in failure, but to pray and not to faint! **Proverbs 24:10, Isaiah 40:29-31, Jeremiah 17:7-17, 51:46, Romans 4:18, 15:4-13, 2 Corinthians 4:1, 16, Galatians 6:9, Ephesians 3:13, Colossians 1:27, Hebrews 6:11-19.**

EXODUS 17:1-16

17:1 And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. 2 Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD? 3 And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? 4 And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. 5 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not? 8 Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. 9 And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. 10 So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. 13 And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. 14 And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. 15 And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi: 16 For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”

REFLECTION

Verses 1-3. Moses tells the story in such a way to remind us of the central “fact” that the people are to learn to trust and lean upon God. That fact is that they are marching, “as the Lord guides them”. They are following the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night and have been since they left Succoth in Egypt. They cannot have a more secure and stable guidance system than the one they have. The Lord Himself goes before them and they see His Shekinah Glory in the cloud and fire, and yet they do not pray and seek the Lord’s solution to the situation He has led them into! **Psalms 27:14, 1 Peter 5:6-7.**

If God leads us some where, then logic demands we think; He has a purpose there for us. If the situation is a hopeless situation, then it simply means that the Lord intends to deliver us in a dramatic manner by which He gains greater glory and we have occasion for greater praise and worship. The Lord seeks to give us occasion to glory in His holy name. He seeks for us to be able to rejoice in the Lord at all times. God’s will for us is clear; that we might rejoice in the Lord in the presence of our enemy, and that we might praise His name in the midst of our problems. His constant desire is that in the hopeless place, that we might delight in the secure hope that is in the Lord’s Plan for our life.

Like the Israelites we are led by the Holy Spirit, and the power of God keeps us in all we do. The Lord's challenge to us is to be secure in our place in Christ Jesus, and so see every situation as an opportunity for praise and worship in the Lord. Philippians 3:1-3, 4:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:16.

Notice the words of the people as they blame Moses for the lack of water. They still have all their animals with them. Once again we are reminded that the numbers of people are around 30,000, and there are probably 10-50,000 animals (sheep, goats, and cattle). They have good pasture in these places in that day. With a group of this size and number of animals they will spread over a great distance, and the men will be busy keeping animals fed and safe from raiders, probably up to several miles from the main camp.

The Sinai area and also Western Arabia where they will go, were both very fertile at this time, and the weather patterns were quite different to today's. The very barren deserts we see now were not there in this day. The area was covered with the thorn bushes that were the source of the charcoal trade for centuries after this, and the pasture under the trees was lush and green for much of the year. The Sahara in North Africa was also a fraction of the size it is today 3500 years ago and was the home to pastoral communities whose archaeological remains are regularly discovered in caves and under the now shifting sands.

The term "wilderness" simply refers to the lack of cities and cultured places, not the lack of pasture. Secure and significant supplies of water are scarce in some places on the Sinai Peninsula and the Lord has led them to one such place; but note, the Lord has led them there. He wants them to learn to pray in faith, not moan in doubt! When we find ourselves in a "barren place", but the Lord's guidance is clear, then we seek his face on our knees and expect to discover glory in the wild places – for they are all His. If we are in such a place, pray and pay attention – there is glory!

Verses 4 – 6. These people were not just politely asking Moses to assist them; their anger was so great that they were ready to stone him to death. For Moses to note this must mean that they were rage filled and had the stones in their hands. As noted above, the situation is not desperate, but they are simply not used to walking with God in hard places, and trusting the Lord is not something they are in the habit of. Keep remembering that the call of Jesus is to walk in the "narrow/constrained" paths on mountain trails, not broad highways.

Matthew 7:13-23. *"13. Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:*

14. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

15. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

16. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17. Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

21. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Their time in Egypt has not been a time of growth in faith, and even having seen the deliverance of the Lord from the Egyptians, worked out over many months, they still have not got a living and real relationship with God so that they trust Him. They have the form of religion, but not yet the reality or power of living faith. God works with them to teach them of his character and stability, but they are, like us at times, slow learners.

Moses does the right thing. He bows before the Lord and cries out to the Lord in prayer and lays before God the reality of the situation he faces. He casts his burden of leadership upon the Lord and seeks the solution, which is bound up in the spiritual education of these people, and the judgment of some, who will persist in rebellion. It is not severe thirst these people face, for they have the milk of their animals and likely some water in containers from the last wells. Moses has not prayed for water yet, so he is not worried about thirst, and the anger, doubts and fears of these people take him by surprise. He lays it all before the Lord, just as we are challenged to. **1 Peter 5:6-7.**

Moses is given specific instruction from the Lord. Once again note, that the genuine prophet always has specific instruction from the Lord not waffling poetic and trite nonsense. God speaks directly to His prophets, not in King James English! Moses is told to take the elders of the nation with him, so each tribal and family group can see their leader there with Moses. It is also a challenge to the leadership to stand with Moses and be seen to be with him in this.

It is their faith test, and they meet it and accompany Moses towards the mountain of Horeb where the Lord's Shekinah glory stands/hovers over a particular rocky cliff face. The Lord tells him that he is to use the same staff that he used to turn the Nile to blood, and he is to approach, with the elders, the rock face that is overshadowed by the Shekinah glory, and he is to strike that rock with his staff, and that out of it will flow a river of water. **Exodus 7:1-25.**

Verses 7 – 8. There is no indication of water behind the rock as Moses approaches it. It is just a massive slab of solid rock in a cliff face or hill. Had there been a sign of water there the Lord would have said, "go to the place where the water seeps from the rock and I will open it up for you". God didn't say this, for it was not His way. Moses is

told to go to a barren and apparently dry place where God sends him, and strike a rock without any indication of water being within, or behind it. He strikes the rock and water gushes out. Now we are to remember that there are 30,000 people plus an equal number of animals, and so this flow is going to be significant, and form a river snaking out into the table lands. The animals are going to be able to drink from the river several miles from the camp, and the people are going to be able to form a water trough system to enable the 6000 households to draw water without disorder or contamination.

The place is called “Meribah”, which means to moan and complain. The name is meant as a rebuke to the people, for they have no need to moan or complain to the One who has led them, and provided for them consistently since they left Egypt. **Psalms 81:1-6**. This place becomes the heart of the writer to the Hebrews “lesson” on faith, and the illustration of the cost of doubting and complaining to God. **Hebrews 3:7 – 4:5**.

These people will miss out on their “Canaan Blessing/rest” because they do not learn to rest in the Lord here in the place where there is no water. Stop for a moment and reflect on my last statement. There was water there all the time wasn’t there? The water was there all the time in the rock, and it was ready for the Lord to release it to His people; all they had to do was ask!

Does this sound familiar? The Lord’s words to us are, “Ask and you shall receive, seek and you will find!” Matthew 6:22-24, Luke 11:9-13, John 11:22, 14:13-14, 15:7-16, 16:19-30, Ephesians 3:20, James 1:5-6, 4:2-3, 1 John 3:22, 5:14-16. The Lord and the apostles cannot get any more plain in their instructions to us regarding problems we may face. We are called to ASK THE LORD, and THINK as HE directs alone! **Isaiah 55:6-11**.

This is why the second name was given to this place; Massah, which means “testing” or proving place. The sadness of the Lord over this incident is recorded in Psalms 81:8-16. The people became in effect, “haters of the Lord”. Their rebellion against Moses and their desire to have what they lusted over rather than what the Lord wanted was severe. Their judgment was also going to be severe, but the Lord in patience with-holds judgment for more months, and tests them further with warfare and another water test. The Lord “waits to bless us”. The Lord desires their acceptance in faith of the truth of His grace, mercy and peace, but they will persist in their frustration, with lust, doubt and anger towards Moses and the One he represents.

Notice finally what the people say regarding the Lord. They ask, “Is the Lord amongst us or not?” They doubt the Lord’s real presence to keep and protect them. They can look up and see the cloud and the pillar, so that by day and night they see the presence of the Lord, yet all they see is their lust based desires and their resentment at the hardships they are being asked to face. They need to worship through their troubles and tests, but they doubt and take all tests of faith as personal insults to them, and so fear gets hold of them every time. **Psalms 95:6-11**.

The Lord will later tell Moses that this is their fatal flaw as a generation and their children will face the constant battle, as to whether they stand in faith, or return to the lust based ways of their ancestors. Doctrine is always to be taught systematically by leadership to try to keep the Lord’s people focused forward in the truth. Deuteronomy 31:16-21, 24-29. The challenge is to be like Moses, Isaiah and the Psalmists, and praise the Lord from the place of trouble, because they see from there to eternity, where their lives and destinies are “hid with God”. Isaiah 12:1-6, Acts 7:35-40, Ephesians 3:9, Colossians 3:3.

Verses 8 – 13. The coming of the people of Amalek was a severe test. It was their first experience of warfare after they obtained their weapons from the dead Egyptian Army by the Yam Suf. Exodus 14:27-31. They have had by this point around twelve weeks time for training with their weapons, and under Joshua they have been busy with this, and are ready to use their weapons with some effectiveness. After their years of hard labour they are fit and strong, and so all they need is basic training in weapon handling, for they have been practising walking/marching in ranks since they left Succoth. In effect the Lord has allowed them to have a twelve week basic soldier’s course on the march and this is their first battle test.

These people of Amalek were descendents of a grandson of Esau. Genesis 36:12, 16. They attack the Israelite camp from the rear, hitting an isolated group of herdsmen guarding the flocks and herds there. Deuteronomy 25:17-19. From both Bible passages we learn that the attack was launched on the Israelite camp at Rephidim, and may have occurred when the bulk of the people were with Moses at the rock. From the parallel passage in Deuteronomy it appears the people attacked by the Amalekites were possibly the weak, sick, young, and old, who had been left behind in camp to look after the animals while the rest of the people went up with Moses.

Now pause here for a moment, for they didn’t actually need to be there, for thorn bushes make excellent fences and the animals were safe. The attack however was cowardly and cost the lives of those who were unable to resist these desert warriors. The treachery and evil of their actions leads to the Lord’s order for their total destruction.

Why does the Lord let this occur? Those who are in camp rather than being at the rock were not where they were supposed to be. The order was for **all the people** to advance up with Moses, and that meant, no matter what their apparent condition, they were to claim the promise and the healing of God, and obey the order of the Lord, and die trying to obey it if necessary. They were also to trust the Lord for their animals, for even if stolen by the desert warriors, the Lord would bring them back with interest. They were to be prepared to take any short term losses and be obedient 100%. Do we rest and “take to our beds” or deck chairs under the palm trees, with stress, rather than put on our armour and stand where we ought to be?

Many people lie down when they ought to march, and tiredness in the elderly can often be caused by heart troubles that would not have afflicted the people if they had exercised more consistently. There is a proven drop of 60% in risk of dementia with just 40 minutes of exercise daily! The more active the elderly are the more fit they become – for we can still build muscle in our eighties and nineties! When God says “move” we are to move out, not say, “we’re tired today, we will just lie down”! These people who stayed behind laid down alright; they laid down permanently in death. They were to be at the rock because there was water there, but also because there they were safe. Their herds would have been alright for a day, or been recovered later, and the men who stayed behind were unable to protect them anyway.

The 6000 warriors trained by Joshua are ready and standing in their tribal groups and so the counter attack launched by Moses is able to be directed from a hill overlooking the camp, but Moses wisely does not rush to action. It may be the first warning they had of the attack was to see their camp burning behind them. This is a serious and fear provoking blow to Israel, and the number of the Amalekite men is at possibly equal to Israel. To fail to win this battle is to see all their wives and children become slaves of the Amalekites. Once again the test is one of faith and action combined. This is more evidence of the smaller numbers of the people in the Exodus, under 6,000 men, not millions, or no desert tribe would have dared attack them.

Moses does not rush into this battle, but waits until the next day to make the attack, so that the people are rested, even if it is lying under the stars by the mountain this night. By resting for the night he gives Joshua the opportunity to conduct last minute training about fighting in ranks and give orders about the disposition of the twelve regiments of his army and how they will relate to each other when they join battle. War mongers are universally condemned by scripture, but fighting for self defence and the protection of the innocent is supported. Nehemiah 4:1-18, James 2:14-26.

We meet here Joshua the son of Nun, and he will prove himself a mighty warrior, but also a loyal, humble, and faithful servant of Moses and the Lord. All the strength of the men will be tested this day, and their readiness to withstand hardship will be tested, for they will have to fight for up to twelve hours in the heat of the day, for it is now July of this first year on the march. A night attack would be a risk for a first battle, but this day action will still require all their strength.

Moses, Hur, and Aaron will share this hardship on the hilltop, as Moses prays through the day, holding up his hands over the battlefield, and as Aaron and Hur strengthen his arms in the prayer battle. As Moses prays with arms uplifted the battle goes Israel's way, but when he lowers his arms the battle swings back to Amalek. It is a fight to the death, with the winner literally taking all.

It is a wonderful picture of prevailing prayer also, with the two men supporting Moses in his prayers and standing by him through the heat of the day. It is a reminder that we are in the Angelic Conflict, and at times the particular spiritual battle we are fighting will rage for hours, days, or even years, and the challenge for us is to persevere in our prayers.

The people of Israel are tough warriors, even after barely three months training, but their victories will come with prayer saturation of the situation, not their strength of arms alone. **Psalm 56:8-11, Isaiah 35:3-4, 2 Corinthians 1:11, Philippians 1:19-21, 1 Timothy 2:1-8, 2 Timothy 2:1-6, James 5:13-16.** Our victories are through prayer alone.

Psalm 56:8-11. “8. *Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?*

9. *When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me.*

10. *In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word.*

11. *In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.”*

Verses 14 – 16. The words and actions of the Lord our God are to be formally recorded as a “memorial” for all generations of believers. This is why the scriptures were recorded; in order that we all might grow by learning the truth from past generations. The Holy Spirit moved upon these men, like Moses, to record the details of God's grace so that we all might relax and rest upon Him. 2 Peter 1:21.

Joshua is to be told the message regarding Amalek, and the Israelites of all generations are to know that these evil people are to be destroyed. Joshua is not able to destroy them all, for he doesn't follow through later in war and destroy them, and so several hundred years later Saul is asked to do this by the Lord, through Samuel. 1 Samuel 15:1-3. The command is a harsh one, for they are to destroy all the people without mercy even to the smallest child, and even beyond that, to their animals. The genetic line of Amalek is to be destroyed, and this is an indication of just how perverted these people were, so that even their children and animals were infected by sexually transmitted diseases.

This is an example of the Four Generation Curse (Exodus 20:4-6), and do not worry about the children in this, for they will not be lost to heaven as a result of it. Their death before the age of accountability is the only way for the Lord to bring them into heaven. 2 Samuel 12:9-23, Matthew 18:10. King Saul's failure to follow through on this command leads to his own loss of the kingship. 1 Samuel 15:12-23. These are hard words and unique ones. What Moses was ordered to do, and what Saul would be later, were for this time only. There is no warrant for abortion or infanticide of deformed/infected babies today. We are under very different orders in the Church that Israel was in her establishment in a polluted land.

Moses does what the patriarchs did so many times; he builds an altar to the Lord, and he calls upon the Lord with a new descriptive worship name. Worship, as we have seen so many times through this book, is the heart of the believer's victory over testing situations and our own sinful life patterns. Genesis 22:14, 33:20. He calls the Lord “Jehovah Nissi”; or “the Lord my banner”. Psalms 60:4, 61:1-3, 62:5-8, Song of Solomon 2:4. The Lord's words to us are to be our banner,

and like the army that responds to the flag or signals of their commander, so we are to respond in obedience to the words of the Lord and worship His holy name. The Word of God is to be our banner in this life and we are to respond to all the things that we are commanded to do in our age in history. We are to get our orders clear and correct, and not apply to ourselves what applies to another, just as each unit in a battle is to respond to its own banner and no other.

Just this very day I initially wrote these words (in 2007) we have had great victory in our own household through the power of prayer over great distress. My second daughter's twenty first birthday party was last night, and she had been food-poisoned by a sandwich on Friday night. She was seriously ill through Saturday and we did not think it possible that she would be at her own party, but rather in hospital. We all cried out to the Lord in prayer for her, and her friends also prayed for her, and she was lifted up to health by 7pm that night and was able to hear many speeches from her friends praising her faith and walk in life. We build that altar in our souls this day, and remember, with Joshua, that the Lord is indeed our banner, our healer, and our strong shield.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. It is the power of prayer that is greater than any other power. We are to be strong, stable, and determined in the power of the Holy Spirit, and so stand in the day of battle, and be fit and strong enough to fight the whole day, but prayer releases the power of God to assist us. In our own strength we can get some things done, but in prayer we get what God can do for us.
2. Every testing situation we face is there to assist us to grow in our trust and faith in the Lord in all the situations of life. Tests are not to make us fail, but to help us become stronger and win in the angelic conflict. They are to be seen like resistance training in the gym. When battles come they come to give us opportunity to win the crowns of glory and the victory over the enemy. Let us build the altar of prayer daily in our walk through this life and so praise the Lord in all things we do.
3. Lust leads to death, but godliness with contentment is great gain. 1 Timothy 6:6. The Lord wants us to rest in His word, and lean upon His promises, as we obey His commandments.

REFLECTION UPON OUR WONDERFUL POSITION "IN CHRIST"

1. We have a position with Christ rather than just a physical position with the cosmos system. We are separated from the system of satanic "worldliness" and are different from our neighbours. We have a new position in Christ - Ephesians 2:6.
2. We have a new position of partnership with Christ, and so we are never alone. - Colossians 3:4, John 17. We have a moment by moment communion with him. He says that he will never put us in a situation without a way of escape. 1 Corinthians 10:13. The way of escape is through our fellowship with Christ.
3. We are workers together with God, we are in his service - 2 Corinthians 3:9, 1:9, 6:1.
4. We are ministers of a new covenant, we have a new message to man. 1 Corinthians 3:6, 6:4.
5. We are ambassadors for Christ - 2 Corinthians 5:20.
6. We are living epistles; we are letters to a lost and unsaved world. Our lives should be such that Christ should be read from the book of our lives. Our life and lips should tell of Christ's power and purpose within us, and Him alone.
7. We are members of the Royal family - Galatians 6:10, 1 Peter 2:9.
8. We are united with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit:
 - a) We are in the Father, he is in us - Ephesians 4:6,
 - b) We are in Christ - John 14:20,
 - c) He is in us - Colossians 1:26,
 - d) We are in the Spirit and he is in us - Romans 8:9.
 - e) We are united forever to God.
 - f) We are not part of a universal soul. That is new age.
 - g) We have been entered into a living union with a personal God.
9. We are members of his body, branches of his vine, living stones, his building, sheep of his fold, part of his bride, priests in his kingdom, saints set apart for his glory.

REFLECTIONS UPON THE SATANIC NATURE OF RELIGION

1. Satan's religion is a humanly acceptable one: no sin, no judgment, no Saviour and no Hell. Satan appears as an angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:13-19,26)

2. Many pastors in the churches are servants of Satan's policy, knowingly or unknowingly. (Isaiah 30:12, Jeremiah 2:8, 2 Peter 2:1-10)
3. Satan's strategy towards unbelievers is to keep them blinded to the gospel. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4, Colossians 2:8, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10)
4. Satan's strategy towards believers is:-
 - a) To confuse by false teaching. (Matthew 7:15, Romans 16:18)
 - b) To appeal to pride. (2 Corinthians 10:12)
 - c) To promote idolatry. (Habakkuk 2:18,19)
 - d) To promote legalism. (1 Timothy 1:7-8)
5. Satan's policy calls for counterfeit faith:-
 - a) Counterfeit gospel. (2 Corinthians 11:3-4)
 - b) Counterfeit pastors. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)
 - c) Counterfeit communion. (1 Corinthians 10:19-21)
 - d) Counterfeit doctrine. (2 Timothy 4:1)
 - e) Counterfeit righteousness. (Matthew 19:16-28)
 - f) Counterfeit way of life. (Matthew 23)
 - g) Counterfeit power. (2 Thessalonians 2:8-10)
 - h) Counterfeit gods. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)

REFLECTION UPON THE NAMES OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

God reveals Himself and His character by His names.

1. EL - The strong one (singular) - 2 Samuel 22:33
2. EL ELYON - The most high God - Genesis 14:18-22
3. EL OLAM - The everlasting God - Genesis 21:33
4. EL SHADDAI -The almighty one - Genesis 17:1
5. ELOHIM - The all powerful one. (plural) - Genesis 1:1
6. JEHOVAH - The self-existent one - I AM Exodus 3:14
7. JEHOVAH-ELOHIM - Lord God, Creator - Genesis 2:4
8. JEHOVAH-JIREH - Jehovah will provide - Genesis 22:13, 14
9. JEHOVAH -NISSI - Jehovah is my banner - Exodus 17:15
10. JEHOVAH-RAAH - Jehovah is my Shepherd - Psalm 23:1
11. JEHOVAH-RAPHA - Jehovah that Heals - Exodus 15:25, 26
12. JEHOVAH-SABOATH - Lord of hosts - Psalm 46:7, 11
13. JEHOVAH-SHALOM - Jehovah is peace - Judges 6:24
14. JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH - Jehovah is there - Ezekiel 48:35
15. JEHOVAH TSID KENU- Jehovah our righteousness - Jeremiah 33:16

NOTES

CHAPTER 18**INTRODUCTION**

Previously in Exodus chapter four I discussed the incident of the circumcision of Moses' sons, and Zipporah's behaviour towards her husband at that time. To all intents and purposes his wife left him, and he was content, if not happy that she did so. Moses is one of the great leaders of scripture who lose their wives to death or divorce. Moses will give the rules for divorce later in the Law, and he will be sensitive to the subject, for he himself is technically divorced from this woman because of her decision that day during the circumcision.

Moses is a humble and private man and he draws a veil over his relationship with Zipporah and the many reasons that lead to her outburst in the circumcision of their sons, and he doesn't run her down. This is painful for Moses and we can read, behind the formality of the meeting with Jethro, that there is neither warmth nor love between him and Zipporah now. Their marriage is over and she leaves permanently after this, even though Jethro clearly desired to restore them together at this time.

Jethro will challenge him over the matter of judgment for the people also, especially after he sees him conducting judicial sessions with the people from dawn to dusk. This tradition of the sheik ruling as sole judge and arbitrator over his people remains amongst the Arab peoples of this very area of Arabia. They expect all manner of disputes to be brought to them, criminal, family disputes, and civil in nature.

With 6000+ households involved, it is simply too much to handle, with each family problem taking considerable time to sort out. The Mosaic Law will establish the principles upon which later judges can draw, but Moses is alone in judgment at this point, even though there are elders who he has been mentoring in this work. The Lord knows that he needs both the help and the principles of Law, and in Grace the Lord supplies his needs. At Sinai he will deliver the Law to Moses and the principles there will guide the judges, and through the godly counsel of Jethro Moses will have the advice to follow to appoint the judges to deal with the problems.

There will be seventy judges, drawn from all the tribes, and that will give each man around 80 households each to judge over, although that is if there is a flat structure, with each judge responsible for a set number. This is probably not correct, for the indication from the verses below and from Deuteronomy 1 is that there was an hierarchical structure (more below – page 44-45). They will be like the Justice of the Peace (JP) in the British tradition, and will rule over their immediate family groups, but amongst their number are those gifted and responsible for the larger tribal divisions also.

Where does this meeting take place? We have the names Rephidim, and Sinai/Horeb, but they don't actually help us at all. As mentioned before, there are two sites and areas that vie for the identity of the biblical Mount Sinai/Horeb. The present mountain known as Sinai was only identified as such in the fourth century of our era, and that was 2000 years since Moses. Since that time in the 320s AD the Sinai Peninsula site has been accepted by the church and also by some of the later Moslem rulers who venerate Moses also, however the Bible makes it clear that Sinai/Horeb was in Arabia proper, not the then Egyptian controlled Sinai Peninsula.

These events that we have seen in the past chapters and after this could not all have been played out in Sinai three months after the loss of the Egyptian Army at the Yam Suf, for the Egyptians had garrisons at this time at their metal smelting works in the Sinai Peninsula. Pharaoh's hatred would not possibly have left his malice behind if the Israelites were still so close to him. My belief is that these events took place in what is now Saudi Arabia, for the three month time frame was ample for the journeying to have reached there, and such a distance would be needed for the feeding of flocks and herds, as well as for safety from further Egyptian attack.

As I also mentioned above in chapter three, do not fall out with me if you want to have all the events of the Exodus in what is now known as the Sinai Peninsula, for that is fine to me, it is just that I believe that it makes more sense to see that the distances travelled were greater and the spaces lived within were more expansive than those of the area now known as the Sinai.

As I mentioned back in Exodus chapter three, Moses father is a priest of Midian, and that may mean he lived as far south as Mecca or Medina. The ancient, and modern centre of the worship of the Midianites was Mecca, and that was the most likely place for Moses to head towards, and for Jethro to live close to. Egypt never controlled this area, and that would be the logical place for Moses to flee to.

Horeb would be then approximately half way between the modern Sinai and Mecca and there is a great mountain there that is called by the Arabs, the "Mount of Moses". The children of Israel have been three months on the march now, and the news of their departure from Egypt will have reached Mecca by the camel trains, and so Jethro heads out to this "Mount of God", where Moses first met the Lord in the burning bush, and he walks into their camp as we enter this chapter. Go back and re-read chapters three and four to refresh your memory of the last meeting with Zipporah.

EXODUS 18:1-14

"18:1 When Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father in law, heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, and that the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt; 2 Then Jethro, Moses' father in law, took

Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back, 3 And her two sons; of which the name of the one was Gershom; for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land: 4 And the name of the other was Eliezer; for the God of my father, said he, was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh: 5 And Jethro, Moses' father in law, came with his sons and his wife unto Moses into the wilderness, where he encamped at the mount of God: 6 And he said unto Moses, I thy father in law Jethro am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her. 7 And Moses went out to meet his father in law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent. 8 And Moses told his father in law all that the LORD had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the LORD delivered them. 9 And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. 10 And Jethro said, Blessed be the LORD, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. 11 Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them. 12 And Jethro, Moses' father in law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father in law before God. 13 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening. 14 And when Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even?"

REFLECTION

Verses 1 – 5. The area is called wilderness in our English Bibles, but the Hebrew word means “driving place for cattle”; that is, it means pastoral land for grazing. In effect it means “cattle country”, “open range land”, not desert lands. The words for deserts, in the sense of unproductive, arid, and totally barren land, are completely different. The land that Moses led the people through is not barren, or their herds would have died, and they have not even been distressed by their journey, or the moaning people would have mentioned it when they were short of water. This entire area is pastoral land in this day and it's fertility and productivity only declines with weather changes closer to our own period after the Roman era (2000+ years later).

Jethro has heard of the escape from Egypt and he hopes that he can bring Zipporah back to favour with his son in law, whom he respects as a servant of the most High God, and who now is the ruler again of a great nation. He also brings the two sons of Moses with Zipporah and reunites them with their father. He brings the three to Moses, and the implication is that Zipporah would not have come by her own volition. Their marriage is over after her outburst as is recorded in Exodus 4:24-26, and she will not stay with the camp, but return to her father's house in great bitterness. At least one of her sons will stay with Moses and share the fate of the Israelites. Gershom will go on to found an entire family of priests who will serve the Lord down the years with honour and distinction.

Eliezer as such is not further mentioned in the biblical record until much later. Remember that the Lord wanted these brothers circumcised, because both could have stood before Him and proclaimed the Covenant and preached God's truth to the people, as their father did. It may be that Eliezer was not circumcised, and refused to be so. My final conclusion is that he was not circumcised and did not follow his father until much later. Remember, these “boys” are between thirty and forty years of age at this point, so are well able to stand up for themselves.

The biblical silence of Moses about Eliezer's life and the lack of reference to his son at this time and later makes me conclude that he did not go on with Moses at all at this point, but returned with his mother in southern Arabia when she returned there. Gershom's sons will be mentioned in Numbers 3-4, and in later lists of the priesthood, although in Numbers 3-4, Eliezer and his son are not mentioned. The first biblical mention of the son of Eliezer, Rehabiah and his descendents is in Chronicles, where their service is recorded. 1 Chronicles 23:15-17, 26:25-26.

From this I deduce that Eliezar and/or his other son Rehabiah return to Moses at some point later in the Exodus, but well after the initial distribution of the priesthood responsibilities are made. He missed out on the destiny that would have been his by his rejection of his father's path until he or his son returns later.

There is good news here however, and his descendents will share in the blessings of God when he or his son returns to Moses, and his son then takes up the priesthood responsibilities, under his uncle's order of priests. His descendents are linked in the Chronicles passage to the family of Gershom and that is probably where they served through the otherwise silent centuries.

Now I am speculating here, on the basis of evidence from much later centuries, and I do not expect you to follow me in this. It may be that after Zipporah's death that either this son, or both of them returned to Moses and served. I want to believe that Eliezar returned, but the fact that Moses does not mention it later leaves the question open. One son at least did return, but we are guessing as to when that was.

It is another example of Moses mentorship to us – reminding us that our families may not follow our passionate service of the Lord, and they will share our destiny only as they share our choices and commitment. We do not delay anything for them, but set them the example of service and forward focus, and we pray that they will re-join us later, and pray that they simply delay their blessing. Nothing stops our service for the Lord. We wait for no-one.

Verses 6 -10. Moses greets Jethro with great respect and an exchange like the one between them can be heard today in the greetings exchanged in the Middle East. Moses conveys his father in law into his tent and there tells him all that we have read so far in this book. The full account of the Lord's deliverance, right up until the recent defeat of the Amalekites, is told by Moses to Jethro.

Jethro praises God for the grace deliverance of the people and for the glory of the name of the One True God. He affirms the superiority of the Lord God above all the gods of the lands, and that means he has seen that the Lord God is superior to all the gods of Arabia at that time also. Psalms 97:9, 135:5. It is of note that the great men and women of God are always unflinchingly polite in their interactions; let us be also.

Jethro greets Moses as his "father in law". Now remember the ages of the people involved here and remove the Hollywood version from your minds. Moses is eighty, Aaron eighty four. Zipporah is around sixty, the boys are between thirty and forty, and Jethro must be at least 90 years of age! Exodus Acts 7:23, 30, 36, 40. Jethro greets Moses by his title as a way of telling him that he desires the continuation of their family relationship. He wants Zipporah restored to him as his wife. This is very much Jethro's desire, but neither Zipporah nor Moses believe this is possible.

Jethro rejoices in the deliverance of the Lord of His people. Once again, we see the principle of rejoicing as the key to spiritual victory. God seeks for our worship as the antidote to our despair in the battles of this life, which can overwhelm us at times. When we are overwhelmed by stress and distress, let us recall the praise of Moses and Jethro and praise the Lord. Let us walk by faith, and that means we praise Him in advance of receiving His deliverance, so that we can rejoice three times; before, during and after our deliverance.

The praise of the Lord centres in our understanding of the character of God, for it is the Lord's goodness, grace, mercy and love that is at the heart of all genuine worship. Worship guards our mind under pressure. Worship is the practical outworking of the promise of God that, "the Just shall live/walk by Faith". Let us praise the Lord. **Psalms 95:1-11, Romans 12:1-16.** It is in the service and sacrifice of praise and worship that we discover our strength again.

Verses 11 – 14. Pharaoh had dealt "proudly" with Israel and with the Lord God, and so he suffered for his arrogance. It is arrogance before God that is most to be feared by intelligent men, yet they often overlook this. Nehemiah 9:7-26. Pharaoh acted as if he knew better than the one who made him, and none of us ought to forget that we are "made", and as such we need to bow more often than we do! The opposite of arrogance is worship, and Jethro leads the worship of Israel in the patriarchal manner by offering a sacrifice before them all.

Moses allows him to do this, for he is a patriarchal priest of his tribe, and is a worshipper of the One True God himself and the elders of Israel all partake of the "paschal meal" together with bread and meat from the sacrifice. The special nature of the nation Israel did not stop them from receiving honour and worship from those outside their national identity, and we see this here, just as with Abraham receiving the worship of Melchizedec. Genesis 14:18, Hebrews 7:1-11.

Remember the Arabs and Israel are all descended from Abraham and they find their greatest strength when they fellowship together and stand united against others. These days will return in the great invasion of Iran, Ezekiel 38-39, and the final assaults of the Anti-Christ, in the Great Tribulation Period. Daniel 9:26-27, 11:36-45.

The next day Jethro rises to see his son in law judging the people. This was common amongst the tribes of Arabia and is so to this day, with people coming to their tribal sheik with all manner of disputes for settlement. There are 6000 families at least here however, and the number is just too great for Moses to have any time to himself at all to attend to genuine leadership matters.

The elders are under-employed, and so Jethro suggests delegation of Moses authority to the elders who have skill in judicial matters and are able to impartially hear and decide cases. Seventy men will be chosen; the start of the Jewish Sanhedrin. In early days in my ministry I had reflected upon this advice and felt it to be bad, in that this group later would condemn the Lord, hassle and abuse the apostles, and kill Stephen. Yet that is fifteen hundred years later and the issue is here and now, and it is sensible for Moses to follow Jethro's advice here, for it is good, and the Lord supports this and guides his servant Jethro in his wise counsel.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Men have different destinies on the basis of their free will choices. God's desire was for Eliezer to stand with his brother in full service, but he walked away. Grace is shown in the fact that his son later did serve and entered back into the path of blessing. There is always a door open to blessing; it is called the door of obedience!
2. Jethro is a godly man but he will be unable to restore Moses and Zipporah's failed marriage. Tragedy like this can strike the servant of God as with all others, and we need to be sensitive and thoughtful as we approach the subject of divorce, for the enemy attacks most vigorously the marriages of the Lord's most significant servants and at times they are ended as a result. Let us be hesitant to be quick to blame and condemn.
3. It is a good thing to hear and follow good advice where that advice is sound, sensible and godly in its source. The Sanhedrin would later go bad, but that will occur with all of the best systems, for Satan delights in getting his people to pervert good things.

EXODUS 18:15-27

“15 And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God: 16 When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws. 17 And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good. 18 Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. 19 Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: 20 And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. 21 Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: 22 And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. 23 If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace. 24 So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said. 25 And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. 26 And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves. 27 And Moses let his father in law depart; and he went his way into his own land.”

REFLECTION

Verses 15 – 16. Moses is the embodiment of the Law of God at this point and he is the one who makes judgments for the people, for all their disputes. Moses is a called man, and he has been meditating on the Law of God for many years, and as a judge over Egypt he has had plenty of experience to draw upon in rightly and justly deciding cases. He also is a Holy Spirit filled man and the Lord guides him. He has not received the full Law of God at this point, but has come to an understanding of enough principles from the Lord's work within him to be able to serve the Lord for focused energy and precision in this work.

The problem he has, is that no-one else has any full understanding of judicial process, nor the study of the principles of Law, for all the rest of the nation have been slaves in Egypt. He has begun to train the elders by mentoring, and he will draw on this for his action of Jethro's suggestion. He needs to teach them, but to do this he needs the revelation of the Lord so that they will listen to every word and follow it. The two things must come together to make these men full judges of their people; both his mentoring of just and righteous process, and the Word of God for principles. He must wait for the Law to be fully received to action Jethro's advice fully, but he can pass on enough to deal with 95% of the cases by the delegation Jethro suggests.

Moses role is mediator, investigator, judge and educator. He is doing all these things well, but he is flagging in energy because of the sheer number of disputes he must address daily. There is no time for anything else, and the need for leadership is pressing. He is dealing with a group that had everything decided for them as slaves of Pharaoh and so this first generation are not used to thinking for themselves at all, and have the false self confidence of people who have received a great gift (freedom), but have no idea of how to use it well.

Moses stands as God's visible presence before the people, and so they want an authoritative decision, and so they go to Moses, possibly about the smallest things. Jethro's words indicate incredible frustration on his part just listening to the drivel that Moses has had to put up with through the day. Numbers 11:11-15, Deuteronomy 1:9-12.

Verses 17 – 18. Jethro's words are godly counsel to Moses, for he speaks as a servant of the true God also, and has had a day to reflect and pray upon Moses labour. This man waits until the right moment to speak, having thought long and hard about the problems that Moses has. It is never good to exhaust the servant of God. We are not to burnout in the work of the Lord, for we are to treat our body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, and that means we do not try to do too much, nor abuse it with lack of sleep and food. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 2 Corinthians 6:16.

To face personal physiological and psychological burnout is sinful, for you have not been a good steward of your energy or physical resources. It is not spiritual to get sick in the ministry due to exhaustion; it is an indication of lack of courage to say “no” to demands that are excessive. The Lord rested and drew apart alone for prayer and recharge, and so ought we to. Matthew 14:13, 23, 17:1, Mark 6:31, 9:2. Let Moses and the Lord mentor us here and draw apart to rest and revitalize ourselves often. When C H Spurgeon was abused by a legalistic brother that he “wasted the Lord's money on holidays”, Spurgeon replied that it was a good use of the Lord's money to recharge, but what was never a good thing was to “waste the Lord's servant” in overwork.

Churches must challenge themselves here, for their pastoral staff are often worked too hard, and so they lose God's men and women. We are responsible to the Lord, and that means we work “as unto the Lord”; often to the point of exhaustion at times, but always with an eye to recharge. **Philippians 2:25-30, 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9.** Let us learn from Jethro's words, and apply the principles into our church and personal life. The senior teaching pastor is not meant to bear the burden of care for the church alone; this is why there are multiple elders and deacons to assist.

Verses 19 – 21. Jethro identifies that the people to do this task must have the character to undertake it. The training can be given later in the points of Law, but without their character being true they will fail as judges. A good man with a true heart for God is teachable and can learn, but an arrogant man cannot ever learn what they need to be a good servant, for they think they are a lord. **Proverbs 9:9-10.**

Moses stands as the Lord's man before the people, and he ought to be referred to by the elders for specific issues, not by all the people for basic things. He must take his leadership role, as the general, and the officers alone speak to the general, the ordinary soldiers do not. This is not arrogance but common sense. **Deuteronomy 1:9-18.**

Notice the qualities Jethro suggests are vital for a judge of the people. He lists, able men, lovers of truth, hating covetousness, men without arrogance so that they can be placed over the people without being filed with pride by this role. They must first have ability to judge; that is, they must have a judicial mind, one that works with logic and clarity, and simplicity in their explanations of complex things. People without this God given natural ability of mind are not even to be considered. It is not true that any may be suitable; only a few possess a logical, incisive and clear thinking mind.

Secondly they need to be men who love the truth above the applause of men, for in judging, the truth alone must guide them, not any self or tribal interests. The third element is vital, for they must be beyond bribery. They must not be men who desire wealth and do not possess it yet, lest they be tempted to take bribes from wealthy plaintiffs. Wealth is no guarantee of wisdom in anything except money making, but any person who is "down on their luck" is normally lazy or disorganized in their thinking and living, and so a poor leader and judge of others.

Verses 22 – 24. All the ordinary matters of family life and camping squabbles between tents are to be dealt with by the elders alone, and only the serious matters that require specific divine guidance are to be referred to Moses. The explanation of the terms "Thousands, Hundreds, Fifties, and Tens", needs some comment, for it is not a straight forward decimal division as it appears in the English translation. The term for thousands is the term for an extended family, the descendants of a common ancestor. The modern Arabic term for "the ten" refers to a small nuclear family of mother, father and children. With this in mind it becomes less clear how many people each judge was responsible for.

What appears to be the structure here is as follows. At the basic family unit of society, the father was held responsible to be a "judge of ten" (his immediate family). Then, within each tribal grouping, an elder/judge was appointed for the next family group size of each extended family (the fifties). Then another level of judges were appointed to deal with disputes between the extended family groupings, (the hundreds), and then finally judges were appointed to handle disputes between tribes (the thousands).

The structure may have looked like this: This covers the 12 Tribes – but remember the Tribe of Joseph was taken as two – but could have been counted as one for judging purposes at what I refer to as Level 1, but then be counted as two for the next levels, and Levi's leading judge was covered by the role of Aaron. This structure gives us 70 new judges appointed and may be what is referred to here, although in heaven I am happy if I am corrected.

Moses – as the Supreme Court Judge.

- | | |
|---------|---|
| Level 1 | 10 Chief Judges over the tribes as wholes and Aaron (Levi)
(each with approximately 500+ family groups) |
| Level 2 | 5 Judges in each tribe (60) as Judges over the Extended families "Hundreds" |
| Level 3 | Extended family Elders to hear disputes and refer them to the "Judges" over The Hundreds. These would be the "Judges" over the "fifties". |
| Level 4 | Each family head to judge his own household – and refer upwards any difficulties |

Verses 25 – 27. Moses heeds Jethro's call, for he sees it as the Lord's word to him. The plan is executed and the plan works out well within a very short time. Moses is writing this much later and can reflect back to his father in law's advice and he sees the hand of God in it. He sees that the burden was lifted from him and he was able to endure the work he had to do rather than do work that he didn't have to do. He also saw that the people were at peace, for their disputes were handled by their immediate elders who were gifted in this matter, and so things were solved quickly, without any delay.

Also the elders who were appointed as judges grew in stature and wisdom through the process, so Moses leadership was empowering and so he was actively helping the next generation to rise up to rule with wisdom. By using this hierarchical judgment system Moses is making sure that able men can be seen ruling over their families, and made rulers over their extended families and so on up to the head of tribe role.

The reference to Jethro is interesting for it's lack of reference to Zipporah and Moses second son. We find his first son mentioned later, but, as noted above, not the second. Zipporah does not crop up in the narrative again, and the next time we have Moses criticized for his marital status, it is by his sister, who resents his new marriage relationship with an Ethiopian woman. Numbers 12:1-15. We will discuss this when we get to Numbers, but lest any think that inter-racial marriage, or re-marriage after divorce is always wrong before God, you are out of step with scripture! God judges Miriam

harshly for her criticism of Moses' re-marriage. Moses has remarried after Zipporah leaves and the Lord's seal is upon it, and against those who criticize him. Miriam gets leprosy and only her brother's prayer lifts it from her. Self righteousness is dangerous indeed on this matter.....

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. There are special qualities required to be a good judge. There are equally special characteristics required to be a good leader. Not every person is called to lead or judge, for they lack the natural and spiritual gifts to do the job. Let us be sure we appoint both categories biblically well. God's isn't unfair in this, for we are judged for rewards according to our obedience on the path we are called to walk, not in proportion to which we resemble Moses!
2. Guidance will often come to us from godly men and women who are called to be encouragers and counsellors, and who live in the Word and whose counsel is "God Breathed". Let us gather around us godly men and women so that we are never short of good guidance in difficult situations where our burdens grow so heavy we do not see the way clearly.
3. All systems of government or Law will work if the right people administer them. Let us ensure that in all "elections" we select candidates for office who have the qualifications that the scripture tells us will produce good leadership and judgment. It is not academic qualification that wins the day but good character that guards the nation, the community and the family.

REFLECTIONS UPON SHEPHERDING THE SHEEP

1 Peter 5:2-4. "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

1. As pastors we are all "fellow-elders", equals before God, tried by suffering, focused and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and with a heart for service, and an expectation of glory within to drive us.
2. We are to "shepherd the flock; loving, self sacrificial service is in view here.
3. We are to feed the flock; they must not starve when they are with us.
4. They are God's flock, not ours. We have the care and responsibility, but we answer to the Lord himself for our work with the flock he has given us.
5. We are to exercise oversight, so as to receive a good report from the Lord, and we are to be focused, as we serve Him, on His well done not anything else (Matthew 25:21-23).
6. We are to serve in a free way, under the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, not from any other "constraint". No compulsion is to drive us except the desire coming from within from love for our Lord.
7. We are to be as keen as a volunteer, and with all the passion that this involves.
8. Lust for money, power, authority, position, or reputation, are not to be a part of our lives at all. Such lust for power is illustrated by Diotrephes (3 John 9-10).
9. We are to be filled with passion, ready to serve, with total zeal for the task to which we are called.
10. Not lording it over the flock, as monarchs or dictators.
11. Being patterns, role models that others can follow in holy and joy filled living.
12. Being focused on winning the crown of glory, that is the eternal reward for the pastor who serves well. This involves being prepared to wear the crown of suffering in time with glory in our hearts, for they are fixed on eternal realities, where our true reward will be received.

Lazy pastors, power or money hungry pastors, are strongly rebuked here, and are reminded that the Lord's expectation of them is serious, and the consequences of failure or success (as the Lord determines it), are eternal. The Lord is the Chief Shepherd, he is the one to whom we must give account, and it is his well done that we are to focus on.

NOTES

CHAPTER 19

INTRODUCTION

There are 633 commandments in the Mosaic Law. The Ten Commandments are only the summary “Policy Statement” of God’s standards for life for the believer. If an Israelite was to break one of the 633 commandments then they break the law as a whole. We ought to understand this, for no man is made righteous by laws, only ever proved unrighteous.

For example, it is like if you steal, you break the law, and are a criminal, so you do not have to murder as well. You break one law, then in the Law’s sight you are therefore a “law breaker”. This system of law shows the standards of God. The purpose of the law was to show man that he was a sinner and needed a Saviour not to produce sinless perfection, for man is, in his own strength incapable of that. **Hebrews 9:27 – 10:14.**

THE THREE DIVISIONS IN THE MOSAIC LAW

The first part of the Torah was the 633 commandments, the second the rituals and sacrifices which showed the Saviour, and the third part being the Jewish Feasts and Holy Days which showed the prophetic program of God. The tying together of the commandments, and the sacrifices showed man not only that he was a sinner, but there was a solution to that problem, and the feasts, the third part of the Torah, showed that God had a plan that was being worked out in history, and that it would be victorious.

Under the Mosaic Law, when you broke a commandment you had to offer a sacrifice. To do so now in the Church Age, would be blasphemous, as the Lord Jesus Christ has died for our sins once and for all, but then it was the expression of that believer’s faith that the final sacrifice would one day be offered for sin. The sacrificial system was the way people expressed faith in the Christ as Saviour then. Keeping the Feasts was the way you expressed faith in the program of God, publicly proclaiming as you celebrated them that the Lord’s plan will be worked out!

The whole Torah, the Mosaic Law, was a complete entity. You could not pick and choose from the law what you wanted to keep and what you didn’t. You were not able to decide to keep a Saturday Sabbath and forget the other 632 commandments; nor could you accept some feasts, or sacrifices and reject others, they were a unified package. We are now in the period of the church, where “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” has replaced this earlier system, lock, stock and barrel. **Romans 8:1-4.**

Whilst the Mosaic law is not directly applicable to us today, as we are under a greater law, that of grace, the study of the Law will show us the character of God, His plan and His precepts. A study of Hebrews 10:1 shows us that this great Legal System was the “shadow” of an even more great thing/person to come. This means that in the Mosaic Law we see a glimpse of the plan of God and the Person at the centre of that plan. The laws themselves showed that man needed God’s grace, and the offerings showed that man must come to God in faith through the path of God’s grace provision.

When you move into Exodus 19 and 20 you are coming closer to the character of God, and you will see that Grace saturates the Law of Moses. 1500 years before the Lord came to the earth Leviticus was written and is a perfect picture of what Christ would do on the Cross.

FAITH IN THE LORD

In Exodus 19 Moses has arrived at Mt Horeb (real Mt Sinai) and he goes up the mountain. In verses 1-6 there are a number of points of interest, God says, “look at what I have done to the Egyptians”. God begins with the past and then looks to the future. God never calls for blind faith. A leap in the dark, and blind faith, is foreign to the Biblical record. He always says to look at what He has done for us, and then tells us what is going to happen, and instructs them/us what they/we are to do on the basis of the evidence of what He has already done. “If I can do this”, says the Lord, “then I can do that”.

This is why a study of prophecy is beneficial to the Christian life as it shows the faithfulness of God in the past and gives confidence that He will perform what He has promised in the future. Many people are ignorant of what God has done. It is our responsibility to teach them so that they have confidence about it. The longer you walk with the Lord the stronger you should be as a Christian. The Lord said that He delivered these people from the Egyptians to make them something. He did not deliver them to kill them in the desert.

We have been delivered just as Israel was, and are now the successors in, and heirs of the plan, at this time, following the nation Israel, as light bearers of the Lord. Verse 10 gives us a lesson on the Holiness of God. We are now called the kingdom of royal priests, whereas Israel was called a kingdom of priests. **1 Peter 2:5, 9-12.** We are given a more dignified title than the Israelites were, and we are operating at a more intensified stage of the Angelic Conflict, and more is expected of us than was from Israel.

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

There is a level of familiarity that is all too common in prayer within the Pentecostal movement that I minister within. I have cringed in some prayer meetings at the familiar and folksy way people address their prayers, and the lack of awe and respect that is often shown. We should approach God in awe rather than in a familiar and even disrespectful way. Remember Jesus is your God, your Creator and your Saviour. His title is the Lord Jesus Christ.

The name of Jesus is used too much by itself in flippant statements such as on bumper stickers and the like. Be careful you do not get too slick with your language, and become blasphemous! Exodus will warn us about the danger of blasphemy, and we need to heed this warning. Babies and toddlers can say "Daddy", but when an eighteen year old, or a thirty year old is still talking in baby language we rightly feel embarrassed and tell them to "Grow up". 2 Peter 3:18.

In Exodus 19 Moses records, that God says that before He speaks to the nation they are to sanctify themselves, prepare themselves for three days. It is a warning that to approach the Lord is a serious thing, and it requires reflection and preparation. We should prepare ourselves before we pray or undertake Bible study.

The Mt Sinai incident emphasises the gap between God and man, and we are reminded by this passage not to remove the gap. The Cross of Christ bridges the gap between man and God, but we are to remember the cost of our salvation, and approach with boldness, but also with humility, deep respect and thankfulness, and holiness.

In John 13:13 the means of approaching the Lord is given. The disciples did not address Him in the Scriptures as Jesus, but Master and Lord. The Lord Jesus Christ commends them for that. Stupid Christians in the 21st century believe they can be more familiar to Him than His disciples, were who living with Him during His three year ministry. We are told in John 15:12-14 that we are the friend of the Lord if we do what He says, if we are obedient. We should be obedient so the He can call us His friend and part of that is to be very respectful. Part of that is to follow HIS instructions in prayer!

EXODUS 19:1-25

19:1 In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. **2** For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount. **3** And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; **4** Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. **5** Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: **6** And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. **7** And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. **8** And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD. **9** And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee forever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD. **10** And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, **11** And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai. **12** And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: **13** There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount. **14** And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes. **15** And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives. **16** And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. **17** And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. **18** And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. **19** And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. **20** And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up. **21** And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish. **22** And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them. **23** And Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to mount Sinai: for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it. **24** And the LORD said unto him, Away, get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aaron with thee: but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the LORD, lest he break forth upon them. **25** So Moses went down unto the people, and spake unto them.

REFLECTION

Verses 1-2. It is now three months since the Israelites left Egypt, and they have arrived at the "Mount of God" where Moses met the Lord. Exodus 3:1. Now it is important to note that the mountain's name is "Horeb" or the "desolate/alone" one. This indicates that it is a great mountain that stands alone. If you look at photos of the mountain traditionally identified as Mt Sinai in the fourth century of our era (2100 years after Moses), then it does not look like it would have had the title, "Horeb", for it is one of a number of peaks in a group of mountains. My belief is that the true

“Mount of God” is in Arabia, and is a great mountain standing alone in what then was pastoral land, and is higher and grander than the presently identified Mt Sinai. Deuteronomy 1:2, 6, 19, 4:10, 15, 5:2, 9:8. Jebel Al Mus/Laws would appear to be this mountain, and it is in Saudi Arabia. I wont fall out of fellowship with me if you disagree with me.

Remember also that the term “wilderness” means pastoral lands, not desert lands. This was fertile rolling cattle and sheep country in this time period, with higher and more regular rain fall levels than today. The mountain itself was rocky and barren higher up, but it’s lower slopes were able to be pastured upon, and this is why the Lord orders the people to stay back and keep their animals back. They had to work hard to obey this, for this mountain dominated the plain that they camped upon.

Presently identified Mt Sinai would present no such temptation, for it is a blasted place, and while it was more fertile and the peninsula had higher rainfall then, it was still a smaller and more barren place that the likely candidate for real “Mt Horeb” in Arabia (Jebel Al Mus/Al Laws).

The camping place for around 30,000 people plus their animals would completely overwhelm the present so called “Mt Sinai” site, let alone if the nation was more numerous, whereas the Arabian contender(s) are far more capable of holding the size of the camp, provide grazing for 20-30,000 animals, and being the stage upon which these following events were played out upon, and the natural features there still resemble the description Moses gives of the mountain.

Verses 3 – 4. The Lord addresses Moses and tells him to remind the nation of their destiny; they are true sons of Jacob according to the flesh, but also they are children of Israel, called sons and daughters of God’s promise and grace. The people are told that they are to remember the deliverance from Egypt, and what happened to the Egyptians. They are to remind themselves that they have been delivered for a reason, and that is to bring glory to God. They are to be reminded that the Lord delivered them on eagle’s wings!

This was a way of saying, with speed, strength and precision. The eagle in the pastoral lands swooped with power and precision onto it’s prey and secured it in it’s long talons. The power, deliberate actions, and speed of the eagle is in view here; God has the power, the precision, and the plan for Israel, and they are beneficiaries of His grace and mercy. **Deuteronomy 32:11-13, 33:27-28, Isaiah 40:28-31, 63:7-9.**

Verses 5 – 6. The offer is conditional on obedience. This covenant is a conditional one, and if the people do not obey it’s demands they will be judged, and will be personally put aside. There is great blessing in the promises of God, but there is great threat also, if the demands are treated with contempt in any way at all. **Deuteronomy 5:1-7, 11:27-28, 28:1ff, 33:2-4, Psalms 25:10, 103:17-18, Isaiah 61:3-6.** If they keep the covenant, then they will become a special people, set apart for the Lord’s purposes in history; they are to be like priests to the world, representing God to the world, and being a set apart people who witness to the transforming power of God in their daily lives. Psalms 135:4.

This nation is a special one, and even today they remain under God’s special protection. As one Arab leader identified, no Arab nation that has attacked Israel has come off well; it is a dumb thing to poke your finger in God’s eye! The house of Sa’ud are the guardians of the Holy Mountain of God, and praise God, since the “Abraham Accords” of 11 September 2020, the Sheiks have stepped aside from their hatred of Israel and recognized that they belong in the Middle East, just as the Arabs do, and so there will be God’s blessing in their lands. Deuteronomy 32:10, Zechariah 2:10.

Ezekiel 38-39 appears to recognize the time that will occur, facing a threat to them all from Iran and her allies. This may have begun in November 2013 when Arab and Israeli met to discuss joint military action against Iranian threats, and has advanced in September 2020 with the Treaty of Abraham between UAE and Israel. Daniel 9-11 certainly indicates they stand together against Anti-Christ, and they must have earlier than this, for the rebuilt temple, possibly alongside the mosques, is a testimonial to peace between them at that time. Ezekiel 38-39.....?

Verses 7 – 8. The first thing Moses does is utilize the hierarchical structure he developed with Jethro’s advice, to work through the elders/judges of the tribes, so that the seventy elders are briefed first and they then take the words of Moses to their people and brief them and obtain feedback. The feedback is unanimous and strong. The people make their promise to obey and do all they are commanded to. Their hearts are in the right place and they are enthusiastic in their commitment, but like all emotional promises, it is not stronger than the character of the people making it. They will fail to keep their word for even one month! Deuteronomy 5:27-33, 26:16-19.

Verses 9 – 13. The instructions regarding the mountain are strict and fatal if disobeyed. The Lord tells Moses that He will appear and speak from a cloud so that the people can hear, and He will do this so that the people believe Moses “forever”. The Lord wants His man certified by the power and presence of the Lord, so that he is seen as the voice of God to the people. Even with this certification by the Lord before the mountain these people will turn on Moses and away from the Lord within months and convince Aaron to make a Golden Calf. Exodus 32.

The people are to wash and clean their clothing, and prepare their bodies and spirits before the Lord for the next two days (including the one in which they are told of this), and on the third day the Lord will come and speak to the people and Moses. This tells us that there was plenty of water around this site; another reminder that this is highly unlikely to be the mountain in the Sinai Peninsula. Washing yourself, let alone doing laundry for 30,000 people is not possible there.

Read carefully the verses Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:11, 11:27-34. It is a serious thing to hear the words of the Lord, and men and women need to prepare their hearts and minds to receive the truth and obey it. There is no room for

anything that will take the focus away from the Lord. This is a call to holiness of body, soul and spirit. There is no room for people to come to worship with unwashed bodies, unclean clothes, and with any unconfessed sin within them.

Now pause and reflect upon this, for in our communion service we need the same focused mind, pure heart and body, and clear thinking. People turn up to church meetings in old and dirty clothes, unwashed and unclean and expect to worship, and magnify the fact that, "God accepts me as I am". This is true, for He accepted you as you were, as a filthy sinner, but now you are a son/daughter, ought you not to appear a lot better than you did as a dirty sinner?

The prodigal son cleaned his body and he changed his clothes when he returned to his father's house. When we enter our Father's house, we ought to resemble sons and daughters of the King, not dirty swine herders! Luke 15:17ff. Let us be challenged and rebuked for our slackness, for we are now heralds of the king, and ambassadors of the court of heaven and we ought to dress and appear like that.

The people are to be kept well back from the mountain. Neither they nor their animals are to approach the mountain lest they die. The most likely candidate for this mountain has a great high fence presently about it, placed there by the Saudi authorities to keep any from going near this holy and dangerous place. The elders were to have their archers and spearmen ready and anyone who went near was to be speared or shot with an arrow. They were to wait until the trumpet was blown and then they were to reverently approach and listen in absolute silence. This is the attitude of worship, for people are focused upon hearing the words of God, whereas today many approach the study of God's Word with flippancy, not even bringing their Bibles to church. Let us be challenged by these sombre words.

Verses 14 – 15. Sexual relationship is not unclean, and yet the men were told to make no sexual approaches to their wives for this short period also. Nothing was to separate them from their focus upon God through these days, because this was such a special occasion. Joel 2:15-17. Now this is a two night, three day period of abstinence, and that was not too much to ask of the people at this unique event.

Paul will warn against taking this principle too far to the Corinthians, for lack of sexual expression within marriage will undermine the marriage and open one or both to sexual temptation. God has made us sexual beings, and sex remains a positive way to express love, release tensions, relax and enjoy the body and emotion, and bind a couple securely together in their mutual giving of each other for the joy and pleasure of the other. There is no such thing as a marriage without sex as far as the biblical account is concerned; for we are made to express ourselves together this way, and failure of either person to be able to do this in a relaxed manner is a serious problem that must be addressed before the marriage unravels. 1 Corinthians 7:1ff.

The rules relating to "uncleanness" after sexual relationship, Leviticus 15:16-18, was for hygiene reasons in hot climates, and the bathing rule was to ensure that the possibilities of infections were minimized. It was not that sex was "dirty", but simply a health requirement. The "uncleanness" until the evening was to ensure that thoughts of sexual pleasure did not intrude if there was any spiritual work to be done. God wanted men and women to be focused in their spiritual service, not be distracted, even by legitimate things. At times we separate ourselves from the good to prepare for an even better.

Verses 16 – 18. The appearance of the mountain was awesome and fear filled the people. This was a special and powerful event and all knew they were facing the one who had overwhelmed the Egyptians and many of them feared being overwhelmed themselves this day. This sort of fear is not wrong for believers at times; especially times when they have been moaning and groaning about the pressures they have been facing. They are reminded of the awesome power and majesty of God and that is not a bad thing as an antidote to petty concerns about the troubles of this present world. **Psalms 18:11-14, 29:3-11, 50:1-4, 77:13-20, 97:1-7.**

Moses is the leader of the people and so he takes the lead and brings the people out to the place close by the mountain's outer slopes. They are not ascending it, but close enough to look up to the heights where the thunders roar and the lightning flashes. Moses places himself in the place of danger at the front, as is correct and proper for all leaders. He leads the people forward to their date with destiny; to meet their God and hear the words they need to hear to keep them safe. All the people are there this time; none will be waiting by the cattle and sheep.

The battle with the Amalekites has taught them to trust the Lord for the safety of the cattle and sheep and do what they are told. Psalms 68:7-8, 104:31-35, 144:3-8. As has been noted the correct figures for the total population is probably around 30,000, as any more would not have been able to gather and be able to hear the Lord and see Moses.

Verses 19 – 21. The shofar, or rams horn may have been blown, but I suspect it was an angel who blew a horn, for while 30,000 people gathered on a slope can hear a single shofar it will not have a sound that is majestic and fear provoking. The trumpet (shofar – the horn that called the people to battle and for solemn assemblies) here is a loud and powerful thing that overwhelms the people with the majesty of God. Moses speaks aloud and the Lord answers with a voice that all hear. I suspect an angel blew a heavenly trumpet here and all realised this was not any old ram's horn!

Moses has a number of trips up and down the mountain, and he accepts the orders of the Lord in these things. God calls him up to the top of the mountain to speak with him, and once he is there he is told to go back down and ensure the people do not break through and ascend the mountain. Now we are talking a six to eight hour climb up several thousand feet here and then back down, only to re-ascend the mountain the next day. I would have been tempted to say to the Lord, "Lord, if they disobey, then kill them, just save me another twelve to sixteen hours climbing here"! Moses cares for the people and his love for them is sorely tested in this order of the Lord. Does he love them enough to climb up and

down this mountain to save them from their own stupidity? Look at an atlas and identify the height of the largest mountain in the north Arabian Peninsula and work out just how long it would take to climb up and down.

Verses 22 – 25. Moses tries to save himself the climb in this interchange and I do not blame him for this. This is a man of eighty years of age, and Aaron is eighty-four, but both are to come up the mountain, and before they come back the priests are to be told that they are to stay well back also. Why does the Lord need to double up this order? Moses wonders himself and reminds the Lord that he has given the people the strict orders that he received, but the Lord still strongly says, “get you down”. Moses obeys the Lord.

The Lord knows these people, and He knows the discussions that are taking place amongst the people as He speaks with Moses. The Lord knows these people are planning to break through to come up the mountain, even though Moses does not yet know how foolish these people will yet prove to be. Moses must be the instrument of God’s grace and warning to these people, and that means he must be prepared to be as patient and longsuffering as the Lord is towards them.

Let us be very scared about “breaking through barriers” to service that the Lord has set up. If we are not called to “climb a mountain” then we must not try to do so. We walk in the Spirit’s guidance alone, not our own desire for great experiences. Many try to usurp other’s roles and arrogantly seize worship leadership when that is not their call. Many seek “mountain top experiences” but lack the call and the spiritual gifting and power to exercise such roles in such places. Such things invite judgment. Do not ever “presume” to any service that is not “called” by the Lord for you to do!

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. As pastors we are challenged to be patient and kind, longsuffering and gracious, and we see in Moses work just how hard that can be at times, and what personal sacrifices we need to be ready to make for God’s people. No matter how stupid the people are, we need to be ready to pour our energies out towards them in love and care for their souls.
2. Holiness towards the Lord is a vital thing, and we need to call our people to sanctify themselves more often than we do. No-one ought approach the Lord in dirty clothes, with unwashed bodies, or with dirty minds. We need to be clean before the Lord in body and soul, and with the Holy Spirit’s work we have no excuse before him.
3. Moses cares for these people enough to walk back down the mountain, warn them again, and then with Aaron re-ascend the next day and hear from the Lord again. He does this in the Lord’s strength, just as we are called to serve, but he will still be facing the tiredness of body and mind as he walks up this rocky mountain. Let us be ready to put our bodies on the line for the Lord’s work.
4. Let us be careful as leaders to warn the foolish not to seek things that they have not been called to by the Holy Spirit. If they do not have the gifting and the specific calling believers must not usurp the calling of others, nor desire to experience things that are not on their path through life.

REFLECTIONS UPON HUMILITY

1. Humility is to be sought - Zephaniah 2:3
2. Humility is manifest in restraint - Luke 6:28-29
3. Humility is produced by the Holy Spirit - Galatians 5:22-23
4. Humility is essential in teaching - 2 Timothy 2:25
5. Humility is essential in learning - James 1:21
6. Humility is valuable to God. - Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5
7. Humility is the path to promotion - 1 Peter 5:6
8. Humility gives proper self evaluation. - Romans 12:3
9. Examples of humility
 - a) Moses - Numbers 12:3
 - b) David - 2 Samuel 16:11
 - c) Jeremiah - Jeremiah 26:14
 - d) Stephen - Acts 7:60
 - e) Paul - 2 Timothy 4:16
10. Evidences of humility
 - a) Forbearance to others - Ephesians 4:2,6:9, Colossians 3:13
 - b) Endurance in trials - 1 Corinthians 13:7, James 1:12

- c) Compassion - 1 Thessalonians 2:7
 d) Peaceability - James 3:17

11. Humility was the primary characteristic of Christ - Isaiah 53:7, Matthew 11:29, 21:5
 12. Promises to the humble - Psalm 22:26, 37:11, 147:6, Isaiah 29:19

REFLECTIONS UPON BELIEVERS APPROACHING GOD – HEBREWS 10:19-22

How do we approach such a place as the Holy of Holies? With a “true heart”, “full assurance”, “hearts sprinkled”, “bodies washed”. Let us look at the significance of each of these.

1. **True Heart** - A “true” heart is a consistent attitude, a dependable nature and character. We are to be consistent in our walk with the Lord, being true to Him, as a married couple are to be true to each other. Our heart and mind is God’s and we worship no other.
2. **Full assurance** - Certainty in our understanding of Bible doctrines. We must be sure of the Lord and His Holy Word. Study of God’s Word in the power of the Holy Spirit must produce a strong confidence in the principles of the Word, so that we lean on them, and apply them.
3. **Hearts sprinkled** - The sprinkling was the sanctifying, or setting apart of an object for holy service to the Lord. Our heart, our character is to be set apart for God, with no distractions leading astray our thinking, our emotions, our volition. No side tracks, just focused service for the Lord.
4. **Bodies washed** - Purity of the body was essential for the priest to function. His garments and body had to be physically and ceremonially clean. Just so with us. We must have all sin in our lives dealt with by confession of sin, so that when we bow in prayer to approach God, we come first and deal with any sins that have separated us from our Lord. God will not hear is if sin is left unconfessed in our life.

NOTES

CHAPTER TWENTY

INTRODUCTION TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

In Exodus 20 we will move into the Ten Commandments themselves, which speak of the Holy and the Perfect Character of God. The first four commandments deal with spiritual things while the last six deal with God's policy for human interaction. It can be called the Magna Carta of human freedom, for all the freedoms of mankind rest upon the application of these ten principles. It is important to read verses 1 and 2 slowly and prayerfully before you address the Ten Commandments themselves. The Lord is your Saviour, or He is your judge.

In verses 3-4 we are commanded not to create things and place them beside the Lord God to worship them. We are challenged not to allow anything to be made which will make us forget the Creator of everything. It is very easy when you are on your daily chores to forget the Lord. I am the one to worship says the Lord, and no-one, or no-thing else.

The "four generation curse" is explained in verses 5-6. God judges those who hate Him, ignore Him and despise the blood of Christ. If they are not seen by us to be judged in time they will be in eternity. God shows mercy to those who love Him and keep His commandments. This double principle ties this passage together with the passages in John mentioned above. God provides the free offer of salvation to all men, but if they continue to reject Him, then if consistently there is hatred in each generation towards the Lord, as a family after four generations they will be eliminated. God calls all people to account and there is a limit to grace.

Verse 7 says that we are not to use the Lord's name in vain. We are to follow God's policy. We are held accountable for our actions. God is like a steam roller in the process of history; either you ride on it or you go under it. God does not ever ignore or forget sins; He forgives them, through placing them all upon the Lord Jesus Christ. **Psalm 103:8-16.**

Computers can now record all your life time financial transactions, and it is a mere man-made object. How much more can God remember? The only way you get out of judgment is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Ten Commandments are a rock on which the unbeliever is going to smash unless they confront the fact of their sinfulness. **John 16:8-11.**

The Sabbath commandment was given in verses 8-10. This was to be a day when the Jews drew back and thought of God, and what He had done for them. However for the believer nowadays (since the Cross and Resurrection) every day, every moment is to be a Sabbath rest. We may pause and reflect on a special day, but every day is to be a "Sabbath" to the Lord for us; we are to work but even more, we are to remember the work of God for us.

Every other commandment is restated in the New Testament in some form or other apart from the one to keep the Sabbath. In the case of the Sabbath the Jews were to go out and labour six days and on the seventh day sit down and give God thanks. It was a day when they had to trust Him physically and spiritually. For us today, every day is to be a day of grace remembrance, praise and thankful worship for us, whether we are working or not. For the believer every day is to be like a Sabbath.

SOCIAL COMMANDMENTS

From verse 12 onwards the social commandments are spelled out which allow a society to function. The foundational command affects relations within the family. We are challenged to respect our parents even though they may be unpleasant. You do what is best for them, you pray for them that God will bless them. Remember, if the parent was evil, and sexually violated or abused their children in any way they were executed under the Mosaic Law, so this command is not ordering children to love paedophiles! We are always to pray for parents, seeking their blessing before the Lord, and for some that will mean their salvation first.

In the Old Testament the translators translated many different Hebrew words for kill with the one English word. In verse 13 this one is one that clearly talks only about murder. This can be seen by the fact that in Exodus 21:14-17 the murderer is to be killed or executed by the State. God is not inconsistent and in our study we will explain the things that for some cause problems.

The whole nation was to execute any death sentence, thereby the people are ensuring that the evil person does not re-offend. In our society, where we have walked away from the death penalty, we have a situation where criminals are safe, and may murder again and again, but the innocent are sacrificed. In this next section we will see that God is on the side of the innocent, and not on the side of the guilty.

In the next verse respect for marriage and condemnation of promiscuity is shown. Your sexual relationship is to be restricted to the person God has provided for you. In verses 15-17 we are commanded to respect the property of others [v15], respect the truth, [v 16], you do not get jealous or envious. [vs 17] If a nation is smart it builds itself on these social principles. No nation can build itself on the first four, because we cannot legislate people's faith, but it can legislate on the last six. These principles are under severe attack in the devil's world at present, with concerted assaults upon marriage and the family, with alternative models of marriage and the family being accepted and legislated as "normal", when they are destructive.

EXODUS 20:1-26

“20:1 And God spake all these words, saying, 2 I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me. 4 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. 5 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; 6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. 7 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. 8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: 10 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: 11 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. 12 Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. 13 Thou shalt not kill. 14 Thou shalt not commit adultery. 15 Thou shalt not steal. 16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. 17 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. 18 And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. 19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. 20 And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. 21 And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was. 22 And the LORD said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. 23 Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold. 24 An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. 25 And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. 26 Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.”

REFLECTION

Verses 1 – 4. The stating of the “Ten Words” is thought to have occurred before Moses ascended the mountain again with Aaron (Exodus 19:24). These “Ten Words” will be carved on the stone tablets later, but they are given now to be repeated aloud to the people at the foot of the mountain. This meant that while Moses and Aaron were up the mountain the second day, the people had these ten words to meditate upon and have their elders lead application discussions on each.

This is important, for we see them break the first commandment quite quickly, (The Golden Calf incident), and it was done, as they sincerely believed, for religious reasons, that they rationalized were acceptable, and sadly Aaron would accept their arguments. These people were used to personifying the concept of the creator God into a statue as a “visual aid” to focus their minds. This was the Egyptian and general way to worship – by making an idol of the “god idea” and worshipping it, pretending to humility in so doing.

The clever pagan and “liberal believer” would argue that the golden calf idol stood for the concept of the blood sacrifice and the creation itself, and that as mere mortals we cannot understand the mighty God, so we pay homage to a “pregnant symbol” of his majesty. They would argue that people need an image of something to pray to, whereas God's challenge was to sit with the truth and worship, without trying to squeeze your view of God into a visual and thereby limited form. God wanted worship to have the mystery of eternity/infinity touching space/time without any trite and foolish things interfering with the majesty and awe of it.

The Lord's point in the giving of the Law was to underline the fact that all such idolatry was for weak minds, and He wanted them to be visibly different to their pagan neighbours, and more intelligent and true in their worship. They were to have no “pregnant symbols” which would quickly become objects of worship in themselves; they were to stand before God in humility, with blood sacrifice, and prayers of holiness rising up as the smoke of the altar.

The only “visual symbol” of the Godhead that would be given was the sacrificial animal, and they were not to make an idol of that, but to take the real animal and shed it's blood as a reminder of the truths of sin, separation, forgiveness, redemption, reconciliation, expiation, propitiation, and justification. The expression of the faith of Israel was to be kept “REAL” and never become ritualistic and formalized to the point that it lost it's reality. Sin and it's solution were to be kept to the forefront of worship, not by symbols, but by actions and prayers. Ritual was to serve worship not overwhelm it's spirit. God wanted and still wants His people to be spiritual, not religious. Satan wants people religious, be they emotional or legalistic, for very quickly they will become fake on either path.

Both the titles or names of God are used in these verses, with “Elohim” translated as “God”, and JHWH translated as Lord. They are combined as “the Lord Your God” in verse two. The parallel passage to this one is the second retelling of

the giving of the Law in Deuteronomy 5:6-18, where the names of God are repeated and the “Ten Words” are given again, with some difference in emphasis, as we will see when we cover that passage.

The account of these events in Deuteronomy 5:4 makes it clear that it is the Lord God (JHWH) who speaks these words. The writer to the Galatians, and to the Hebrew congregations later tell us that the Law was ordained or spoken by angels, but specifically the “angel of the Lord” – the Lord Jesus himself. Galatians 3:3, Hebrews 2:2. This is a reference to the pre-incarnate work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is called JHWH, and also the “Angel of JHWH”. The Law of Moses was spoken to Moses by the pre-incarnate Christ.

The Lord reminds them all that He is the one who delivered them from their bondage to Egypt and He will be the one to deliver them from bondage to sin and falsehood also. If He could deliver them from the Egyptians then He can deliver them from anything.

The Lord our God does not want us confused by any other things in our worship. He wants us to sit with our mortality and finiteness, and not try to explain things we cannot explain from this side of space and time, and not try to visualize things that are best left and worshipped as mysteries. The Lord wants us to be intelligent, and that means sit with our limits, without trying to fill the gaps in our knowledge with false concepts and simplistic answers to questions that are too big for us.

God calls us to intelligent faith, and that means a humility that is content with the truth of our limits as men and the wonder and worship of the creator Saviour God who is bowed before. We are to bow before the Lord, not try to press him into our mould! Idolatry is lowering God to our images, and the Lord wants us lifted up, not looking down. No symbol, from earth, air or sea was to be used to “aid” worship. Man was to stand before God in humility and truth. **Psalms 115:4-15, 135:15-20, Isaiah 40:18-31, 44:9-20, 45:16, 46:5-7, Jeremiah 10:1-13, John 4:23, 8:32-46, 17:17-19.** These verses will form an excellent meditation for any bible study group.

Verses 5 – 7. These verses cover what is termed “The Four Generation Curse”. (Refer to the BTB study of this.) This is a particular curse that is visited upon an individual who is the fourth generation in a family line to reject the truth about God, and actively hate God. By this means the Lord lets the people know that there is a limit to grace and mercy, and that limit is four generations of negative volition towards the Law.

If a family goes into the fourth generation of negativity (hatred) towards God, then they will be removed from the nation and the earth. It is a testimony to God’s patience and grace, not His judgment, for He waits in order that there might be salvation, and judges only when the negativity is such that the entire community is at risk from this evil household. Exodus 34:6, Numbers 14:18, Psalms 86:15, Isaiah 28:21, 1 Timothy 1:16, 1 Peter 3:20, 2 Peter 3:9-15.

Verses 8 – 11. The Sabbath commandment is a long one, and covers all eventualities and all responsibilities for the household. The father of the family was, as we saw last chapter, the “Judge” of the family, and he was to ensure that the Law was being kept by all. He was not to use his position to order others to break it, or he would be held responsible for the breaking of the Law. There was to be no-one saying, “Oh my child did this, not me, forgive them, for they are only children!” Each household was to be under the order of the Law and the father was held responsible for the outcomes from their household.

They were to remember the seventh day and keep it holy (set apart for the Lord). They were not to treat the seventh day as any other day, but were to be reminded each week of the grace, mercy and blessing of God towards them. They were to make this day a grace celebration, when they remembered that God worked for their deliverance, they did not.

They were to recall that all their efforts were of no value without the Lord’s blessing upon them. They were to express this by stopping all work on the Sabbath Eve and not begin work again until 6pm the following day. This was unheard of in the ancient world. People in agricultural economies worked seven day weeks permanently. Israel was to rest one day in seven as a reminder that God’s grace alone would prosper them, not working an extra day! They were to learn good time management, and not be thoughtless about how they administered their workplaces. Six days was ample time, and the extra time was only needed if they didn’t plan properly.

The Sabbath day became both a holy day, as well as being a business incentive training tool. The Sabbath day, it may be argued, is why Jewish people down the centuries have been more industrious than other people groups, for they had to think about time management well before it became the business subject it is today. They have also rested and recharged one day in seven, and that is the best way to live, and be both sharper and more productive. While the Sabbath rest is not a spiritual command for us, it remains the best work-rest routine, to take off completely from all work at least one day every seven.

The order was not given, as some commentators argue, for them to “copy the example of God” who rested on the seventh day of the creation. This point was given as an analogy only. God rested to proclaim blessing to man, and man receives that blessing by trusting (resting) in God’s commands and being obedient to them. Man finds rest only in obedience to the commands of their creator and Saviour. The Sabbath was for Israel their weekly reminder of God’s grace, mercy, and also His holy demands. They were to obey if they wanted to receive spirit, soul and bodily rest. **Hebrews 3:7-4:10, James 5:10-11.** This was not about copying the Lord their God, any more than we copy Jesus in water baptism, for God’s rest and the Lord’s baptism are far different than ours; it is about rest coming by obedience. It is about doing what we are told by our Maker.

Verse 12. The fifth “word” is the command to honour parents. It was not just to honour fathers, but fathers and mothers. Once again the order here is divine, not human, for most societies of this age only honoured the father, and the mother was little more than a slave. The equality of women is a major biblical teaching from beginning to ending.

The role and status of women has been much discussed in relation to the theologies of men, but the biblical message is clear; women are equal in God’s sight to men, and may lead and be the mentors of others, including the men. In this category we include Deborah, Esther, Ruth, in the Old Testament, Anna, and all the women named Mary, as well as Lois, Lydia, and Priscilla in the New Testament. Look up these women’s names in a good concordance and study their lives and witness, and see the roles they had in the plan of God, and then remember all the women missionaries who have served down the ages, establishing churches and training the next generation of ministers.

There is no room for sexual dominance in biblical studies! While the biblically sound woman will be “a keeper at home”, in the sense of keeping the home stable, she may be a businesswoman, a teacher, an evangelist, or a support worker in a church. Check out Proverbs 31:10-31 for those who think Christian women = boring. The woman described here is a powerful business and spiritual force in her community. Her home is stable, probably with servants, and she is a force for good in family, community and nation.

To honour one’s parents is a foundation for stability in society and one which nations ignore at their peril, for the stability of society rests upon marriage and the family. When marriage and the family decay, so does society. What does it mean to “honour”? The word comes from a primitive root meaning, “heavy, or burdensome”. What this word appears to mean is that we are to see our parents as those who have taken heavy burdens on our behalf, and to give them respect for their suffering for us, and we are to bow to them, as if we are carrying a heavy burden, in respect for their role.

An aspect of this became clear to me fully in 2005, with both my elderly parents (as an adopted child – they took me as a little orphan at 3 months of age and brought me up), who both had dementia and were unable to fully care for themselves. My “burden” was to care for them, and carry that burden lightly, as they carried the burden of care for me as a little child. I bowed before them as I served their needs, just as they served mine as a child. To respect in this sense, means to honour them for what they did and pay back that debt of honour by caring for them in their time of need.

Remember my words above about abusive parents. As we will see, for a parent to abuse their child, physically, verbally (taking God’s name in vain before them), or sexually to abuse them, was for that parent to be executed. No abuser was to be honoured, for they were to be executed under Moses’ Law, and so no child who was abused by their parent was under any burden to honour an abuser; rather they were/are to be encouraged to expose them to the full penalty of the Law. Proverbs 1:7-9, 15:5, 20:20, 23:22-26, 28:24, 30:11-17, Matthew 15:4-6, Ephesians 5:21, 6:1-3, Colossians 3:20.

The command to honour parents is one with a promise. Ephesians 6:1-4. This commandment is strongly reinforced in the New Testament, where the promise of blessing associated is underlined, and the parallel command to parents is also given; that they might be mentors of their children and not provoke them to frustration by their poor parenting. The double blessing for honouring parents involves both length of days and prosperity in the land the Lord gives them. The indication behind this blessing is that it will be withdrawn if the command is not obeyed.

The breakdown of the bonds within the family are an indication of moral decay in a nation; they are the fruit of evil. Galatians 5:19-21. Ezekiel 18 is the record that the prophet Ezekiel made of the reasons for the Babylonian Captivity, and a major one was the break down of good mentoring by fathers to their sons. The breakdown of morality and spirituality destroyed the nation. Ezekiel 18:1-24, 30-32, 22:6-16. Ezekiel 18 also forms a commentary on the four generation curse.

Verses 13 – 17. The next “words” are the social commands that keep a society safe. The Lord works in the right order in His commands; from love and respect towards God, to respect towards parents, to respect towards one’s spouse, one children, and then the lives of others, and the property of others. Deuteronomy 5:16-22. What you will find in the community is that those who do not respect other’s property do not respect their own spouses, and do not respect their own parents.

The first command refers to first degree murder. Of all the words for kill, the one chosen here refers to unlawful killing; to murder. Those who break this law will be killed by the society and the society that kills them will not be breaking this law, so it is not a blanket rule about killing men or women as such. Judicial execution is not judicial murder as the abolitionists argue. Exodus 21:12-17, Leviticus 24:17-23, Numbers 35:16-34, Deuteronomy 19:11-13.

The death penalty is the final elimination of a person from society who has gone too far, and unless they are eliminated they will continue their rampage of evil, and will mentor others in the same. In our own country we have a number of men who have chosen a criminal life style in their teens, murdered a person then, gone to jail for ten years, then come out and murdered again. In one case in my society a man has gone in and come out three times! Three innocent people are dead and the man, now in his sixties is living isolated, but free, while the families of his victims still grieve their losses.

Because of our liberal laws three people are dead rather than one! Our weakness has led to our streets becoming unsafe places to walk upon. Such things indicate God’s judgment upon a nation. Leviticus 26:21-22, Deuteronomy 30:1-6, 29-34. We think we are liberal and enlightened, but our understanding is darkened and so are our streets.

The Lord takes this first social commandment and expands upon it, making even the thought of murder a sin that needs to be dealt with, identifying that hatred in the soul is the root of murder in the hands. Matthew 5:21-22. The Lord also takes the command against adultery and expands upon that, challenging us all to set up our guard against unlawful sexual relationships at the gate of our minds. The mental attitude sin of lust is to be confronted, confessed and forsaken, so that the act is so far from the mind that it is no longer a possibility. Matthew 5:27-32, Ephesians 5:3-5.

All these mental attitudes are indications of the Old Sin Nature's dominance in the soul, and this must be addressed or great evil will start to seep out in the actions of the body. We must be filled by the Holy Spirit, or we will have our hands and life filled with the evil that Satan delights in. Galatians 5:16-26.

Theft has always appeared to be an easy way to "make a living" from the carnal viewpoint. The Old Sin Nature delights in taking advantage of others and stealing from them. This "casual attitude" to others belongings is one of the many satanic attacks upon the society of man, for he hates the Divine Institutions, and only by breaking them down does he achieve the chaos he desires to work his evil within, for only in chaos do men seek the "strong man" to deliver them, and Satan always has such a man in the wings.

Adolf Hitler and Saddam Hussein were two such men who arose out of chaos and created satanic carnage. The ultimate "man of sin" will emerge from the chaos Satan creates at the end of this present age. He creates chaos because it leads to ultimate dictatorship, for people will accept any false "messiah" who promises to deliver them from the chaos and lawlessness, but the deliverance is at a price. Satan creates chaos and then promises to deliver the carnal from it!

It is always tempting for the Old Sin Nature to "get something for nothing", yet of course, there is no such thing; everything costs something, and it is either earned or stolen. Those who steal rob themselves of happiness and contentment, for they never know when the thief will strike them. Solomon warned his sons against temptations of this sort. Proverbs 1:10-23, 11:1-8. Solomon shows his great wisdom regarding the loss of peace of mind by the thief; be they a sneak thief, violent robber, or a corrupt accountant.

The same thing applies to the false witness, who lies to obtain things they want. The good news of transformation through the power of the Holy Spirit is that man is delivered from such sins by the power of God. The early church at Corinth was filled with people who lived evil to the full, but were now filled with the Holy Spirit. Having given their lives over to the control of their Old Sin Nature so long, the people of Corinth had learned that obedience to the Holy Spirit is the only remedy to the temptations to their old evils. **1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Ephesians 4:21-32, 1 Timothy 1:8-14, 2 Timothy 3:1-5, James 4:9-12.**

The command regarding coveting is a direct targeting of the mental attitude of each person, and a challenge to us to bring every thought into captivity to Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:5. The battle on this earth is for the minds of men and women. We either win or lose each day we live on this earth depending upon which thoughts we let be expressed and which ones we challenge with God's Word and reject as unworthy of children of God. The Lord wants us to challenge all thoughts of evil and eliminate them from our lives.

The Lord's word to Moses was clear; all things and people that were under our neighbour's control were to be left there and not looked upon with any form of lust. Contentment was to be practised by all who love and obey the Lord. We are to be resting in God's provision for us, and be content with what He provides, without any lusting for the things of others.

Many feel like Paul as they face this command. Romans 7:7-25. Paul grappled with his tendency to sin, but kept advancing in the faith, and so let the Holy Spirit keep him back from his temptations. This is our challenge; to win the battle for the mind by confession, and by the filling of the Holy Spirit. **Romans 8:1, 12:1-2.**

Verses 18 – 20. The people had great fear as they hear and see the majesty of God in the cloud and the lightning flashes, and yet they will forget this so quickly. As we read these words it is well to remember what happens to this generation. They forgot the power and majesty of God very quickly and fell into gross sin and doubt. Many today believe that "signs and wonders" will impress people and transform their lives, but the Exodus Generation remains the main argument against such a false belief. More signs and wonders will assist not one percentage point in the evangelism of the world. God sends His signs of power when they are needed, in accordance with His Eternal Plan, but they do not transform the people who experience them beyond the span of their memory of them, and carnal men and women forget the power of God quickly. They may be given simply to ensure all are "without excuse" for their choices!

The people are scared and ask Moses to speak, and for God to not speak to them directly again, because they are so scared they fear they will die. Now this is nonsense, but it is the sort of thing that religious people say, when they do not know God and do not want Him too close to them. These people are hypocrites and play actors in their faith. They do not seek a deep relationship with God, for by this point in their journey they have seen enough to know the heart of God towards them and rest in His love, and seek Him with all their hearts. The fact that they have no hunger for fellowship with the Lord is the fruit of their real desire, which is to live their own lives, and use God to get them out of slavery alone.

They do not seek to live for the Lord alone, for they seek to live for themselves! They do not want the Lord to speak, for they fear His closeness, for He convicts them of sins they do not want to give up! Always be wary of those who claim to be Christians, yet they do not seek the presence of the Lord, or desire the closeness to His Holy Word. Those who love the Lord speak often of Him, and those who play act religion desire to be afar off! Malachi 3:16-18.

Moses tells them the purpose of the fear that the Lord has visited upon them; it is to prove/test their attitude towards Him. They have failed this test at this point, for they do not see past the sounds and sights to the heart of the Lord beyond them. This is our challenge; to see beyond our circumstances and see the heart of love towards us. An awareness of the closeness of the presence of God is the means people keep themselves pure from sin. If the presence of the Lord is constantly before us we have a sure source of resistance to sin. Proverbs 1:7, 3:7, Isaiah 8:13.

Verses 21 – 22. Moses boldly enters the darkness of the Lord's presence, for he knows the Lord and is able to approach without fear, for he knows the heart of God towards him and the people. Hebrews 4:16, 13:6. The Lord responds to the request of the people by drawing attention to the fact that He has spoken to them and telling them to remember that and be obedient to all they have been told.

The Lord is going to leave them without any excuse for their sins towards each other, and their evil towards Him. They will be told of the truth and they will be reminded that they are held responsible for their response to it. Nehemiah 9:13-26, Hebrews 12:25-29.

Verses 23 – 26. The Lord repeats to Moses the first commandment and specifies the sort of things that people will do to try to "get around" the prohibition against other gods. They will make things that "stand for" God, and make pleasant art work that they can admire and "use for worship", so the Lord cuts them off completely and underlines the prohibition against any religious art work for worship purposes!

There is also a prohibition against using hewn stones for any altar at this time. It was to be an earthen altar, to remind them that they were earth themselves. It was not to be hewn stones by man, for man can offer nothing holy to God, and the works of man are unacceptable to God. No tools were to be used in the making of altars, for they were to be natural and God made, not man made and ornate as the pagan altars were. Paganism celebrates man, but the Mosaic Covenant was to celebrate the Creator and Saviour alone. This would alter over time, and the temple of Solomon and the later one would have a giant worked stone altar platform.

There was also to be no nakedness displayed in any way upon the altar steps, nor any rituals that uncovered people's genitals. Sexualized religion was the norm in the world of Moses day, and the Israelite's worship was to be holy and pure, not debased as the nations around them. This is a good guide for us today, for we are to have nothing that celebrates fallen man, emphasizes sexuality, or detracts from pure worship of the Lord our God.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Nothing was to distract from the simple worship of the Creator- Saviour God. No art, music, or gesture was to distract the worship of the people from their occupation with the Lord and honouring Him. So much of our worship today is distracting, and while we may not want to return to "puritan" days, they had a point and it was drawn from these words to Moses. Let us ensure that nothing we do in a worship service distracts people from the holiness of God and His holy demands upon ourselves. Let us walk in the true biblical "fear of the Lord"; not in slavish fear, but the liberating respect and awe for the One who will keep us safe, as we obey His commands.

2. Grace alone would save and keep people moving forward spiritually in the past, and it is still the only way to live now. The people of Moses' day had to remember on the Sabbath the message of grace, and they had to recall it again as they looked at the unhewn stones or earthen altars. They could add nothing to the work of God except pollution. Grace means God has done the work and we get the benefit, and that is the way the Lord wants it; He seeks to bless us. Our task is to live in a grace-oriented manner, and give Him the glory through our obedience to His Word.

3. The breakdown of morality within marriage, and stability within the family, lead to the destruction of societies. The Mosaic Law is God's Law and a nation that fails to protect marriage and the family will not function as a society for much longer. The battle is to be won in the mind of each person, and if that battle is not won in the mind it will be harder to win on the streets. All sin is to be faced as the thought enters the mind, and if it is rejected then the person stays on the right path through the devil's world. Our challenge is to defeat his power by walking in the Holy Spirit through each day, confronting the temptations to sin by dismissing the very thought of evil or sin.

REFLECTION UPON THE NECESSITY OF THE BLOOD SACRIFICE

1. Ever since the earliest recorded time God has required a blood sacrifice for sin. It is implied by the coats of skin provided by the Lord in the garden after Adam and Eve had attempted to clothe their nakedness with leaves. Abel brought an acceptable animal sacrifice, unlike Cain's who brought an unacceptable bloodless offering.

2. The requirement for blood sacrifices was continued with Noah after the flood; (cf. the near sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham); and was established as a requirement not only by the Passover lamb but also in the Levitical offerings.

3. When recording the will of God for Israel in the matter of food and the abstinence from eating "any manner of blood" Moses states "For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."

4. It is clear from the above that the life of an innocent victim (the animal sacrifice) acted as a shadow until the once and for all payment was paid with the true sacrifice of Christ.
5. There is an absolute necessity of the unique sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ as indicated by the phrase "the blood of Christ". (Romans 3:25, Ephesians 1:7, Hebrews 9:22)
6. Up to the time of the once and for all sacrifice the sins of believers were set aside adjacent to them (gk. para) but since the cross they have been taken fully away.
7. The twelve elements of grace which involve the blood of Christ:-
 - a) The New Covenant. (Hebrews 8:8, 9:20-21)
 - b) The blood is the life. (John 6:53)
 - c) Purchase and Redemption. (Acts 20:28, Ephesians 1:7, 1 Peter 1:18-19)
 - d) Propitiation. (Romans 3:25)
 - e) Justification. (Romans 5:9)
 - f) Sanctification. (Hebrews 13:12)
 - g) Cleansing. (Hebrews 9:14, 1 John 1:7, Revelation 7:14)
 - h) Victory. (Revelation 12:11)
 - i) The blood of sprinkling. (Hebrews 10:22, 1 Peter 1:2)
 - j) Made nigh. (Ephesians 2:13)
 - k) Peace. (Colossians 1:20)
 - l) Boldness to enter. (Hebrews 10:19)
8. It is of interest that the resurrection body consists of flesh and bone but apparently no blood.

REFLECTION UPON OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE - SPIRITUALITY

1. All Christians have the Holy Spirit indwelling them. When we allow Him to control our lives, we are said to be "filled with the Spirit" or "walking in the Spirit".
2. The filling of the Holy Spirit can be lost by
 - a) Grieving the Spirit - by sin.
 - b) Quenching the Spirit - by not submitting to His leading.
 - c) This is called being carnal, or controlled by the flesh, the old sin nature.
3. The filling of the Holy Spirit can be regained by
 - a) Confessing sin. (1 John 1:9)
 - b) Surrendering your life direction to God. (Romans 12:1-2)
 - c) This is called being spiritual, or controlled by the Holy Spirit.
4. Only the Holy Spirit in us can produce good works acceptable to God - anything in our own strength is unacceptable. (Romans 8:8-9, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15)
5. The spiritual believer
 - a) Imitates God. (Ephesians 5:1, 1 John 3:9)
 - b) Glorifies Christ. (John 7:39, John 16:14)
 - c) Fulfills the Law. (Romans 8:2-4, Romans 13:8)
6. In the Bible the human race is divided in three Categories:-

[a] Natural Man - A person born physically alive, but not regenerated. He may be highly sophisticated, civilised, gentle and kind, but is completely ignorant of any spiritual phenomena. (1 Corinthians 2:14) Equivalent to the cold person in the church in Laodicea.

[b] Carnal Man - A person regenerated or born again but living his life under the power of his old sin nature. Prolonged activity in this area produces a Christian who is still a baby. (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). Equivalent to the lukewarm person in the church of Laodicea.

[c] Spiritual Man - A person regenerated and living generally in the power of the Holy Spirit. He discerns the difference between the things of God and man. (1 Corinthians 2:11-13) He has fellowship with God in his daily life. (Ephesians 5:18-20) Equivalent to the hot person in the church of Laodicea.

7. Carnality

[a] The believer possesses an Old Sin Nature after salvation (1John 1:8, Romans 7:14,15).

[b]. The Old Sin Nature is desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9).

[c]. The believer under the control of the Old Sin Nature is called carnal (1Corinthians 3:1-3, Romans 7:14).

[d]. The Old Sin Nature frustrates bona fide production in the life of the believer (Romans 7:15).

[e]. The Old Sin Nature is acquired at the point of physical birth (Psalm 51:5).

[f]. We are therefore considered spiritually dead at the point of physical birth (Romans 5:12).

[g]. The Old Sin Nature has several facets: areas of weakness produces sins, areas of strength produces human good. It has trends towards asceticism or lasciviousness. In many cases asceticism is considered to be spirituality.

[h] The Old Sin Nature is not found in the resurrection body.

NOTES

CHAPTER 21**INTRODUCTION**

These judgments (mishpatim) are the rights of the people within the Law. The rights of masters and slaves are dealt with, and the rights of parents, children, and the innocent party's rights in the matter of any unlawful slaying. Deuteronomy 25 – 29 expands upon this section. Principles of Law are laid down here and are still embodied in our laws today. In this chapter we see that the unborn child is treated as if it is a full member of society and any killing of a child in the womb was to be treated as a homicide.

Rules for those sold into slavery set limits on the years they could serve, and special rules were laid down for the treatment of girls sold as servants-wives to ensure they were not sexually used and then cast aside. In the matter of homicide, the rules laid down here make the intention to kill a key point that separates accidental from culpable deaths. This is the foundation for modern law, and sets this code well apart from those of the other nations that were filled with many injustices and arbitrary nonsense. Do not let any liberal nonsense peddler say that Hammurabi was the source of Moses words here, for Moses revelation from God is light years ahead of anything else. Others learn from Israel!

EXODUS 21:1-17

“21:1 Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them. 2 If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. 3 If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. 4 If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. 5 And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: 6 Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever. 7 And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, she shall not go out as the menservants do. 8 If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her. 9 And if he have betrothed her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters. 10 If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish. 11 And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money. 12 He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death. 13 And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee. 14 But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die. 15 And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death. 16 And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death. 17 And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.”

REFLECTION

Verses 1-2. The concept of slavery to us is abhorrent and our reaction to this evil may cloud our understanding of these verses, so we need to put aside the comparison of American and British slavery and see here a totally different thing. The slaves of the old Roman and British Empire had no rights and abuse was common, whereas in Israel slavery, or indentured service as it was, was covered by these rights/responsibilities for both the slave and the master. The servant had been sold to the master, and as we will see later in this book and the others, in the Mosaic period, the reason was normally non-payment of debts.

There was no such thing as bankruptcy in the ancient world as there is in our own. In that day you could not have your debts wiped by a court and then head away and fraudulently start up a new business. You had to pay your debts off by working for the people you owed money, for nothing, or be sold as a slave to pay the debt, and if your debts were significant, your entire family could be sold to pay the debt. The person who loaned money in good faith was always to be repaid in full.

In our day the people who loan money have no such assurances, and normally end up receiving little, with the person who borrowed the money heading away to start up again, often with his money secured in a family trust or an overseas bank account. A debt was not a casual thing in Moses' day as it is in our own! Our business world has been ruined by the casual attitude of many towards their debts and businesses and nations have been brought to their knees as a result. The World Financial Crisis (WFC) 2007 – 2014 has been the result of casual attitudes towards indebtedness, and continuing financial instability is being caused by this on-going national/international sin/evil. Satan's policies rule now and it is too late; we are on the path to the Tribulation period and the evils of debt-economy will be used to control all.

While initially this indentured service (Fixed term slavery) appears awful, stop and consider the alternative in this day. Without land (sold already to pay the debt) all the indebted man could do was work as a labourer, and there may not be any such work locally, and if the debt was owed after sale of land, the man owed the money wouldn't want the debtor wandering off to another place to work, with a "fake promise" to pay later, such as in our modern day we have to hear! The Law's first concern was that the person who was owed money was paid back, and that all in society knew that to borrow was a serious thing, and a debt was indeed a debt of honour, and would be paid in money or sweat, but never in

blood or jail. Once land and buildings were sold, the family of the man who owed money had no-where to live and if there was no work, was unable to feed his family. The concept of Israelite slavery stepped in here to ensure all were protected. The man who lost the money could offer himself as a slave for hire to pay the debt, and if he and his wife or family were sold, it had to be as a “job lot” (whole family group – with only the man working if he alone was sold – the wife was expected to keep doing the household chores for the family – but could be put to work if the debt was so high that her labour also was required to pay it off, as could older children to make full repayment) but the entire family was to be kept together.

The Hebrew slave was sold for the value of seven years labour, and the money was paid immediately to the man he had borrowed money from and not repaid. The man who was now a slave, went to work for his new master (who had paid his debt) and worked for seven years to repay him the value of his purchase price, plus living expenses. At that point he was set free again, and any people he brought into the household were set free with him.

If he wanted to remain a slave/servant in the household he was able to do this with a special ceremony (below). This was at times recognized by people; that they could not look after themselves and slavery was preferred to starvation. He was sold for seven years only, not for life; it was a limited term “slavery” (best called “indentured service”) and not like the American and British evils that later flourished in the 17th and 18th centuries until abolished by the Christian parliamentarians in the UK in 1830, and by civil war in the USA. Families were to be kept together in the process.

In effect this was a form of social welfare for the poor who had been reduced to circumstances where they were not able to care for themselves. It was meant to be humane but just to the person owed money, and the slave and their family were under the same law as other Israelites, to be protected from abuse and murder, and entitled to one day off per week to worship, and able to take full part in all worship. They were to be fed and clothed at the expense of the master who had purchased their labour for seven years.

They were sent away at the end of seven years without any additional money, unless it was “earned”, but well fed and clothed, and no last minute “expenses” were to be charged which would mean they could not go free. The Lord covered all possibilities to ensure his people were protected, even those who were foolish with money, or had bad luck with a business venture. Deuteronomy 15:11.

Verses 3 – 4. The family that came in with the man were to leave with the man. No charges were to be made or deducted for his family’s “room and lodging”, for the family’s labour was to be taken as sufficient payment for everything that was spent by the family while he/they were in service. The second statement of the Law regarding this in Deuteronomy 15:1-15, makes it clear that the person was not to be sent away without goods to ensure he and his family were fed while they re-established themselves. Read Deuteronomy 15:12-15 especially.

If, while he was with the master, the master gave him a wife, then she was expected to stay, unless she herself was emancipated at the same time, and if they had children, the children were the master’s responsibility to care for and they stayed. This opens up the next issue, which was the recognition by the man who had been sold, that he was not able to look after his own affairs and would be better off living within a greater household. Such a man could accept a wife, and with it the recognition that he would be staying in the household forever. To accept a wife as a slave, was to accept a life time of slavery, and for some that was true “social welfare” as they couldn’t support themselves in freedom.

The alternative was to wait for the seven years to be over and then take a wife as a free man. Those without the self control and ability to think ahead would be selecting life time slavery, and for such people that status in Hebrew society was probably the best place for them. In the Roman and Greek worlds slavery remained a terrible evil until it was abolished by the Christian emperors, but in Hebrew society it was a place where those who didn’t want, or couldn’t look after their own affairs, were cared and provided for.

Verses 5 – 6. The man who had been caught by economic or climatic catastrophe, or had been careless financially, and had ended up a seven year bonded man, could at the time for his emancipation make a decision to stay forever in his master’s house. This was to be a formal and fully informed legal decision. It was a recognition, that for many, what they wanted in life was the safety and security of stable living arrangements, new clothes, and plenty of food, and that was all they wanted. Their freedom didn’t matter to them, for they were able to enjoy the Sabbath rest weekly, attend worship with the family, and had all they needed in food and clothing.

These people were the “welfare beneficiaries” of their day and the family that cared for them had to provide all they needed. Such a man would be literally “nailed” to the door of the house and by having his ear pierced he accepted life time service to his master and his household. Leviticus 25:23-31, 39-44, Deuteronomy 15:16-18. This recognition of life time bonded service was to be certified by the local Judges so that a legal process was involved, and there was oversight of it to ensure that there was no abuse, and that all understood their rights and responsibilities in the process.

This process was meant to be a humane way to deal with poverty, but it was abused by evil men as all good processes can be. In Nehemiah’s day the rulers of the people were capitalistic during a famine period and great distress was caused, and great anger was kindled in Nehemiah. Even the judges had been corrupt in the practises in Nehemiah’s day. God’s purpose in these laws was to protect people who were not able or prepared to look after themselves, not open the door for others to abuse them. Nehemiah 5:1-13. Even if these people who became slaves were lazy, foolish, and didn’t value their freedom or personal responsibility to care for their families, they were still to be cared for humanely. Welfare beneficiaries were not to be despised and abused, even if their life style choice was beneath God’s call.

Verses 7 – 11. The situation in Nehemiah's day had really got out of hand, with the daughters of the starving people sold into indentured service, at times to protect careless parents. Sadly, the whole catastrophe had been caused by the manipulation of economic conditions by the wealthy, using high interest rates for poorer and often unthinking borrowers to bankrupt them and seize their land. Such things have happened many times in history, and for God's people they were not to occur, for under the Mosaic Law, interest rates were **not** to be charged for any loan.

The way loans were to be made was by way of an agreed flat fee, and/or a agreed share of the crop planted only once it came in, or a specific percentage share in the profit of a venture, once it came to its successful end. To be a loaner of money was therefore a harder and riskier thing than in our day of set interest rates, and this is why, if a person defaulted on the loan, they had to pay by indentured service, and there had to be certainty for the loaner that they would be paid back by labour or by cash.

The price of throwing a wedding in biblical times was extensive. Gifts had to be given to relatives of the groom, and although a "bride price" might be paid, it would not be enough to throw a party for all the guests that would be expected to be invited. To feed several hundred people for three to seven days was significant. John 3:1-10. For a family which was low of funds there were two options; the first was to accept that no marriage would be allowed for their girl, or they had to "sell" her into service in a greater house and hope she found favour with a wealthy member of the household, who would then marry her at the cost of the new household.

The parents were "selling" their rights to decide who their daughter married, and she was accepting that she had to work as a servant in that household until her seven years were up, or she was redeemed by an interested man. He in effect paid the bride price and any monies her service had not worked out at that point, but the cost of the wedding would be paid by the family that had bought her from her parents. She was like Ruth waiting for her Boaz to come as her redeemer; who would pay the price to set her free.

For a poor girl this was not "slavery" but "service", and it was opportunity to escape her parent's poverty and enter a wealthy home where she may make a good match with a more successful man than her parents might have known. It also meant the parents were able to pay their bills! It was also a great risk, for, without the Mosaic Law protection, she may have been bought by a man who simply wanted a girl for his mistress and would then sexually abuse her until he got sick of her and then could cast her out at the seven year point and replace her with another. Specific rules are laid out here to protect the girls thus sold, so that they had the best opportunity to make the good marriage that they needed for protection and advancement in their agrarian society.

Read these verses carefully. The maidservant was to be treated differently than the indentured male servant, and she was to be granted more protection, for she was more vulnerable sexually to abusiveness. She was purchased as a servant for seven years also, but the prospect was of marriage to a family/household member, and if anyone acted deceitfully or abusively with her in this process she was to be set free without any money being paid to release her.

As a student of ancient history for many years now I am still struck as I read these verses by how different this law was to that of the Romans, Greeks and other so called "Civilized" nations. They treated all girls as commodities and if the master wanted to take sexual advantage of them he did and none raised their voice to criticize. The girl could be raped and abused and then sold to others or placed by the master straight into the local brothels. All of this evil was forbidden under the Mosaic system and the Judges/Levites were to oversee this and ensure that injustice and evil did not occur. They failed to follow this at times, but the Lord's will for this people was clearly laid out here.

In verse eight, if the master had betrothed himself to the girl, to take her as his wife, then he had to follow that promise through and marry her, and her children were ranked equally with any other wife who was not a servant. This was the pattern established by the Patriarchs, although not fully followed by Jacob, who played favourites. Genesis 30. If for any reason he falls out of love with her, then he was not to enslave her permanently, nor sell her to any foreign buyer, but he had to allow her to be redeemed by another. He was not able to lock her away, as was the custom with many cultures in the Middle East, to ensure that no other man ever had access to that woman. He had to allow her to be redeemed by another, or send her away free himself, without any payments, back to her father's home, with no disgrace upon her.

If he had betrothed her to his son, then he had to deal with her as a daughter, and that meant he was to have no sexual activity with her at all, and that he was expected to pay for the wedding, as if she was his own daughter. If he took another wife and she was more favoured than this servant girl, then he was to treat her as his wife still, feed, clothe and care for her all her days, and she was not to be treated as a servant again. If any man, having married a woman, fell out of love with her, then he was not excused the duty of care towards her. This care for servant girls, and protection from sexual exploitation, was to extend to captives from warfare also. Deuteronomy 21:11-17.

Verses 12 – 17. These verses cover the rules on manslaughter, and define what is, "accidental homicide", and what is murder. Murder was always to be followed by the death penalty, but accidental death, where there as no intention to kill, was to be treated differently. The principle of guilt was to be established by the judges, and they had to discover clear evidence of intention or the person was not guilty of murder. The word used for "smite" here is a word that means to deliberately inflict fatal wounds. There is no intention to hurt and warn, or defend by disabling; this is the clear intention by the nature of the wounds, to kill when such action is not justified. Genesis 9:5-6, Leviticus 24:17, Numbers 35:16-34, Deuteronomy 19:11-13.

To cover the cases where a man would find it difficult to prove his innocence, and argue self defence safely, after the rage of the dead man's relatives had fallen a little, the man who believed himself guilty of accidental homicide, or self defence, could flee to nominated cities of refuge, where he would await a fair and impartial trial before the judges there, rather than the local judges where the death occurred. Numbers 35:1-15, Deuteronomy 19:1-10.

This concept of a place of refuge to await a fair trial is raised in Exodus 21:13, but the cities are only nominated in Numbers and Deuteronomy, for those books were written as they neared the land and the particular cities are identified, but this is the introduction of the concept. Now note the phrase, "God shall deliver him into his hand". What does this mean? Does it mean God delivers him to death? It covers what we would say was a death that would not have been expected given the circumstances and the blows struck. Under our own law it is covered in what is known as the, "eggshell skull principle".

We deviate from the Law of Moses, and we hold a person guilty if they strike a blow and the person struck dies, even if others would not have died as a result of a similar blow. The fact that a person has a weakness, or you hit a "lucky spot" and they die is the striker's problem under our present law, and the striker will be guilty of homicide, although not probably of murder. The Mosaic Law was more lenient in this matter, identifying that if a person dies as a result of something that for others would be an irritation, then it is to be looked upon as "an act of God", and they are not guilty of murder, and are not to be executed, but they are to flee to a city of refuge, and wait there until their case is heard and the evidence gathered to support this form of defence.

In verse fourteen the religious defence is denied any murderer. They cannot later "cling to the altar" and claim religious forgiveness, or later conversion as their defence or a mitigating factor. 1 Kings 1:50-53, 2:25-34. There was to be no pleas in mitigation for murder, other than self defence or accidental death. This principle was highlighted in America a few years ago, when a female murderer converted in jail to Christianity and her supporters argued she should be spared the death penalty for the murders, because she was now "no threat" to anyone, and would be a productive member of society now. She was executed, and according to this biblical principle, she was rightly executed, for she dies, not for her state now, but her state when she took other's lives without any cause, other than lust for money and sheer pleasure in her power to kill. Having said this, we would argue for clemency, that she might serve in jail (below).

Now I am personally glad that, although legitimate (as stated above) we do not have summary execution in all countries, for we have many men and women saved in jail, who otherwise would have been executed as unbelievers. We have a number of EBCWA Learning Centres operating in jails around the world and many prisoners are the teachers in them, and many of these people WERE murderers and are now ministers of the Gospel of Life. As new creations they serve the risen Lord and bring hope and life where previously they brought death and disaster. They stand with Paul, who was also a murderer! Remember his actions and his words, for he was a multiple murderer, and it is his life that is our hope, and the reason the attitude of the church changed towards the death penalty. Acts 8:1-3, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 1 Timothy 1:12-15. My comments above about lack of firmness on the death penalty creating more chaos on the street remain true – our liberalism has made society more unsafe – but it does open the door for evangelism – so we ask, will you pay the price believer and be active as God directs in your liberal (and unsafe) society?

While murder was punishable by death, so was simply striking a father or mother. To violate the sacred duty to parents was to be worthy of death. To have bitterness, hatred, resentment, or malice towards parents who were not guilty of any abusive action (in itself guilty of death), was to place oneself under the ultimate penalty. A person who does not honour their parent, but strikes them as if they were a dog to be disciplined, by that act they show that they have contempt for the institutions of God, and so they are a danger to all men and women in their society. Before they have the chance to show contempt to others in society and destroy other's lives, they were to be executed on proof of their assault upon their parents. Once again the word for "strike" is a severe blow leaving wounds or bruises that indicate great malice, contempt and hatred. Moses goes further than these introductory principles in Deuteronomy 21:18-23, 27:24-25.

Slave trading in any other way, than with voluntary seven year service as an indentured servant, or sale of captives through war, was to be seen as the "theft of a man's life" and was to be punishable by death. In the ancient world generally a stranger wandering alone could be seized and sold and none would raise any problem with it, nor would there be any penalty for the slave seller later. Things were to be different in Israel, and all were to be secure from theft of their goods, or their lives. The rule here covered the three people who could stop the evil practise of man stealing; the man who seized the stranger, the man who sold him and the man who had him working for him, and all three were to be executed.

This was a severe system, but it meant that, when it was applied that a person could walk secure in the knowledge that it was unlikely that a slave trader would seize them, for such people were in fear of the consequences. It is a reminder to us in our liberal and weak world, that consequences that are sure and consistent do have an impact on the evil, for they calculate their risks carefully when crime is their business. Fear is a wonderful teacher! We face a choice in society; either the criminals are in fear, or the population is in fear! God's way selects the criminal to fear, modern liberalism selects the general population!

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. In our day "people smuggling" and the trafficking in human beings is tolerated by many nations. God's Word is clear on this and these other matters. These things are evil and are to be condemned and the perpetrators dealt with severely. The Mosaic Law eliminated all these things from Israel's borders when the Law was fully applied, and this is

why they had such peace and prosperity during those times. If we want safety we must have law that is consistently applied, where the criminal is fearful of the consequences of their actions, but the innocent member of society is free of fear.

2. The "slavery" system of Israel was unlike any other. It is best referred to as a system of indentured service for bankrupts, for that is what it was. Any person who was unable to manage their own affairs was able to be looked after under this system, and become the servant of a larger house and be able to follow their faith and be fed and clothed for life. This welfare system worked when backed by the Law and the judges applying the full code. Like all systems it was open to great evils if men abused others and the law administrators failed to act quickly to protect the innocent.

3. Under the Mosaic System the young and vulnerable members of poor families were protected by God's Law. Girls were then, and are still, regularly sold in poor communities; sent into larger households as servants, or sadly in many cases, as prostitutes or mistresses for wealthy men. The Mosaic System provided protection for all such girls whose families had no money to arrange a wedding for them and would have been unable to support or care for them.

Indentured service for the girl was to be sexually safe for her under the Law. If she was desired by a wealthy member of the household, then she was to be "betrothed" formally and a wedding held at the household's expense, and if she fell out of favour later she was not to be cast aside, nor was she allowed to be sold to any other master. How safe are our young women? Let us be challenged by this ancient law and keep our children safer than the statistics would indicate they are! Too many children are abused when in the care of so called "Christian" people. This ought not to be!

4. Murder and manslaughter are separated by criminal intention, and the Mosaic Law was the first code to make this distinction fully and equitably. We are still to make this distinction today and the basis of this Law is correct. Capital punishment is allowed, even ordered by God; for innocent life is to be taken as sacred, and the criminal's life is to be taken from them on the Creator's orders.

While we acknowledge this fact, we personally rejoice when "Life imprisonment" means life, and when those who have been condemned to life get saved in jail and find the one who is the Way the Truth and the Life! Truly then the "Lifer" gets real LIFE. We rejoice in the number of "lifers" who have found the Lord in jail, and have gone on and graduated in the EBCWA Diploma program and are now teaching God's Word in jail. They are standing like Paul, slaves to their jail term, but free to serve the Ruler of all, and winning eternal rewards for their faithful and acceptable service. These men are new creatures in Christ Jesus, just as Paul was, and they celebrate the life they have in jail, serving the One who have given them life to serve him.

5. Let us learn from the wisdom of Moses and be clear thinking in our application of the Word to life, just as he is here. He was Holy Spirit led and so are we to be.

REFLECTION UPON THE GREAT GRACE WE HAVE ALL RECEIVED IN CHRIST JESUS: DR LEWIS SPERRY CHAFER IDENTIFIED 34 "GIFTS" GIVEN AT SALVATION

Listed below are the 34 things God provides for every believer at the point of salvation. Let us rejoice in them all.

1. In the eternal plan of God. (Sharing the destiny of Christ)
 - a) Foreknown (Acts 2:23, Romans 8:29, 1 Peter 1:2)
 - b) Elect (Romans 8:33, Colossians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 1:4, Titus 1:1)
 - c) Predestined (Romans 8:29, 30, Ephesians 1:5, 11)
 - d) Chosen (Matthew 22:14, 1 Peter 2:4)
 - e) Called (1 Thessalonians 5:24)
2. Reconciled
 - a) By God (2 Corinthians 5:18, 19, Colossians 1:20)
 - b) To God. (Romans 5:10, 2 Corinthians 5:20, Ephesians 2:14-17)
3. Redeemed (Romans 3:24, Colossians 1:14, 1 Peter 1:18)
4. Condemnation removed. (John 3:18, 5:24, Romans 8:1)
5. Under Grace instead of judgment; God is satisfied with the death of His Son. (Romans 3:24-26, 1 John 2:2)
6. All sins judged by the death of Christ. (Romans 4:25, Ephesians 1:7, 1 Peter 2:24)
7. Dead to old life - alive to God.
 - a) Crucified with Christ. (Romans 6:6, Galatians 2:20)
 - b) Dead with Christ. (Romans 6:8, Colossians 3:3, 1 Peter 2:24)
 - c) Buried with him. (Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12)
 - d) Raised with Christ. (Romans 6:4, Colossians 3:1)
8. Free from the law.
 - a) Dead. (Romans 7:4)

- b) Delivered. (Romans 6:14, 7:6, 2 Corinthians 3:11, Galatians 3:25)
9. Regenerated. (John 13:10, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Titus 3:5)
- a) Born again. (John 3:7, 1 Peter 1:23)
- b) Children of God. (Galatians 3:26)
- c) Sons of God. (John 1:12, 2 Corinthians 6:18, 1 John 3:2)
- d) A new creation. (2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15, Ephesians 2:10)
10. Adopted. (Romans 8:15, 8:23 (future) Ephesians 1:5)
11. Acceptable to God. (Ephesians 1:6, 1 Peter 2:5)
- a) Made righteous (Romans 3:22, 1 Corinthians 1:30, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Philippians 3:9)
- b) Sanctified positionally. (1 Corinthians 1:30, 6:11)
- c) Perfected forever. (Hebrews 10:14)
- d) Made meet (qualified) (Colossians 1:12)
12. Justified (declared righteous). (Romans 3:24, 5:1, 5:9, 8:30, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Titus 3:7)
13. Forgiven all trespasses. (Ephesians 1:7, 4:32, Colossians 1:14, 2:13, 3:13)
14. Made nigh. (Heavenly citizenship based on reconciliation) (Luke 10:20, Ephesians 2:13, 19)
15. Delivered from the kingdom of Satan. (Colossians 1:13, 2:15)
16. Transferred into God's kingdom. (Colossians 1:13)
17. On a secure foundation. (1 Corinthians 3:11, 10:4, Ephesians 2:20)
18. A gift from God the Father to Christ. (John 10:29, 17:2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 24)
19. Delivered from the power of the sin nature. (Romans 2:29, Colossians 2:11)
20. Appointed priests unto God.
- a) Holy priesthood. (1 Peter 2:5)
- b) Royal priesthood. (1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 1:6)
21. Under the care of God as a chosen generation and a peculiar people. (Titus 2:14, 1 Peter 2:9)
22. Given access to God. (Romans 5:2, Ephesians 2:18, Hebrews 4:14, 10:19, 20)
23. Within the "much more" care of God. (Romans 5:9, 10)
- a) Objects of His love. (Ephesians 2:4, 5:2)
- b) Objects of His grace.
- i) For salvation. (Ephesians 2:8, 9)
- ii) For keeping. (1 Peter 1:5)
- iii) For service (John 17:18)
- iv) For instruction (Titus 2:12)
- c) Objects of His power. (Ephesians 1:19, Philippians 2:13)
- d) Objects of His faithfulness. (Philippians 1:6, Hebrews 13:5,6)
- e) Objects of His peace. (John 14:27)
- f) Objects of His consolation. (2 Thessalonians 2:16)
- g) Objects of His intercession. (Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25)
24. God's inheritance (Possession). (Ephesians 1:18)
25. Beneficiaries of an inheritance as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. (Romans 8:17, Ephesians 1:14, Colossians 3:24, Hebrews 9:15, 1 Peter 1:4)
26. Having a new position. (Ephesians 2:6)
- a) Partners with Christ in life. (Colossians 3:4)
- b) Partners with Christ in service. (1 Corinthians 1:9)
- c) Workers together with God. (1 Corinthians 3:9, 2 Corinthians 6:1)
- d) Ministers of the New Testament. (2 Corinthians 3:6)
- e) Ambassadors. (2 Corinthians 5:20)
- f) Living epistles. (2 Corinthians 3:3)
- g) Ministers of God. (2 Corinthians 6:4)
27. Recipients of eternal life. (John 3:15, 10:28, 20:31, 1 John 5:11, 12)

28. Members of the family and household of God. (Galatians 6:10, Ephesians 2:19)
29. Light in the Lord. (Ephesians 5:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:4)
30. United to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
 a) In God. (1 Thessalonians 1:1) of "God in you" (Ephesians 4:6)
 b) In Christ. (John 14:20 of "Christ in you" Colossians 1:27)
 i) A member in His body. (1 Corinthians 12:13)
 ii) A branch in the vine. (John 15:5)
 iii) A stone in the building. (Ephesians 2:21, 22, 1 Peter 2:5)
 iv) A sheep in the flock. (John 10:27-29)
 v) A part of His bride. (Ephesians 5:25)
 vi) A priest of the kingdom of priests. (1 Peter 2:9)
 vii) A saint of the "new species". (2 Corinthians 5:17)
 c) In the Spirit. (Romans 8:9) of "the Spirit in you"
31. Recipients of the ministries of the Holy Spirit.
 a) Born of the Spirit. (John 3:6)
 b) Baptized with the Spirit. (Acts 1:5, 1 Corinthians 12:13)
 c) Indwelt by the Spirit. (John 7:39, Romans 5:5, 8:9, 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19, Galatians 4:6, 1 John 3:24)
 d) Sealed by the Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 4:30)
 e) Given spiritual gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:11, 27-31, 13:1, 2)
32. Glorified. (Romans 8:30)
33. Complete in Him. (Colossians 2:10)
34. Possessors of every spiritual blessing provided in eternity past. (Ephesians 1:3)

EXODUS 21:18-36

“18 And if men strive together, and one smite another with a stone, or with his fist, and he die not, but keepeth his bed: 19 If he rise again, and walk abroad upon his staff, then shall he that smote him be quit: only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed. 20 And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished. 21 Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money. 22 If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. 23 And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, 24 Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. 26 And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for his eye's sake. 27 And if he smite out his manservant's tooth, or his maidservant's tooth; he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake. 28 If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit. 29 But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death. 30 If there be laid on him a sum of money, then he shall give for the ransom of his life whatsoever is laid upon him. 31 Whether he have gored a son, or have gored a daughter, according to this judgment shall it be done unto him. 32 If the ox shall push a manservant or a maidservant; he shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned. 33 And if a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein; 34 The owner of the pit shall make it good, and give money unto the owner of them; and the dead beast shall be his. 35 And if one man's ox hurt another's, that he die; then they shall sell the live ox, and divide the money of it; and the dead ox also they shall divide. 36 Or if it be known that the ox hath used to push in time past, and his owner hath not kept him in; he shall surely pay ox for ox; and the dead shall be his own.”

REFLECTION

Verses 18 – 19. The Law covered every eventuality. In struggles between men one may pick up a “blunt instrument”, or wood or stone and strike the other. What was to happen if the man died was clear; the striker was to be placed under arrest and executed if criminal intent was present. But what was to happen if the person was seriously injured but recovered? The brilliance of the Mosaic Law is seen here. The man who struck the other is to work for, or pay for all loss of wages for the injured man until he is able to resume his support of his family.

He was also to “cause him to be thoroughly healed”; in other words he was to pay all medical bills to ensure that man was fully restored. If the man was permanently injured, then the striker was to cover his losses for life! Responsibility for causing the injury was total, and therefore the liability for support of dependent people, or the injured man himself, was also total. The man was to keep supporting his victim until that man was able to walk around with his staff, and that doesn't mean on crutches, it means able to walk abroad with a staff, for protection, in his hand.

Verses 20 – 21. This appears at first sight to be an anomaly in the law and value the servant less than the free man. The clear message was, that murder was murder and was to be punished by the full penalty of the Law, but if the person was injured and lasted for more than two days before they died then the master was not to be punished. Now God is not unjust, so pause and reflect upon this, for on the surface, this appears a great evil. Firstly, the master had the right to chasten a lazy servant with a stick. Proverbs 10:13, 13:24, 29:19. If he hurt the servant he lost their working ability and so the loss was his. It was foolish and short sighted for a master to beat a servant so that he could not work, for he lost their usefulness. If the master lost his temper he robbed himself by over correcting the servant.

If the master intended to kill then the servant died within forty eight hours, and in such a circumstance the master was executed immediately. If the servant lived for more than two days then it was evident that the master had not intended to kill the man and so the loss of his earning power to the master was considered a fine for the manslaughter.

Before you jump to the conclusion that the life of the serving man was cheap here pause. For all free men a similar system was in effect; for manslaughter a significant fine would normally be the punishment. There was no jail term in ancient Israel, only death or fines. The fine was paid when the killing was accidental, without criminal intent, and the fine was to compensate the surviving family for the loss of earning power of the slain person. As the master had lost this himself – there was no further fine if he had clearly not intended to injure the person unto death.

We are used to punishment by imprisonment, but such a punishment actually means everyone loses. The dead man's family have still lost their loved one, and they have lost his earning power, and they are not compensated. The killer is locked away and his family loses their bread winner. Two families suffer and the State pays \$50,000 - \$100,000 per prisoner, per year, for the privilege of it all. Society is "safe" while the criminal is locked away, but unless she/he is saved in jail emerges a bitter and still evil menace – there is little long term gain apart from salvation.

Under the Mosaic Law the fine was set by the judges and the dead person's family was compensated immediately, and the killer paid the money, or was sold into bonded service to pay for it, if he couldn't. Justice was immediate and everyone alive was still working, with no loss, other than the life, which was judged accidental. As we will see below, (verses 26ff), the assault upon a servant that led to any permanent injury or disablement led to serious consequences for a master.

Verses 22 – 25. The rights of the unborn child to be considered a full member of society are here enshrined in the Mosaic Law. If two men fight and a pregnant woman is injured in the fight, and she loses the baby, then the man who struck her is to be guilty of murder if he struck her with any intent to injure. The Law and the later Rabbis set the unborn child as a full member of society if it was a fully formed child and looked ready for life. If it died in the process or the woman died as a result of the blow then the striker would be certainly executed. If there was any injury then the woman's husband could set the punishment for the man who struck his wife. He could demand equality of injury, or fine by way of compensation.

The judges would hear what the man requested, and they would decide what was equitable, but the Law's guidance was what is known as the principle of Lex Talionis; or "eye for eye". It meant that any injury inflicted by the perpetrator on the victim, could be inflicted by the victim on the perpetrator. If the person lost an eye, then the guilty person had an eye put out at the judge's bench. If they had a leg broken then the perpetrator had a leg broken. This may appear barbaric, but it was a salutary reminder to everyone in society, that as you mete out to another, it will be meted out to you! Read Jesus words, Matthew 7:1-2, Mark 4:24, Luke 6:37-38.

It was a principle of absolute justice, and any thug who thought they could inflict pain without having any themselves were clearly warned that they would feel every bit as much pain as their victim had. Such things might have a salutary effect still upon thugs, who swagger away from our courts after beating a person up and causing great pain, and they swagger and insult the public because they have had a minor fine or some community service for their evil.

Stupid people (and all thugs are stupid people) only understand pain, and under God's system they felt it, and probably only felt it once, for they learned! This principle is still used in Islamic countries and you are a lot safer as a local trader in those places than in most Western nations. Thieves who have seen the severed hands of other thieves will tend to find other things to do with their hands than steal!

Verses 26 – 27. The master who struck a servant so that they lost their eye was forced to immediately set that servant free, and send them away with all the gifts that would have been theirs at emancipation. If the servant was injured in any other manner there was compensation to pay as set by the judge. The servant had rights, and they were to be heard by the judge. If a tooth was knocked out, then the servant was to be let walk permanently free.

Can you see that this Law made it very clear to masters that any excessive beating of any servant would lead to the loss of that person's value to the household. To knock out their tooth was to lose them permanently and all the money you had paid for their service was gone. For a master to lose their temper was an expensive thing. The Mosaic Law was the best inducement to "anger management" that the world has ever seen.

Verses 28 – 29. It was common then as now for animals to get out of control at times, and just as now, some farmers are careless in their treatment of their animals and careless about keeping potentially dangerous animals under control. We have recently had in New Zealand a man fined for not keeping his dog under control and it killed his relative.

Under the Mosaic Law that man would have been executed, although in his case he faces a life long sentence of the death of a loved relative, and my prayer is that he finds forgiveness in Jesus, for that is the only place he will find peace.

Such cases are what this law has in mind, and we will see in the following verses there are more laws relating to this careless ownership of potentially dangerous animals also. If an ox (or any animal of value to the farmer) killed any person then that animal was to be killed immediately and burned. It was to be a total loss to the owner, who had failed to keep it safe from hurting people, but the owner himself escaped punishment, but only if he had not expected the animal to attack anyone.

The rule was different however if the owner had been previously warned for the dangerous behaviours of this animal and had taken no precautions to keep it from hurting others. All that was required for the owner to be punished was for the ox to have previously pushed with its horns against anybody. If it has given this indication of potential danger, then the owner was totally responsible for any deaths it later caused, as if he had killed the people. If he had been fully informed of the danger that this animal posed to the general public and he has not kept it securely in behind a stone wall, then the ox died and so could the owner of it, although the local people, (who had lost their relative and friend to the ox) were able to ask the judges for a fine as the next verses make clear.

Verses 30 – 32. If the local people feel sorrow for the farmer and owner of the killer ox, then they could ask the judges for a stay of execution, and the imposition of a fine instead. This fine will be a “ransom of death”; he will escape the death penalty, but only by fully compensating the family for their dead relative’s earning power over at least the next seven years. The price was high for the farmer if he was careless, and the action of the law could not be avoided by legal fine points as too often responsibility is avoided today. An oxen was worth several months wages; up to a years wages. The total fine could be eight years salary for the man. Work that out in your own case and see what an incentive it is to keep your animals safe from harming others. The more I read of this Law the more I long for our own Law to move in this direction. Don’t waste time day dreaming about this, for we have already gone past the point of no return, but here we see the Law of the Millennium – and it will be justly applied by the Lord himself.

The Mosaic Code was just, fair, quick and worked when applied consistently and honestly. It provided real remedies and the incentive was upon everyone to take responsibility or face certain and specified consequences. In our modern world a man can be careless with his dog, and it can rob a neighbour of their wage earner, and their loss is \$50,000 per annum for the next twenty years, but the guilty man’s fine might be \$50-00. The Mosaic Law was equitable and when applied with integrity provided safety for all. As you read these regulations, remember these will be the laws on earth under the Lord’s rulership during the Millennial Kingdom.

Verses 33 – 34. We move here to what we call basic “Health and Safety” regulations. Due care and consideration of the implications of your actions upon the safety of others was required in all things you did in the open fields. Any digging was to be covered over, or protected in such a way that no harm could come to any person or animals that might wander there. If you did not look at any work you did and ask the right questions of yourself, then you may be liable for significant damages. The right questions are, and remain to our own day, “Can anyone be hurt here?”, and, “Can I do anything here to make this as safe as it can be for a passer by?” God requires “duty of care”.

Those who failed to ask these questions and take action to protect others were immediately fined the value of any animal injured, although the guilty man got to keep the carcass of the dead animal, but the owner of the animal got money to immediately buy another one. The concern of the Lord in His Law was that those who had losses that affected their ability to earn and support their families were immediately able to make them good, and so be able to meet their obligation to support their loved ones. God calls us to think of “others” and this Law centres around this concept.

Verses 35 – 36. If two oxen fight and one kills the other, then the two farmers are to sell the live animal, and divide the proceeds; each sharing 50% of the loss. The dead animal becomes food for them and is also divided. Fault is not apportioned of animals, for they do not have “intention” in any criminal sense, so one farmer could not argue that the other ox was a “bad animal”, (unless, as we will see below there was evidence of past behaviour) for the Law stated that the loss was to be equal in such a case. The incentive again was on all farmers to keep their animals away from other people’s animals if there was the slightest chance of fighting that might lead to loss.

The exception to the 50:50 split of the loss was if one of the animals was known to push it’s horns at others, and if that was proved, and the farmer had not kept the animal inside behind secure walls, and it killed another, then the total value of the dead animal was to be paid by that farmer to the man who lost his working ox, and he was left with the dead animal. Any farmer with a fighting animal was under great pressure to have that animal butchered for meat quickly, or keep it well and securely locked away or it could place him in poverty and servitude.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. “Others” is always the Lord’s motto for us all. We are to be considerate in all things. In all actions we are expected to ask about the welfare of others and the implications of our action on others. How well do we measure up in our home, our neighbourhood, and our workplace with this? Moses mentors correct mental attitude, for it is God’s will.
2. Biblical Law will be International Law one day. It will not be applied by act of any parliament, but the actions of the Lord himself. You are reading here the principles of God relating to Law and Justice. This Law will rule the earth one

day when Jesus rules from Jerusalem. The principles behind these words are to be taught to every believer today, for in them we see the heart of God for equity in all things amongst men.

3. The unborn child was granted full rights as soon as it resembled a human being, and this is quite early in the developmental process. Let us be sure we grant unborn children the rights that the Lord does, and let us be sure we value others and their rights as the Lord does here. Let us be challenged about our slack laws, and realise why thugs and criminals mock the law and the innocent. There are only two options in this world; either the criminal fears, or the people do! Let us always argue that the Law be feared, for then our homes, our loved ones, and our goods are safe.

REFLECTIONS UPON THE RULE OF THE LORD IN THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

1. "Thy will be done on earth" will be fulfilled in the Millennium. (Matthew 6:10)

2. The Kingdom is the Millennium, the first 1,000 years of Jesus' eternal reign. It will be after the second advent, on the old earth. (Revelation 20:4-6)

- a) Promised (2 Samuel 7:8-17, Psalm 89:20-33)
- b) Prophesied (Isaiah 2:1-5, 2:11, 12, 35, 55, 56, 62:11)
- c) Presented (Matthew, Mark, Luke) Israel, not the church)
- d) Postponed Epistles of New Testament (for church age)
- e) Proclaimed (Revelation 10) (Angelic herald) (Revelation 11:1-14) (Human heralds)
- f) Plagiarized (Revelation 13)
- g) Perfected (Revelation 11:15-19)

3. Issues relating to the Millennial Kingdom

- a) The Character of God - will He keep His word to Israel? Yes. Jesus Christ will reign.
- b) Unconditional Covenant - will He keep Covenant? Yes. Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic, New - all fulfilled in the Millennium.
- c) Dispersion of Israel - will He recover them again? Yes. At the second advent.
- d) Advent - will He return to earth at the worst period in history? Yes. At the end of the Tribulation.
- e) Millennial - The Kingdom of Jesus Christ is eternal, why the emphasis on the first 1,000 years? Jesus will do what Satan has been trying to do for 6,000 years; He will create perfect environment in an instant, as a demonstration to prove that perfect environment is not the answer; regeneration is.

4. Principles from Micah 4:1-8

- a) The Kingdom will be supreme. (Micah 4:1)
- b) The Kingdom will be universal. (Micah 4:2)
- c) The Kingdom will be peaceful. (Micah 4:3)
- d) The Kingdom will secure universal prosperity. (Micah 4:4-5)
- e) The nation of Israel ruled by the Lord for the Kingdom. (Micah 4:6-8)

NOTES

CHAPTER 22**INTRODUCTION**

The Laws (Mishpatim – laws of action – centring in the rights of people) continue in this chapter. The first seventeen verses still referring to violation and righting of issues of property and personal rights. The last half of the chapter covers specific rules for Israel as a covenant and special people before God and their need to be different to the nations around them, and be totally separate in their moral, financial, religious and ritualistic practises, and to avoid like the plague all occult practises.

They were to be a people who stood for holiness, and were to stand like beacons of righteousness that would be impressive to the nations around them. People were meant to look at Israel, admire them, long for the righteous and just society they had, and seek to be like them; we are under the same requirements. **Matthew 5:14-20**.

As we go through this chapter, as with the last, I expect you will say again and again, as I do, “what a just and fair Law this was”. Remember, these laws will be the Laws that will one day rule over all the earth and they will produce perfect security for the first time in history under the rulership of the Lord Jesus Christ and the exercise of His appointed judges – the church age believers. It is worth learning these laws now, for the Bible appears to indicate that some from amongst us may be the rulers exercising authority under the Lord through them.

EXODUS 22:1-17

“22:1 If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. 2 If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him. 3 If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him; for he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. 4 If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double. 5 If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field; of the best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution. 6 If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed therewith; he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution. 7 If a man shall deliver unto his neighbour money or stuff to keep, and it be stolen out of the man's house; if the thief be found, let him pay double. 8 If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto the judges, to see whether he have put his hand unto his neighbour's goods. 9 For all manner of trespass, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing which another challengeth to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whom the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbour. 10 If a man deliver unto his neighbour an ass, or an ox, or a sheep, or any beast, to keep; and it die, or be hurt, or driven away, no man seeing it: 11 Then shall an oath of the LORD be between them both, that he hath not put his hand unto his neighbour's goods; and the owner of it shall accept thereof, and he shall not make it good. 12 And if it be stolen from him, he shall make restitution unto the owner thereof. 13 If it be torn in pieces, then let him bring it for witness, and he shall not make good that which was torn. :14 And if a man borrow ought of his neighbour, and it be hurt, or die, the owner thereof being not with it, he shall surely make it good. :15 But if the owner thereof be with it, he shall not make it good: if it be an hired thing, it came for his hire. 16 And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife. 17 If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins.”

REFLECTION

Verses 1- 4. There was no jail in Israel. They were smart enough to know that jails do nothing for crime statistics except delay them, if you have enough people locked away inside. The Lord's Law is far more intelligent than man's laws, and the Lord made the Law provide instant penalties that were true deterrents, and that fully compensated the person who bore any loss with full restoration of what they lost with interest. The thief had to restore what was stolen, but not just what he took; he had to repay two, four or, five times the amount taken, and if he could not restore it, he was sold into bonded service for seven years immediately.

The old concept of “hard labour” drew close to this, but all our so called “human rights” legislation has undermined this. The thief was expected to work off their debt if they could not pay it directly. The gains from theft were very uncertain indeed and most thieves were nailed quickly when this law was applied. This Law of God was focused on permanent life change by the criminal, by the certainty of absolute penalty. Our modern laws are woolly and produce arrogant disregard of them by smart criminals and devious lawyers. No such evils are allowed under God's Law.

If the thief had killed or sold the animal he has stolen then the penalty was five fold, or four fold for a sheep, but if the animal was alive and in his possession when he was caught, then he was to restore double to the one from whom he stole. If the thief was killed in the act of committing a crime then the killer was deemed to have acted correctly and no blood could be sought by the relatives of the dead thief. A criminal in the act of committing crimes had no rights other than to a fair trial and instant fine, if he gave up quickly, or a burial at his family's expense if he did not. Penalty for theft was restoration for losses, or slavery if he couldn't pay.

In today's world we have fines that build to such a point that they cannot ever be paid by the lazy thief who will not work, but we are too spineless to institute hard labour so that he can pay the debt off by working it off! In this day the thief could not escape the consequences of his theft by "designer poverty"; he would be sold for seven years labour to repay the one he stole from immediately, and then by his work over seven years he repaid the man who bought his labour. Justice was done and done quickly. **Leviticus 6:1-6**. The basic principles of good law were established in these rules. There was quick justice for the person who had lost by the crime, and so good people respected the Law, because it protected and honoured them. Secondly there was the deterrence effect of the fine system, with it's back up in bonded service for those who couldn't pay.

Verses 5-6. Malice towards others who are more successful has been a factor of the Old Sin Nature of man since the beginning, and any malicious act was punished quickly and consistently. Also the carelessness of a farmer who didn't concern himself that his animals ate the fodder of a neighbour was punished. We have this principle enshrined in our English "Law of Tort", where actual losses are to be measured and restitution made. The intention of the man is important here; "he puts his animals in", rather than they break in through a wall. If the animals break in, or an earthquake breaks down a wall this law will not apply, unless the farmer concerned makes no attempt to secure his animals as quickly as possible.

If there is criminal or malicious intent, then from the best of his own fields and vine yards, he is to make full restitution. Note that it was to be "of the best"; he could not give poor fodder for the fodder his animals ate, nor could he give blighted grapes and vine to replace the one eaten. Even if the fodder eaten by the animals was poor, the malicious man was to repay from the best, and the judges were to ensure it occurred. The same principle applied to loss by fire that was carelessly lit. Any damage done or losses of crops caused by a fire was to be made good by the person who lit the fire, whether they intended to cause damage or not. In a hot dry summer great care was needed with fires, and those who did not take such care were to face the full consequences of their actions.

Verses 7-8. Here we have cases of dishonesty and possible breach of trust. In some circumstances a neighbour would ask a fellow neighbour to guard his goods or crops while he may have had to attend a wedding or funeral elsewhere, or because his neighbour had a better place for such storage.

Neighbours were encouraged to work together, so what would happen when what was left was stolen by a third person? In such a case, if the thief was caught then there was not a problem, for the thief had to repay all that was stolen doubled, to the original owner on his return, or be sold into seven year bonded service to repay the debt. Proverbs 6:30-31.

The fine for the thief, which might bankrupt him, actually ended up providing for him and his family if he was poor. He ought to have faced his poverty and sold himself into service, but if he failed to do that voluntarily, then he was sold, and the debts were paid, the people who suffered theft were paid, and the thief and his family were in a household where they were fed and clothed, and guarded/watched for the next seven years. He faced consequences, but also got care.

Verse 9. In the matter of what is called here "trespass" and abandoned goods the judges were to decide who owned the item on the basis of the evidence brought and if there was any malice or carelessness of action they were empowered to award a fine of double the value of the item or animal that trespassed. Deuteronomy 16:18-20. Now the "trespass" refers to fraud, when a person obtains the goods or animals of another by some trick, and there is a dispute about ownership. The judges are to carefully and honestly hear testimony as to whose the item is and the process by which it came to the other person and once the decision is made, the fraudster is to be treated as if they are a thief; they are to pay double, for the loss and for their malice and planned deception.

Verses 10-13. Any "delivery" of any animal to a neighbour for the working use of the neighbour had to last for the job it was to do. A sick or dying animal could not be sold as if it was well. Any animal that died was to be compensated for. Any animal that was injured in the process of transfer was to be compensated for. Any animal that "disappeared" in suspicious circumstances was to be investigated and the man who sold the animal had to formally swear before the judges that he knew nothing of this. These were "tricks" and frauds that were common in the ancient world and remain so today, where unscrupulous men sell an item that is faulty, or sell and then recover the goods later by theft or fraud.

The process was "investigative justice", where the judges were expected to investigate and ask the right questions. All questions in such a process had to be answered. If the formal swearing takes place, that he has not taken the goods, or had any hand in their disappearance, then the man who has suffered the loss was to accept that formal declaration and he could claim no fine. If there is any proof of theft, then the thief is to make restitution and pay double to the man he sold to then stole from. If a lion or bear has torn the animal to pieces, then there is nothing owed to the new owner from the seller, but the evidence for a wild animal attack had to be brought before the judges.

Verses 14-15. When any contracting is done between farmers these rules applied to any losses of animals in the process. If a farmer hired a yolk of oxen alone and used them to plough his field and one died or was injured in the process, then the hirer had to pay the cost of the replacement animal, or any real losses of productivity, to the owner of the oxen. If the owner himself came with the animals and worked them himself, and any animal died or was injured, then he had to bear the loss himself. It was obviously worth while, when hiring assistance, to hire a working team of animals under the control of their owner. It was more expensive, but carried less risk.

This was also a rule that protected the animals, as a man who hired animals may over work them to try to “get his money’s worth” and so kill or injure an animal by harsh treatment. This rule made it not worth his while to do such a thing, or his loss would be significant, and made it easier and more convenient to hire the owner also, so the animals would be better treated, and more employment opportunities were made in the community.

Verses 16-17. This rule is placed in the property area because under the law, the father of a girl controlled her marriage proposals and was the protector of her virginity. If any man had sex with a girl who was not betrothed to him, he violated the girl, ruined her prospects for marriage to another man, and insulted her father by not having spoken to him about the girl before seducing her. The situation here is “enticement” or seduction, not rape, which will be dealt with elsewhere. This is a girl who was not betrothed to another, for if she was betrothed to another man, then the punishment was far more severe. All adultery was punishable by death; for both the parties in the adultery because it was a deliberate insult to God and man. Deuteronomy 22:22-30.

A man who seduces a girl is to pay the full “bride price” as her dowry, and is to formally seek her father’s permission for a marriage. If the father is not happy with this man, by his reputation or character, then the father may reject the marriage proposal, but he may keep the money. In the Deuteronomy passage a girl was protected from the charge of adultery only if she cried out for help and was in a city where such help could have been expected. A girl could always argue that she was forced against her will and then the man alone would be executed if there was evidence of her being forced. Any man who seduces a virgin and obtains permission and marries her may not ever divorce this wife. Deuteronomy 22:28-29.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Jails do not work for reform, although they do work for evangelism and Bible Colleges, as we have seen in a number of places in Africa. Prisons do not reform, nor do they address the needs of the thief’s family, nor the losses of the victim. The Mosaic Law perfectly answered the needs of their society by ensuring that all thefts were immediately made good, two fold, four fold or five fold. There was no loss to the victim of crime, and the criminal was immediately punished by hard labour to pay off his debt, and through the seven year indentured service option, he was always able to repay debts and his family was fed and educated about the foolishness of theft as a way to “earn a living”.

2. God cares about the victims of crime, and these often include the family of the criminal. God’s Law provided for all in it’s system, and ensured that, when it was properly applied, the innocent were protected and the guilty were immediately punished. Equity, transparency, and speed are essential for the Law to be respected, and in our modern English origin system all those principles have been lost. Let us rejoice that one day this Law will be the rule for the earth under the Lord Jesus Christ and the believers will be ruled, and will rule with justice.

3. God always cares about the details of the Law, and the issues of farming in this day were important to the Lord. The specific nature of the criminal acts are identified and the principles for judging given, so that later judges can be fair and just, and consistent in their rulings. The key principles of property rights, personal rights to safety and security, and the need for clear evidence of wrong doing with clear criminal intent, are all the hall mark aspects of a just and fair system.

EXODUS 22:18-31

“22:18 Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live. 19 Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death. 20 He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed. 21 Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. 22 Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. 23 If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; 24 And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless. 25 If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury. 26 If thou at all take thy neighbour’s raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down :27 For that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious. 28 Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people. 29 Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me. 30 Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen, and with thy sheep: seven days it shall be with his dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me. 31 And ye shall be holy men unto me: neither shall ye eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs.”

REFLECTION

The issues raised in this section are those that reflect upon the spiritual life, and life example, of the people of God in the midst of a pagan world. The nation of Israel was to be like a beacon of light in the darkness of the surrounding pagan nations. They were to be an example of what it could be like for the pagan nations if they followed the Lord. This meant that any evils had to be dealt with as soon as possible.

Verses 18 – 20. First we need to define our terms here. A “witch” was not a harmless old herbalist who made medicines for the poor people. By the 17th century of our era the so called “Witch Trial” in Salem and other places led to

the judicial murder of many who were simply practising an alternative life style, and often very biblical medicine. They were not “witches” in the biblical sense and their execution was evil and awful murder in biblical terms. The witch of the Mosaic Law was a woman/man who practised magical arts, utilized drugs, practised demon possession, all tied to the pagan religions, for the purpose of casting enchantments upon others in society for power, money or pleasure. They were practitioners of the magical arts of the pagan religions, and normally “sacred” immoral priests of the religion they followed, and they used their demon possessed powers for evil in society. They were gone to by people to enchant another and so defeat them in some enterprise, or punish them for a real or imagined misdeed. They had power, for they drew their strength from satanic religion, and directly from indwelling demons.

All who practised magical arts that drew their powers from demonic sources were to be immediately executed. It was important for their quick death, or they would pass their demonic power onto another and the evil would grow rather than be extinguished in the land. Demon possessed people will become very agitated as they are dying, for the demon within them needs to be passed on to another family member or associate so that it's work can continue through another human host. All who open themselves to demonic activity were to be executed as soon as any offence was proved so that this transmission was stopped; be they witches or warlocks (male or female).

Matthew 8:30-32. In this story from Jesus life the demons that inhabited the man sought to be embodied in the swine, and the Lord gave them permission, for He knew what the result would be, and there should not have been swine herds there anyway. Smarter than the men, the swine chose suicide above demonic possession, and all killed themselves.

A close friend of mine came from a demonic possessed family. They had been involved in séances and other demonic activity for many generations. She was led to salvation, and so released from the evil that infected the rest of the family, but as her mother died, she desperately tried to get my friend, her oldest daughter, to “receive the gift of power” and have the demon passed to her. My friend reported that her mother died in great torment, for the demon could not be passed on to another, and it made her passing very traumatic for all who witnessed it. Sadly my friend's mother rejected the Lord right until the end, and so died without any hope, any peace, and without eternal life. Leviticus 19:26-31, 20:1-6, 27, Deuteronomy 18:9-14, Galatians 5:20.

Anyone whose sexual appetite was so jaded that they had sex with any animal, was to be executed as soon as the sin was discovered. There was to be no mercy shown to those whose sexual appetites became abnormal. They were to be seen as evil, not sick, and not psychologically disordered, just perverted by evil. When we follow evil desires we will become psychologically disordered, but that is seen as a result, not a cause.

I have worked in the counselling area of sexual abuse for over twenty five years now, and although abusers were often sexually abused themselves, their abuse cannot be seen as a cause, for the majority of abused children go on to abhor this evil and bring their children up with safety. Those who abuse themselves and others sexually do so for the pleasure and power they obtain. They are without excuse before God. Their choice to follow evil rather than God's will, was their death warrant under the Mosaic Law, and they were to be dealt with quickly as a lesson, and protection to others.

Sexual perversions develop because people become more and more focused on sex as a source of personal pleasure and power, rather than as a bond of love between a married couple. Any perversion away from pleasure between a married couple was to be dealt with severely, because all sexual perversion destroys marriage and the family, and once started on a sexual pleasure addiction, there is no stopping the person involved, and they will act out their perverted thoughts with animals, the same sex, and with children. Satanic activity always destroys the person, and then others.

Many of the pagan religions of the days of Moses had sex as a central part, and all satanic religions from the beginning have had sex as a central aspect, as it provides the pleasure and the power to secure people's addiction to the evil. All such religions and the people who practised them were to be destroyed. Leviticus 18:19-30, 20:10-26, Deuteronomy 27:15-26. These two passages mention the results of the sexual deviations of the Canaanites; these people and their animals were infected with sexually transmitted diseases that could kill. They and their animals had to be eliminated for safety.

All who decided that eclectic religion suited them and desired to sacrifice to many gods were to be eliminated from Israelite society. There was no room for anyone to serve other gods/demons in Israel, for they were to be a holy and separated nation before God and the presence of anyone who worshipped other gods was a pollution that was not to be tolerated at all. Because the worship of the pagan gods involved sexual and other evils, like child sacrifice, there was a double reason for the elimination of these people.

Firstly they were an abomination to the Lord and broke the nation's unity before God and brought divine judgment upon the people because of their evils. Secondly, the worship of the pagan gods did not end with a sacrifice of an animal or some wheat or wine, it ended with sexual immorality and often with the rape and/or murder of children. This was not a case of God being too harsh or extreme, but of God being careful and protective of others.

Verses 21 – 24. The abuse of others for sexual pleasure has been discussed, and now the rules move to the subject of financial or judicial abuse of the powerless in society. If people abused the weak for personal gain, using direct threat or force, or judicial means, then they were to know that they would be judged very harshly by God for this evil. They would be punished as a nation if they did not judge rightly, so the judges were placed under a solemn duty to care for their community, but they were also aware that they needed to be just and fair, or the entire nation would pay for their injustice.

They had served as slaves in Egypt and so they were not to abuse the stranger amongst them. If they failed to remember that they had been slaves, and became arrogant and abusive, then the Lord would directly discipline them for their evil. So often people forget from what humble origins they have come and abuse others. We call it "Nouveau Riche" syndrome, whereby the most arrogant are often the most recently enriched. While it is the stuff of the gossip columnists it is an evil in God's sight, and all who would abuse the weaker or poorer than themselves need to accept that they make themselves the enemies of God.

Widows were particularly vulnerable as were orphans and could easily be enslaved by unscrupulous men; indeed this was the norm in other pagan societies. They were under the special care of God in Israel and were to be looked after by society through the judges care and the individual's taking responsibility for their needy relatives, even if by indentured service. No-one was to be homeless in Israel; all were to be cared for and provided with work, so that they had self respect. Charity without responsibility produces dependency and disaster for the individual, the family and the nation. There was to be no "welfarism", but there was to be no starvation either where people were prepared to work. Those who were not prepared to work didn't eat. **1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12.**

If the Israelites forget any of these rules, and the oppressed cry out to God, then the Lord's promise is that He will hear their cry and He will judge His own people, even if those praying are not Israelites! The Lord will deal with His people's evil by severely judging the people who abuse others, and that means they may be condemned to death by crime, disease, or invasion. To forget your duty of care to those in need is a serious thing for the believer who has been saved by grace. As we have been treated by the Lord, just so are we to treat others. **Psalms 78:57-64, 146:5-10, Proverbs 22:22-23, Matthew 6:14-15, 18:31-35.** These verses with those above are excellent for home group reflection.

Verses 25 – 27. The rules for those who loaned money or goods were strict. They were protected by the Law, and could be sure that if they loaned to any person that they would get their money back due to the seven year bonded service provision for any defaulter on a loan. They could take clothes for security of a loan but the cloak had to be returned to the person each night so that the borrower was able to get sleep on a cold night.

The Lord cared for the poor and so are we expected to. They were expected to work for their bread, but none were to take advantage of them in their distress. No interest was to be charged for any loan. A simple fee was charged for a loan, or a percentage of profit on any venture that the money was used for. The lender was sharing the risk and so they shared the profit, but they were not to charge interest rates that were open to abuse, and thereby deliberately bankrupt the borrower. If the poor man called aloud to the Lord the promise of God was that He would hear that abused borrower and judge the lender severely.

Verses 28 – 31. The command is not about "gods", but is a reference to "Elohim" – to God himself in three persons. The plural is used in the title of God as a reminder that the Lord works amongst man and has revealed Himself in three personalities through the centuries. The command regarding cursing God also extended to God's appointed rulers. The princes of the people were to be respected as was the Lord their God. Authority was to be respected and obeyed in all things that did not conflict with the commands of God. No ruler could order a person to break the Law; if such a thing occurred the believer was to tell the ruler that he could not break the commandment of God and take whatever punishment the ruler gave, confident that the Lord would deal with that ruler.

The next commands are demands for faith to be expressed well before there is evidence of prosperity coming. The "First Fruits Offering" was to be made to God, well ahead of the rest of the crops coming in. Those without faith might delay the first fruits offering to make sure that the real crop was coming in and they had enough to feed themselves. God's command was, "step out in faith and offer the first fruits fully and completely, and trust Me for the rest of the crop to follow".

There was also to be no delay in their offering of the first born of the animals each year, but on the eighth day the animal was to be taken from its mother and given to the priests. They were to be obedient and trust the Lord for the greater crop/herd, once the first fruit offering was in. They were all to separate themselves to the Lord's service, and that meant they were not to act and eat like pagans. Animals torn apart by the lions and bears were not to be eaten, but to be fed to the dogs. They were to eat food that was appropriate to the servants of the living God, and were not to act like wild men themselves. They were to be visibly different to their pagan neighbours.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Believers are to be visibly different to their pagan neighbours. They were not to act, eat or worship in any way that might be seen as pagan. All those who practised evil in the land were to be eliminated completely, so that the innocent, stupid and the young were protected from their evil.
2. Sexual and other perversions are the result of evil men's choices; they were not sickness, but sin. They were to be judged absolutely and swiftly lest the evil spread. All evil was to be seen like cancer and surgically removed.

CHAPTER 23**INTRODUCTION**

This section is a continuation of the previous rules from chapter 22. It is as if the Lord gave Moses many rules and regulations, each one of which builds upon the principles of the Ten Commandments. Each of these rules are principle driven and designed to be teaching points about the character, plan, and the purpose of God. The rights of others are to be respected and they are to be valued as you value yourself. Matthew 5:43-46, 23:37-39.

EXODUS 23:1-17

23:1 Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. **2** Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment: **3** Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause. **4** If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. **5** If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him. **6** Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause. **7** Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. **8** And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous. **9** Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. **10** And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: **11** But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy olive yard.

12 Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed. **13** And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth. **14** Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. **15** Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty.) **16** And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. **17** Three items in the year all thy males shall appear before the LORD God."

REFLECTION

Verses 1 - 3. Legal proceedings were to be carefully and thoughtfully undertaken, and no-one was to leap to a conclusion that a story was true without real and multiple evidence sources for it. Unless there was evidence for a statement it was not to be made! No-one was to bear any false witness, and it was forbidden to support evil men in false swearing to help them win their court cases. Gossip was seen as sinful and evil.

Majority opinions were not to be followed, but the truth sought in all things, and only the truth followed. The believer was to stand for truth irrespective of who stood with them. No part was to be played in the political court games of wealth and power, where evil men were perverting the course of justice.

Equally, no-one was to favour the poor man, just because he was poor; the truth alone was to determine what was the outcome of a court case. No personal sympathy was to guide any decision making, only truth. A hateful man who was right was to be supported, just as a nice pleasant man who was wrong, was to be condemned. The truth alone was to be the guide; justice was to be done without partiality. Psalms 15:1-5, 82:3-5, 101:5-8, Proverbs 10:18-19, 17:4-5, James 3:17-18.

Verses 4 - 5. All Israelites were to be their brother's keeper under the Mosaic Law. If they saw a neighbour's animal wandering away, they were expected to bring it back for their neighbour, as he would be expected to bring back their animal if it wandered. This would stop damage being done by it and having the neighbourhood broken up with fines being placed against people, when a quick action would stop all the losses and upset.

Even if the ass of a man you hated had fallen over under a burden, you were to go to the assistance of the animal and assist it. Your personal opinion of the owner is not to stop acts of charity towards their animals. I suspect part of this is the Lord's care for an animal, but even more it is a way to try to get the neighbours talking again, and breaking down hatred in the community. **Deuteronomy 22:1-4, Proverbs 25:21-22, Romans 12:17-21.** Our motto – "OTHERS!"

Verses 6 – 7. Stay well away from any matter concerning falsehood and lying. If you know others are lying to cover their evils and sins, be far away from them. Even if they are close to you as friends, keep well away if they start to lie, for you do not want to be associated with their lies, nor drawn into their web of deceit, nor be later asked to condemn them for their evil. The company of men who lie is to be avoided at all costs. No friendship is to induce you to lie to cover someone else's sins. Be careful in all matters of judgement regarding the death penalty, for to falsely accuse, or condemn a man to death is to be held by the Lord guilty of his murder. The death penalty still stood, but with these solemn warnings to be careful not to fail in the duty of truth.

God will not support any one who does a wicked thing in the name of justice. There was to be no vigilante justice, no lynch mobs, but the process of justice, on the basis of fair and equitably applied Law. A false witness was to receive the same punishment that the person who they accused would have received had they been found guilty. Deuteronomy 19:15-21. It was serious matter to abuse the holy Law of God.

Verses 8 – 9. No “gifts” were to be received by any judge, for any thing associated with his work. They may not be a bribe as such, but may later be used to exert leverage. Nothing was to be received that might compromise later judgment. **Deuteronomy 16:18-20, Proverbs 15:27, 17:23-24.** Injustice was to be hated, and justice sought. Racism was never to guide any matter before the Law, and the stranger was to be judged with equity and care, as if he/she had all the rights of an Israelite, because in God’s sight there were no strangers to His grace.

If the Israelites were not just in this matter they could be sure that the Lord would hear the prayers for the stranger, just as He heard their prayers when they were slaves in Egypt. Deuteronomy 24:14-18. We will all be tempted at times to break the Law, but we have a Saviour Who was tempted before us and is there to strengthen us in all things. Hebrews 2:17-18. Moses was to mentor these truths and so are all leaders who name the Lord’s name as their king.

Verses 10 – 11. There was a weekly Sabbath, and also a seven year Sabbath, and in that year the indentured servants were set free and all the people could eat freely of any field of what grew wild. The poor were not to be forbidden in that year to freely take from the wild fruits of vine, tree and field. This would be important in the first year of a servant’s release for he may not be able to find work for that year and in this provision of the Sabbath year the poor were assisted to find their feet and be able to feed their family until they were settled again. Leviticus 25:2-7, 11-12, 20-24.

Verses 12 – 13. The Sabbath was a rest made for all, and that meant every one. Mark 2:27. The servants and the servant’s children were all to rest upon that day. Strangers in the land were not to be set to work on the Sabbath; no one was to work, for all men and women were to know God’s law and see that the Creator knows how to care for His creatures. No cooking, cleaning, meal preparation of any sort was to be done; all were to rest and recharge their batteries after the labours of the week.

Studies have shown that the inner body clock of man is on a seven day cycle and that taking one full day a week off from labour allows people to recharge. We are wise if we follow this rule today. In my stress management work I tell people, “Moses was right!” and urge them to take at least one day a week from their labours and rebuild their physical energy for the tasks of the next week. God wanted sustainable work from His people, not burnout! He still does! As a leader we must not violate these “Sabbath principles” and ensure our staff always have at least one full day off per week, and proper sick leave and holiday times when they can rest and recharge without hassle from work.

It is a disgraceful thing when believers exhaust or burn out their workers or themselves, or when churches demand their pastors work seven days a week. The Lord cared and cares for the rest and recharge of His people. It is not laziness, it is commanded rest, and we must take one day in seven off and rest therein. God cares for us and wants us to recharge our batteries every week, so that with energy and focused minds we can serve Him. Burned out people cannot do anything except seek help, or make mischief! Exodus 31:13-17.

We are apt to hear attacks upon the legalism associated with the Sabbath in Jesus day, but we are to remember that the Lord broke the traditions of men, but never the Mosaic Law, for He was the one who gave it. The Sabbath concept is a vital one for any who wish to survive in difficult work roles. If you don’t take one day off in seven you will burn out! Getting sick, by breaking His Law, does not honour God! Every day is a “Sabbath rest” for us today, to God’s glory!

During all the Sabbaths there was to be mention only of the Lord, never any pagan gods. No name of any pagan god was ever to be used in Israel. They were to be treated as evil beings, as demons, and ignored. Their names were not to be spoken. The believers were to use the Sabbath as a time of reflection upon the nature, plan and purposes of God for them. They were not to reflect upon paganism. I am still amazed by people who delight in studying “other religions”, or the old paganism, or demonism. None of these subjects are fit subjects for believers. They are to be known of from scripture and then we are to move on, giving no time of attention to the devil whereby he may deceive, pervert or distract us from our service of the Lord.

Verses 14 – 17. Three formal assemblies are instituted here for the nation Israel. This is the first mention of the Feasts as solemn assemblies when all the men are expected to stand before the Lord and worship together, and the final form that they will take is spelt out in Leviticus.

I take it that Exodus is written first, close to the time of the revelations occurring, and so it forms the basis of the early observances, with the book of Leviticus being written a few years later, as a more formal treatise that is the “quality assurance manual” for the religious worship of Israel. My surmise, (and it is only that), is that it may have been that Exodus is the initial historical record and training guide for the religious format for worship, and operates for the first year or two, with Leviticus being the more formal record of the worship formats, as it gets “shaken down” and correctly established over the next thirty years, with the priests being personally trained by Aaron and Moses through this period.

In this view, Leviticus becomes the complete statement of the worship format, after the worship has been running for a decade or two, so that it becomes the future training and instruction manual for the priesthood, and so awaits a settling period, during which Exodus alone is the guide. Moses is working on all the five books through this period of over 38 years, and Deuteronomy will be his formal restating of the Law, running a parallel course to this section of Exodus.

Leviticus 23:1ff, Deuteronomy 16:1ff, 26:1ff. I do not claim any infallibility for this viewpoint and don't ask anyone to follow me in it, but it makes sense in light of the time frame of the Exodus, and the simplicity of this section and the, I believe later, complexity of the Levitical passage.

The three feasts mentioned here are; Passover-Unleavened Bread, Harvest-First fruits, and the feast of Ingathering (The Feast of Tabernacles), at the end of the Jewish Year. These feasts will be times when all the men are expected to come together as a nation, in person to celebrate as a united people the significance of these three feasts. The celebration of these feasts was the solemn obligation, or "tribute" that the Lord expected from Israel as the thanks offering for their receipt of the land. All sovereigns expected their people to come before them at certain times bearing gifts and paying their respects before their ruler, and as Israel was a theocracy, the people were expected to come before God with their gift offerings and pay Him the respect He was due as their provider and protector. Failure to do this was tantamount to rebellion, and sadly that was what future generations would be guilty of.

These three feasts are agricultural feasts, yet they were kept in the wanderings of the Exodus and so they become through that time a picture of faith. The people are to come before the Lord each year of the forty they will spend in the Arabian Peninsula and celebrate the Lord's sovereignty over them and His delivery of the land to them. They are to be thankful for His blessings before they are received, just as we are to be thankful in advance also. Hebrews 11:1-2, 12:1-3.

Each of these feasts speak of the Lord's grace provision of the fruitful land that they will receive, and well before they sow and harvest, they are to celebrate what they will do, or what their children will do. (Remember, the adults of the Exodus generation will not enter the land because of rebellion – but they will celebrate the feasts until they die, as a testimony to their children, that even though they have failed, the Lord will not fail the children, and He will deliver them the land). These feasts also speak of the person and work of the Messiah of Israel, and the certainty of His final victory and rulership over all the earth.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. All leader's words are to be our bond, and we are to serve the Lord in spirit and in truth. We are not to look to men for our rewards, nor for our guidance as to what to say or do in difficult situations. We are to look to the truth and the Lord alone in all our doings. False witness under the Law brought the same penalty as the things for which the man charged would have been liable. We are to take these things as seriously as the Lord does!
2. Let us, as pastors, be as careful about receiving gifts as the Lord instructs the judges of Israel to be. To receive a gift may be taken by the giver as having a totally different meaning to what we believe it to have. People give for all sorts of reasons, and to receive a gift may mean you have inherited an obligation to be partial to that person as a result. Be careful about receiving gifts.
3. The Sabbath was made for the rest and recharge of man. If we do not rest for a full day every seven days, we will burn out, and such a mental and physical collapse does not honour God. God has given this rule to be applied, not for self righteous reasons, but for health and safety reasons. Let us keep a rest day aside every week, during which time we do not answer the phone, check our emails, write any letters, or do anything associated with work, but we rest our mind and body as the Lord gives us guidance. Let us ensure that self centred people in the church honour the pastor's rest day and do not call him on that day. It is a disgrace when people call their ministers on their day off! Let us also ensure that we never urge our workers to break this principle; they must have at least one day totally off every week.
4. The Three first Feasts instituted were laid down as God's teaching tool to remind the people of grace and the certainty of His plan working out. As they celebrated these feasts they were remembering His promises and were challenged to express their faith in them. These feasts today still speak of the Lord's plan; both those aspects which are complete at the First Advent, and those that are yet to be completed, but will be by the Second Advent.

REFLECTION ON THE FEASTS OF ISRAEL

1. In the Jewish calendar seven feasts were ordained by God for the Jews to follow and to be a sign to all believers.
2. In order the feasts were:-
 - a) Passover
 - b) Unleavened Bread
 - c) First Fruits
 - d) Pentecost
 - e) Trumpets
 - f) Atonement
 - g) Tabernacles
3. THE PASSOVER (Deuteronomy 16:1-8, Leviticus 23:5)

Historically

- a) This feast originated on the night when the angel of the Lord passed over the land of Egypt immediately prior to the children of Israel leaving their bondage under Moses.
- b) A male lamb without blemish was killed on the 14th Nisan having been brought into the house 4 days before, great care being taken that not a bone in its body was broken. (Exodus 12:1-6)
- c) The lamb was roasted, eaten with bitter herbs and any portion left was burnt. (Exodus 12:7-10)
- d) In the original Passover the blood of the Lamb was daubed on the doorposts and lintels, any such house being spared from the last plague against Egypt. (Exodus 12:21-28) All plagues were against the gods of Egypt.
- e) The Passover was on the anniversary of the promise to Abraham. (Exodus 12:41)

Fulfilment

- a) The sacrificial lamb represents the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 5:7)
- b) Christ died on the 14th Nisan on the cross having entered Jerusalem, the Holy city 4 days before on the 10th Nisan.
- c) When the Roman soldiers broke the legs of the thieves they found Jesus dead so no bone in His body was broken. (John 19:32, 33)
- d) The roasting of the lamb represents judgment, the bitter herbs representing sins or failures.
- e) The eating of the lamb represents faith in the work of Christ i.e. eating and drinking at the communion table.)
- f) By faith in Christ we are protected from the final judgment of God. (Romans 8:1)

Currently

- a) Each time we celebrate the Lord's supper we are looking back to the cross and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)
- b) This could also represent salvation to the believer.

4. UNLEAVENED BREAD (Leviticus 23:6-8)

- a) This feast lasted for seven days starting on the 15th Nisan and portrays the provision and fellowship with God.
- b) The bread was unleavened due to the need to leave Egypt with utmost haste. In addition the wine was without leaven or alcohol - the wine being boiled during this feast. This has been found in Chaldean army instructions when it was feared that the Jews could revolt during the time of unleavened bread if they were served with alcoholic Chaldean beer.
- c) As God can have nothing to do with sin God's provision is without leaven as leaven represents evil in the scriptures.
- d) There are various forms of leaven in the Bible:-
 - i) Leaven of the Sadducees - human viewpoint. (Matthew 16:6)
 - ii) Leaven of the Pharisees - ritualism (Mark 8:15)
 - iii) Leaven of Herod - worldliness (Mark 8:15)
 - iv) Leaven of the Corinthians - wantonness (1 Corinthians 5:6, 7)
 - v) Leaven of the Galatians - legalism (Galatians 5:9)
- e) Bread made without leaven shows the perfection of Christ. (Leviticus 2:11)
- f) This could represent the Christian walk for the believer.
- g) The unleavened bread was cooked on a griddle which caused the bread to have stripes. It also had holes. By his stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:5) They will look upon him whom they have pierced. (Zechariah 12:10)

5. FIRST FRUITS (Leviticus 23:9-14)

- a) This feast always occurred on a Sunday and was celebrated on the 17th Nisan.
- b) This feast portrayed the resurrection of Christ and occurred half-way through the feast of Unleavened Bread.
- c) Christ is said to be the first fruits of them that sleep. (1 Corinthians 15:20)
- d) Christ rose 3 days after his death on the Passover.
- e) The Jews crossed the Red Sea 3 days after leaving bondage.
- f) The ark rested on Ararat on this very day after the flood. (Genesis 8:4)
- g) This could represent the resurrection body for the believer.

6. PENTECOST (Leviticus 23:15-21)

- a) Pente - fifty - this occurred always on a Sunday 50 days or a week of weeks after the first fruits, generally in May or June. (Leviticus 23:15)
- b) It represents the dispersion of the Jews which occurred historically in AD 70 and there followed a long gap to the next feast representing the long time the Jews would be out of the land.
- c) Pentecost in the year of the crucifixion was the day on which the Church age started with the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem. (Acts 2:1-4).
- d) At Pentecost, 3,000 were born again; at the giving of the law, 3,000 were killed.

7. TRUMPETS (Leviticus 23:23, 24)

- a) This occurred in September, the blowing of the trumpets representing the coming of the king. It is the Jewish New Year Day.
- b) This represents the return of the Lord Jesus Christ for his Church at the Rapture. The Jews recognise this as the day on which God would again have a relationship with the Jews.

8. ATONEMENT (Leviticus 23:26-32)

- a) This occurred ten days after the feast of trumpets. It represents the fact that believing Jews only enter into the Millennium.
- b) From evaluation of (Daniel 12:11 & 12) and parallel passages it is apparent that there is a period of judgment at the second advent of some 45 days. This is a period of the wheat and tares, the sheep and the goats. The unbelievers are baptised with fire. (Matthew 3:11, 12.) The believers enter the Millennium.

c) This was the only day of the year that the high priest was able to enter the Holy of Holies bringing a bowl of blood, once for himself and once for the nation. (Hebrews 9:6-7). His entry represents the sacrifice of Christ.

d) Christ's sacrifice is the fulfilment of this ritual. Christ only had to make one offering, as he was sinless, for the sins of the world. (Hebrews 9:11-14) On the feast of Atonement red wool, the Atonement Lot, was tied to the temple pillar. After the blood was spilt the lot turned white until the time of the cross. Afterwards it stayed red. This sign showed Christ's once and for all sacrifice.

9. **TABERNACLES** (Leviticus 23:33-36)

This occurred five days after the feast of Atonement and lasted a week. It represents the Millennial reign of Christ and the perfect provision and environment provided. (Deuteronomy 16:13-15, Romans 8:19-22)

10. It is of interest that the two feasts that speak of God's perfect provision - Unleavened Bread and Tabernacles - were a week duration whilst the others were for a day, speaking of a point in time occurrence such as the crucifixion, resurrection or rapture of the Church.

11. **SUMMARY**

- a) **PASSOVER** - fulfilled at The Crucifixion on Passover AD 32
- b) **UNLEAVENED BREAD** - fulfilled at Burial of Christ on Unleavened Bread AD 32
- c) **FIRST-FRUITS** - fulfilled at Resurrection of Christ on First-Fruits AD 32
- d) **PENTECOST** - fulfilled at End of Jewish Age on Pentecost AD 32
- e) **TRUMPETS** - to be fulfilled at Rapture of Church
- f) **ATONEMENT** - to be fulfilled at Second Advent of Christ
- g) **TABERNACLES** - to be fulfilled at Millennial reign of Christ

12. As Paul had seen the literal fulfilment of the first four feasts in some 8 weeks in AD 32 it is hardly surprising that he would expect to be in the "rapture generation". (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 2 Thessalonians 2:1)

EXODUS 23:18-33

“18 Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain until the morning. 19 The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk. 20 Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. 21 Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him. 22 But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. 23 For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off. 24 Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images. 25 And ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee. 26 There shall nothing cast thy young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil. 27 I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. 28 And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee. 29 I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. 30 By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land. 31 And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee. 32 Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. 33 They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.”

REFLECTION

Verses 18 – 19. There was blessing associated with obedience to the Lord in keeping the Feasts of the Lord, but they had to be kept properly, without any actions that would distort their meaning and significance. The feasts stood for important, even central, doctrines relating to the Plan of God for the earth, and so they had to be celebrated in a prescribed manner, and that way only. They were a picture of Christ and His work, and as such the picture had to be correct in all details.

The blood of the Pascal Lamb stood for the perfect sacrifice of the Lord upon the Cross and as such it had to be offered in purity and perfection. No leaven was to be any where near the houses of the people through this time. Passover and First Fruits were within the area covered by the Feast of “Unleavened Bread”. Leaven stood for the principle of human

works or evil, and both concepts were to be eliminated from these feasts, as a reminder that the Lord will not accept man's works, nor will He accept any compromise with evil. Both categories seep into the entire body, like leaven, if they are left unchecked.

The next command is a strange one, and most would say, "well I am in no danger of doing this". Who would have thought of seething (cooking) a young kid goat in it's mother's milk? For it to be specifically forbidden it must have been a real possibility and an action that at least some did regularly. It is tied into the bringing of the First Fruits or harvest offerings before the Lord. Some study of this topic uncovers the fact that the cooking of kids was a delicacy, and as with all delicacies, experiments were made as to how to improve and expand upon it's delicate flavours. The way this was done was to cook it in sour milk.

Now God has sanctified the relationship between a mother and her child and this bond is to be respected, even amongst the animals. No animal was to be killed and then cooked with any part of it's parents. There was to be respect for nature and parenting within it, just as there was to be within mankind. The Ishmaelites did this sort of cooking and the Israelites had adopted it, and in this command the Lord forbids this copying of their unsaved relatives. They were to be different to their pagan neighbours and were not to pick up their culinary habits, nor the religious ones that went along with the food!

Verses 20 – 23. The Angel of the Lord is to go before them and the promise is that He will bring them into the land of promise with absolute security, but they must be absolutely obedient to this angel, for He will not be forgiving of their errors. They are to get His commands right and obey them. They will be clear, for He will be in the cloud and the pillar of fire, and all they have to do is move when He moves and stop when He stops. The Shekinah glory is the glory of the Lord, and the Angel of the Lord is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is He who is here with them in the Exodus and He who gives the Law.

The Lord is the one who forgives our sins, yet here He is identified as the one who will not forgive these people if they fail to hear Him. The Lord is the judge of man as well as the Saviour, and He becomes the judge, when man rejects His saviourhood. It is this that is in view here; the people will be judged, rather than their enemies, when they reject the Lord's deliverance. If they are obedient then their enemies will be judged and the way will be open to the land. Sadly, this generation will fail to follow through and will die in the wilderness under God's judgment. They make their choice at the end of the first year as they approach Kadesh Barnea and their choice is to doubt God's ability to deliver the land to them.

Verses 24 – 25. The Lord will bless them and deliver them from their enemies if they obey Him. They are not to respect, mention, nor serve in any way the gods of the people who are being dispossessed of their land, for they will lose it because of their gods and the evils of their service to them. They are to break down the pagan altars and destroy every vestige of their worship. They are to have no room in their homes or their land for anything that is pagan in any way. The promise to the Israelites is both agrarian prosperity and physical health. They will be well if they serve the Lord alone, but they will suffer economically and physiologically if they do not obey the Lord.

Verses 26 – 30. There will be no premature deaths amongst the animals or amongst the people if they obey the Lord and serve Him as they ought to. Barrenness amongst the animals was a curse, for the prosperity of the animals depended upon them being fertile and bearing many young. Also amongst the people barrenness was seen as a judgment, for many children in an agricultural economy was a blessing as there were then many hands to work. Isaiah 65:20.

The blessings promised are known in theology as "Millennial blessings", for, as the Isaiah passage makes clear, they will be received fully when the Lord rules from Jerusalem. The blessing that could have been Israel's, had they obeyed the Mosaic Law, will be the lot of all mankind when the Lord rules upon the earth. The tie up between the Millennial Reign of the Lord and the Law is seen in the Sermon on the Mount and the passage from Deuteronomy that it completes. Deuteronomy 28:1-14, Matthew 5:1-18.

The Lord repeats the promises made throughout the early chapters of the Exodus record; that He will deal with the enemies of Israel and He will drive out the Canaanites from the land of promise. They will be in such fear of the Israelites that they will be unable to stand against them in battle. The picture is of people being driven by a swarm of hornets; they will flee as people controlled by their fears. The land was promised to Abraham, and it will be received by this generation's children. Genesis 12:6-9, 13:14-17, 15:7-16, 18-21, 17:1-14. The covenant made with Abraham will find it's fulfilment in the things that unfold after the people enter the land.

Note the verses that are often overlooked. Look at the Lord's words in verses 29-30. They will not have the numbers to overwhelm the land and it's people, and that would not be good anyway, for they need to slowly move the balance of power in the land and slowly squeeze the Canaanites out, and this they do by the days of David and Solomon. It will take as many years to fully conquer the land as it took to sojourn in Egypt. These verses are another reminder that the total numbers of people were around 30,000, for it will take centuries before they are numerous enough to completely rule over this land. Had they numbered 3 million they would simply have overwhelmed the land and had no reason to trust the Lord, nor fear their enemies.

Verses 31 – 33. The boundaries of the land are set by God and they will apply even into the Millennial Kingdom. The nation Israel is given all the land from the Red Sea to the River Euphrates and from the desert (of Arabia – Deuteronomy 11:24) to the Mediterranean. This area has never been fully occupied by Israel, even under Solomon. It

comprises all of modern Israel, much of Jordan, Syria, Sinai and parts of the Lebanon. Study a good Commentary on Ezekiel 47-48 for discussion of these Millennial borders for Israel.

They are told clearly to make no covenant of any sort with the Canaanites. To make a covenant required the recognition of the gods of the other party and no such recognition was to be given. These evil peoples were to be driven out of the land and no mercy or accommodation was to be given to them. They were condemned because of their beliefs and life styles and they were to be destroyed, or the Israelites would be distracted and distorted in their own beliefs and practises. The book of Judges is the sorry account of how this played out in the 400 years between Moses and David.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. There is no compromise with evil, without the loss of morality and/or sanity on the part of the person who compromises! Evil is to be eliminated or avoided; there is no safe third option and there never will be.
2. There is blessing in obedience to the Lord, for His paths are the ways of pleasantness and all His ways are the ways of peace. The Lord is careful in what He requests of us, and asks us to do only the things that will recharge our batteries or lead to our and others blessing. Let us seek to obey the Lord in all we know of His clear commands for then we position ourselves in the place of greatest possible blessing.
3. The Lord was with them as they journeyed just as He is with us as we walk through this life. Let us draw close to the Lord in prayer and fellowship through His Word as we walk through this life. As we fellowship with the Lord, so we resist temptation, and develop strength to withstand all manner of distractions, that will lead us away from the plan of God for us.

NOTES

CHAPTER 24**INTRODUCTION**

This chapter begins with Moses telling us that the Lord gave him this instruction to approach the Mountain. It would appear that this is further initial revelation that he received on the Mount during the visit there as recorded in Exodus 19:3 – 23:33. It is a continuation of the same message received at the same time. Moses may have recorded these things on clay tablets, or on papyrus on the Mountain in note form, as was the Egyptian scribal manner, and then write this up more formally in the camp over the next day.

The specific lists of commands and rulings would lend themselves to listing on a papyrus sheet. There was no reason for Moses to try to do a memory feat with the words of God; they were simply too important for that. I believe he would have carried writing equipment up the mountain with him, as he knew the Lord was going to give him very specific instructions and it was vital that he got things right.

The word used for telling the people the rules (verse 3) is an old scribal word that indicates reading from a marked list, and this is also suggestive of his working from an initial list of the words of God. Other men are specifically listed in this chapter as accompanying Moses, as if it is a different trip up the mount than the one recorded as beginning in Exodus 19, but this may be simply his way of saying that in addition to Aaron, these men also were there in the group at the bottom awaiting his return. This will be significant later in the rebellion they are all part of, and as it will centre around a “golden calf”, it is important that he mentions their presence at this point as they are going to offer an oxen as a sacrifice.

EXODUS 24:1-18

“24:1 And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off. 2 And Moses alone shall come near the LORD: but they shall not come nigh; neither shall the people go up with him. 3 And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do. 4 And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. 6 And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. 7 And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. 8 And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words. 9 Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: 10 And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. 11 And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink. 12 And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them. 13 And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God. 14 And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them. 15 And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. 16 And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. 17 And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. 18 And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.”

REFLECTION

Verses 1-3. This instruction to ascend the Mountain with the named men and the seventy elders, I believe occurs in time sequence in Exodus 19:20-25. Moses has ascended up once and is then sent back down with the warning, and then is asked to come back up with Aaron. Moses mentions at this point that Nadab, Abihu and the other elders were also in a group at the bottom slopes of the Mountain, “worshipping afar off”, when he went back up for the second time (Moses had gone up the Mountain alone, at least twice before in the previous five days – Exodus 19:3, 8).

The instruction to the elders was “to worship afar off”. They were to be in prayer while Moses heard the words of the Lord concerning the people. They were to be in prayer for all the hours that Moses was up the Mountain. It may have been the best part of a day, as this is a significant mountain. They were not to enter the cloud shrouded part of the Mountain, but remain at a safe distance, as were the people themselves, even lower down on the plain itself. When Moses came down, the elders joined him and all the people cried aloud together, in response to Moses reading the words of the Lord aloud, “all the words the Lord has said, we will obey”.

From their response I believe that Moses read the actual words he had heard from God, and read them in such a way, with pauses between them, that the people knew – these are the words of God directly to us. The record of them that we have in Exodus 19-23 is an expanded version of those initial “words”, which Moses will apparently write up, either late that night, or in the early hours of the following morning (next verses). Deuteronomy 4:1-2.

Verses 4 – 5. This is the last piece of evidence that Moses operates as a scribe up the mountain, and then, late that night, or early in the following morning, does his draft of what we have read here as Exodus 19-23, and then goes out to begin the sacrifices that are the formal recognition and acceptance of the covenant God has made with Israel in this place. Just note in passing that Moses rises early, and that is a pattern for God's men through the centuries. A minister who sleeps in (unless he works late into the night – and here Moses does both) is a contradiction in terms. Moses rises before dawn to ensure the written work is done.

The "Book of the Covenant" is written as the written record of the Covenant being sealed in blood that day, verse 7. I believe this "Book" is the initial draft of what we have read as Exodus 19-23, and was developed from the papyrus sheets he copied while hearing the words of God on the mount. He places this book close by, I suspect close to the altar, ready to read later. He will read the "Book" to the people after the sacrifices and before the sprinkling, to refresh their minds on the nature of the Covenant they were making. With everything ready now he then proceeds to the supervision of the sacrificial offering that will seal the covenant that God has made with them in this place.

The people's response, verse 3, late on the afternoon he came down from the mount, was their acceptance of the initial words of the Lord, and so the covenant is sealed in blood now as a formal recognition of the seriousness of their commitment to obey the Law. **Deuteronomy 5:1-7, 31-33, 6:1-3, 11:1-7.**

An altar is made in accordance with the instructions received on the mountain. **Exodus 20:24-26.** Young men from each of the tribes (these will be the men who enter the land in the end) bring an oxen to represent their people and the Levites sacrifice the oxen on the altar for each tribe. These young men may be the ones who carry the bowl of blood for each tribe, which Moses then sprinkles over the people later. They act as servants of the Lord, their people, and of Moses; they act as mediators for their tribes before the Lord.

There are also twelve pillars adjacent to the altar, each one representing a tribe of Israel. It is not mentioned how these pillars are set up. Are they set up in a row behind the altar, or are they set up in a giant circle around the altar? Are they giant stones, or tree trunks? How high were they? We have no guidance from the text on this, although the twelve basins referred to below indicate that they may have been waist height so that the bowl could be placed upon each one as it was filled with half the blood of each ox. The significance was for the people to see that they were all represented before the Lord and that each tribe stands before the altar, and each place was covered by the blood of the sacrifice.

Verses 6 – 8. Were the basins placed initially upon the pillars, and then taken by the men after they had led their oxen to the altar, and then picked up once the Levites had charge of the ox, ready to catch their blood when it was shed? This makes sense, but we cannot know for sure. After reading the Book of the Law, Exodus 20-23, Moses would progress around the assembled tribes and sprinkle the adult members of the tribes himself, (Possibly all the people – children with their parents), and it would make sense for the representative of each tribe to carry the basin with the blood from their sacrificial animal for that purpose.

It is another reminder that the total number of people here is around 12,000 adults, there being 6000 men under arms; approximately 500 per tribe. The ritual here at the Mountain was unique, as it was the first offering to mark the Covenant, and would differ from that at the Tabernacle later. Moses took the "Book of the Covenant", and read it all aloud, and by that I take it, he meant the record of what had occurred on the Mountain (verse 4), that would later form Exodus 20-23.

Moses poured/shook out half the oxen's blood upon the altar and the other half was kept in the basin until all the oxen, one for each tribe, were slaughtered and offered up, then tribe by tribe he sprinkled the blood upon the adults of the people by using a hyssop brush which would shake out a sprinkle of blood sufficient to leave a slight mark on all the 1000 adults (and possibly their families) of each tribe assembled before the Lord that day. **1 Corinthians 11:23-34, Hebrews 9:16-28.**

We also are covered by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. As Moses sprinkled the blood he cried aloud, "Behold, the blood of the Covenant which the Lord has made with you this day".

Verses 9 – 11. The people now draw near to the Mountain yet again. The elders of the Israelites now were invited to approach the presence of the Lord up the Mountain. Now this event occurs after the sacrifice and the sprinkling which Moses has explained, for now the elders and people are sanctified by the Lord, through the blood sacrifice, and they may approach Him. They do not see the Lord's face, but they see the throne as it were of the Lord on the mountain. These men will within months forget the majesty and ruling power of God and believe they cannot take the land! As we study this sight they see, let us remember that faith is not built by such visions of majesty, but by application of the Word of God, so that it lives in the heart. A sight of glory may fade, but active daily faith will build strength through the years.

These men saw great glory this day and Moses describes it in the best terms he had, with reference to the brightest of the precious stones they had in their jewellery. The Lord did not lay his hands upon the elders, (He did not beat or destroy them), but He did lay His hand of blessing upon Moses, and they all ate at the Lord's Table there on the mountain, as the disciples would by the Sea of Galilee. The person of the Godhead they saw was the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah 6:1, Ezekiel 1:26, Daniel 7:9-13, John 21:9-14, 1 Corinthians 10:16-22, Revelation 19:1-10.

Verses 12 – 18. Having made the Covenant through the blood of the sacrifices, Moses is now told to come back up the Mountain and that this time there, he will receive two Tablets of Stone upon which God will write the "Ten Words". Now note this sequence of events again. We are used to thinking of Moses going up the mountain once and

then coming down with the tablets of stone and that this is the first time the people hear the words. In this false version of events we follow the Hollywood film version, not the Bible.

As we have seen, Moses goes up and down the mountain numerous times, and he has received the Ten Words already, read them from the papyrus notes he took on the mountain the first afternoon, and then again the next day has read out the longer version from his written up notes; our Exodus 20-23. So the people have heard the Ten Commandments and the rules that flow from them twice now before Moses goes up to receive the solid stone carved version of them. The stone tablets will be the third record of these “words” of the Lord.

God’s purpose is that the commands may be “taught” thoroughly, and from the sequence of events we can understand that the Lord expects us to teach and re-teach things at least three times before He considers we have taught an item! From verse 13 it may be that this occurs the next day, after the sacrifices. That would make sense, for the day of sacrifices would have been exhausting and a sleep in would be needed before another ascent of the mountain was made. This time Moses goes up with Joshua alone.

Now remember, given what will happen while he is away, that the people have had two days of teaching of the Ten Commandments, and have seen and experienced the blood sacrifice of the bulls offered for each tribe as a mark of their acceptance of the Covenant. Moses has gone up for the purpose of receiving the solid testimonial of God that the Covenant is “set in stone”; it is the final Law for Israel.

Very specific instructions are given to Aaron, as the senior man left in the camp, and to the other elders, specifically named is Hur, as Aaron’s assistant. The elders are told that Aaron and Hur are in charge while they are away, and that they are to refer any matters of judgment to them. As a nation they are to “tarry” for Moses. That word means they are to wait as long as God makes them wait, and they are to wait prayerfully. To tarry means to wait with expectation and relaxation, knowing that the timing is the Lord’s and He is in no hurry.

Moses has no idea how long he and Joshua will be up the mountain this time, but he thinks it may be some days; it will be forty days and forty nights. This will be a testing time for the rest and God is asking them the question, will they wait upon the Lord, or will they panic and get into falsehood through lack of patience? This remains a central leadership issue to our own day.

The two men head up the mountain alone and the cloud shrouds the entire mountain and they disappear into it as they ascend. The people may expect them back within days, but they will be away for forty days. Deuteronomy 8:1-6, Matthew 4:1-4. The Lord’s presence is clearly upon the mountain, but Moses is left to wait for seven days before the Lord speaks with him initially. He also must learn patience and calm in the midst of a fearful situation.

From the plain the Israelites cannot see Moses but they see the fire upon the top of the mountain, as if it is an erupting volcano. It does not look to them as if any man could survive the glory, majesty, and power that is being demonstrated there. The darkness of the cloud has engulfed Moses and Joshua as far as the Israelites are concerned. They are called to believe that called men can meet God and survive, but they feel vulnerable under the shadow of that mountain and they panic and start thinking as men. We are called to think and act differently – on the basis of the Word of God!

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Dramatic signs of God’s power and glory are not needed for dramatic faith, but quiet belief and faith in the words of God are important. No matter how powerful the vision is, it can fail, but daily renewed faith in the Word of God will never fail, for it builds daily. God calls us to daily walking with Him and whether we see dramatic things or not, to make dramatic impact in our generation through our faith walk in the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. We are called to teach the principles of God’s Word faithfully and well, and repeat them again and again. The people of God are always to be without excuse before the Lord for their disobedience. The preacher is the “watchman” and will be held responsible to the Lord if he does not speak the Word truly, fully and often.
3. Too many believers do not study the Bible enough, nor do they walk through the passages thoroughly. The result is our view is often coloured by a film we have seen rather than a truth that we have been taught. Once we realise that Moses went up the mountain so many times, and that the people had heard the Law twice before they received the Two Stone Tablets, then we see the extent of their sin against God when they rebel. God has left them plenty of evidence for truth before He leaves them with the test of Moses absence. The Lord tests us, but His tests are fair!
4. Moses does not “delay” returning to the people, nor does God delay in speaking to Moses. Everything occurs in the right time according to the plan of God. Often we feel the Lord is making us wait, and that is what it appears to be from our side, but things occur in the great eternal plan. Let us learn to wait. It is the hardest lesson of all, but God’s answers are worth the wait.

CHAPTER 25**INTRODUCTION**

The next forty days and forty nights were for Moses, after the initial seven days silence, packed with instructions about the Tabernacle that he was to build for the Lord to dwell with his people. For the people below on the plain the time was one of increasing fear, as the lightning played on the top of the mountain and they heard nothing of Moses or Joshua through this time. It was a time filled with revelation for Moses, but filled with fears and testing for the people.

The people had heard God and promised to obey His Word, but they didn't know Him, nor did they depend upon Him, and they genuinely started to believe that Moses may have died up on the mountain. They had seen the deliverances of the Lord to date, and had heard the lessons from each of the "Water Tests", but they had failed to apply the things learned into the fabric of their belief system. **Hebrews 3:7 – 4:11**. Note how many times these verses are stated!

Moses is oblivious to all this, for he is, as the people should have been, simply occupied with the revelation of the Lord his God. With Joshua there as his scribe he is writing and sketching every day as the Lord draws the Tabernacle for him and describes all the sacrificial system that is to be instituted within it. The people have a superficial faith and after forty days their emotional memory has faded and their human strength/courage is gone, and that is always when the enemy whispers his temptations. Luke 4:1-2.

The description of the unfolding events has the following format, spread over the next five chapters:

- Verses 1-9. The call for an offering to build the sanctuary.
- Verses 10-22 The description of the Ark of the Covenant.
- Verses 23-40 The description of the Table of Shewbread and the Golden candlestick.
- Chapters 26-27 The description of the Tabernacle itself with some "service" instructions.
- Chapters 28-29 The investiture and consecration of the Levites – Aaron and Moses alone did the earlier sacrifice of the Oxen, but once the Levites are set aside formally, they will then take over.

EXODUS 25:1-19

"25:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering. 3 And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass, 4 And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, 5 And rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood, 6 Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense, 7 Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate. 8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. 9 According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it. 10 And they shall make an ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. 11 And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about. 12 And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four corners thereof; and two rings shall be in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it. 13 And thou shalt make staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. 14 And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them. 15 The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it. 16 And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee. 17 And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. 18 And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. 19 And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof."

REFLECTION

Verses 1-7. Moses is up the mountain, and possibly Joshua is close by. The Lord has waited for six days before speaking, and so the two men have been waiting in prayer until the Lord speaks and now Moses is ready to receive instructions. The message is clear and unfolds over the next days. What we have here is Moses rewrite from the notes that he and/or Joshua take on the mountain. The first thing is that the people are to be asked to produce an offering of items that can be used to build a sanctuary for worship purposes.

The Lord wants them to have a focal point for their worship that will be more meaningful than the simple altar as presently stands before the mountain with the twelve pillars around it. The sanctuary is to be erected from the gifts of the people of the items for their worship. They are to be actively involved in the process and to be a part of the building. Holy Spirit filled men are to be the builders and artisans for the work of the Lord and all are to be involved as Spirit directed.

God will move upon the people to give what is needed as He moved upon the Egyptians to give them the items in the first place. The people will learn through this process that all that they have received is from the Lord, and all belongs to Him, and all is to be held on loan and given back when required. Each item of the tabernacle, and every aspect of it's very structure will be a teaching point about the nature, plan, and purpose of God for the nation.

Note the list of things required. It was to be a “heave offering”; a gift lifted up and then placed before the Lord. It had to be a gift that was “lifted up” from the man’s own belongings (even though the Lord had given it to them by grace anyway), and that person had to be happy about giving the item. It was a free will offering, and that had to be given in joy. If it could not be given “with his heart” then it was not to be given. Refer the “Doctrine of Giving” below.

The items were precious and special, and while received as gifts from the Egyptians, some will have become attached to them. There was to be an appeal for a “free will offering” of gold, silver and brass, as well as various precious stones for the breastplate of the chief priest’s ephod. Moses mentions this here but will explain it later. This is another reference which indicates that this passage went through two or three writings; the first on the mountain, with notes taken, and the second as he recorded things for the training of the priests and the building of the tabernacle and ark, and then possibly a third as he later put Exodus into its final form.

In addition there was the need for fabric and many skins of animals. These items were common in Egypt and were part of the booty that they received from the Egyptians when they fled. Exodus 12:35-36. They were to be asked for specifically only the things that could be used; nothing was to be donated that was not of good quality, nor of no value, nor of any use. Malachi 1:7-14, Mark 12:41-44, Luke 21:1-4. The “widow’s mite” was “all she had”, and for some people that would be an offering of Millions of dollars! When we give to the Lord it must be of our best, not the cast offs that should be dumped, and not our spare change, when the Lord requires far more of us.

I still remember receiving a gift for an auction to raise funds for a charity, and when the man realised what charity it was, he replaced the item with an older one, because he didn’t believe the specific charity was as worthy as the one he had thought it was. People’s giving truly shows their values towards the person or organization given to. We are to give of our best to the Lord and with joy in the lifting of it up from amongst our own belongings and our lifting it up before the Lord as our sacrifice of praise to Him. Giving is to be guided by the mental attitude that asks not, what shall I give, but what shall I hold back?

Verses 8 – 9. The Lord speaks of the Tabernacle as a dwelling/meeting place for Him to meet with His people as the focal point for their worship. Moses would be shown an image, a 3D picture or some plans on the mountain. The instructions are specific and appear to be in list form indicating that he or Joshua wrote things down, almost by dictation and that they saw the finished item in some form directly from the Lord, so that they knew exactly when the workmen got it right, and were able to give incredibly detailed instructions to the artisans so that they got it right.

From the Lord’s words to Moses, as he records them, it appears that the Lord showed him a vision of a steadily built up, element by element, “working model”, as Moses gets a 3 dimensional view of every item with the accurate dimensions from all angles, and is able to give the instructions so that from every angle the workmen who do the work get it right. As we go through the next verses however, the nature of the Lord’s revelation appears to resemble what we see on a television documentary, where the first thing seen is the foundations, then they “add in” the walls, then the roof, and so on until the building is formed before our eyes. Acts 7:44, Hebrews 8:5.

Verses 10 – 11. The way Moses describes the ark indicates he sees it piece by piece, as the Lord shows him first the basic wooden box, so he can see how it is to be made and fitted together, then describes the gold overlay, then the gold “crown” decoration around the top of the box, then the rings to attach the poles for carrying it, then the poles. It is as if he “sees” the basic pieces being built together by the Lord before his eyes.

When we “see” a finished item we describe it overall first and then move to the piece by piece description, normally from the most elaborate or dominant part to the most simple. This is not the way Moses describes it, and it would not be helpful if Moses was to see the item as a whole first, because he needs to see the wooden box and its construction before he sees how to overlay it with gold, and then attach the golden crown, and then where and how to attach the rings for carrying it, and then understand how to beat out the gold into the two cherubim. Moses sees the Lord build this in a vision, in a way that is unique in all the literature of the ancient world, for the technology to actually replicate this on television is quite recent, and so we are the first generation of believers who can see how Moses saw this.

Verses 12 – 15. The “shittim” wood is known by us as acacia wood. Now Moses does not have to describe the actual construction in detail for this ark will be made only once and he will personally supervise its construction, so he records only enough to give the people an overall impression, and to remind him of the specifics he will need to oversee its construction. The acacia wood is very strong and suitable trees with good straight timber of the lengths required will be able to be found in the Arabian Peninsula. Moses vision from the Lord was such that he could say to the builders of everything – “Stop, that’s not the way the Lord showed me, you are to do this....”

The acacia is the most common hard wood of the area and in this day the trees were more plentiful and far larger than today’s specimens. It is good wood to work and forms a good base upon which sheets of gold can be attached. The staves that held the ark were not removed for nearly five hundred years; until the ark came to rest in the Temple of Solomon. 1 Kings 8:9-11, 2 Chronicles 5:1-9.

Verses 16 – 19. The purpose of the Ark was to be the centre point for the Tabernacle that would be built. The ark was a box built to contain the tablets of stone, upon which the Lord would carve the Mosaic Law, and these were to be hidden within the ark as the Lord’s testimony to his abiding standard for man, and as evidence against the sins of the people. The roof/top of the ark is shown to Moses last. It is designed to be the throne of God, but unlike any throne ever

built. It is the throne of mercy and grace; the place where the sacrificial blood will be sprinkled, and at that spot the Lord's Shekinah glory will dwell, and from that place the Lord will speak to His people through the High Priest. The cloud of the presence, and the pillar of fire by night, will hover over this spot once the Tabernacle is built and dedicated. Deuteronomy 10:1-5, 31:24-29.

There are many excellent studies on the structure and appearance of the Ark, and all cover the significance of each aspect of this amazing box. The two beaten statues of the angels are made of pieces of beaten gold, so that the statues are as similar as they can be, yet they will be different, as they are individually beaten, not cast from the same mould. They stand from the Lord's perfect character; His justice and His righteousness, meeting over the top of His mercy seat. God's character looks down at the place of mercy and grace; the place where the blood is sprinkled and God is satisfied, and man is forgiven his sins. The Ark becomes a picture of God's grace provision of salvation for mankind.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. We are to wait upon the Lord and He will answer our needs in the right time for us in accordance with His plan. Until the answer to our prayers comes through we are to "behave valiantly" and keep an attitude of prayerfulness. There is never delay with the Lord, just timing in his eternal plan – we walk with the Lord, never ahead or behind, and always on the narrow path! The only "broad way" leads to destruction. Matthew 7:13-23.
2. "Heave Offerings" are legitimate things at times for churches to ask for, as long as they are asked for in a grace context, with time to pray and prepare the free will offering the Lord lays upon the heart of each. If a great work is to be done, such a work may be publicized and an offering called for at a certain time. This is what occurred in Paul's day with the pressing need of the churches in Judea due to the coming famine. Acts 11:27-30, 2 Corinthians 8:1-15, 9:1-11.
3. Only the best is good enough to give to the Lord. Let us all consider this principle, for our time, our goods and our money are all to be available for the Lord's work in this manner.
4. The Tabernacle and all that was within its perimeter was a teaching tool as well as a focal point for worship. Every detail of the sacrificial system was important to understand for the Israelites, for all the details taught them of the Lord their God and His plan for us. The centre point was the Ark; the very grace throne of God amongst them. As they celebrated the blood shed for them on a daily basis, just so let us celebrate the Lord's blood shed for us every day.

REFLECTIONS ON OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS 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.

EXODUS 25:20-40

“20 And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. 21 And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. 22 And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel. 23 Thou shalt also make a table of shittim wood: two cubits shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. 24 And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown of gold round about. 25 And thou shalt make unto it a border of an hand breadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about. 26 And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet thereof. 27 Over against the border shall the rings be for places of the staves to bear the table. 28 And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them. 29 And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and spoons thereof, and covers thereof, and bowls thereof, to cover withal: of pure gold shalt thou make them. 30 And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me alway. 31 And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same. 32 And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side: 33 Three bowls made like unto almonds, with a knop and a flower in one branch; and three bowls made like almonds in the other branch, with a knop and a flower: so in the six branches that come out of the candlestick. 34 And in the candlesticks shall be four bowls made like unto almonds, with their knops and their flowers. 35 And there shall be a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches that proceed out of the candlestick. 36 Their knops and their branches shall be of the same: all it shall be one beaten work of pure gold. 37 And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it. 38 And the tongs thereof, and the snuff dishes thereof, shall be of pure gold. 39 Of a talent of pure gold shall he make it, with all these vessels. 40 And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.”

REFLECTION

Verses 20 – 22. The angelic beings that the artisans were to beat out of gold, were to be standing high and erect, over the mercy seat; they were not to be crouched over it. The righteousness and justice of God do not bend for man; they remain perfect and absolute. We bow to God's perfect standard, and get on our knees before Him.

The perfect standard of God is met by the blood shed at the cross by the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing else, other than the blood of a perfect sacrifice will take away man's sin and defeat the enemy who brought sin and death into the world. They literally cover the mercy seat with their wings so that the blood will have to be sprinkled under the wings of the angelic beings. This is a perfect picture of the cross.

Hidden within the box and covered by the mercy seat, Moses is to place the two tablets of the Law upon which the hand of God wrote the Law. The place from where the Lord would speak was from that space above the mercy seat and underneath the overspread wings of the two cherubim.

God would speak with Moses anything that He had to say from that place. Revelation would be by grace, righteousness and justice; from the heart of the character of God directly to the needs of His people. Other descriptions of the Ark or cherubim are in 1 Kings 8:6-10, 1 Chronicles 28:18, 2 Chronicles 3:8-13. Solomon used the cherubim on the Ark as a model for his great golden statues of the cherubim within the Temple he built.

Verses 23 – 30. The details for the construction of the Table of Shewbread was the next instruction Moses received. It also was to be made of the acacia wood, and it had a similarity to the Ark in that the same crown design was to be beaten in gold over the top rim of the table. It was to be slightly smaller than the Ark but its top was at the same height of 1 ½ cubits. A cubit (Ammah) was measured from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger of a man's arm. Just a note on measurements at this time, for there were a number of different "cubit" lengths, but the biblical length is thought to be between 45-50 centimetres.

The border around the top of the table was to be made "a handbreadth" (Tophach) wide. This is the second biblical measure, and was equivalent to four fingers width laid side by side, about 8 centimetres. The border was also to have a

golden crown motif upon it, speaking of it's belonging to the King of kings. The crowns were a symbol of kingship, and the King of Israel was to be the Lord of hosts.

The table was to have rings fitted at each corner, as was the Ark; and the staves to carry it were to be the same as those of the Ark also. They were to be left in place at all times, ready to move the table with the Ark, as the Lord ordered. The plates and utensils upon this table were to be made of pure gold.

Gold was the metal that spoke of the perfection of the character and plan of God and this Table spoke of His provision for His people. It was always set before the Lord, because the Lord's provision was always before them, and they were to remember that the grace, mercy and love of God was fresh every morning and this offering was to be a daily reminder of that, in addition to the reminder that unless man "partakes" of the bread of obedience, then he will be outside the blessing of God. Leviticus 24:8ff, 25:5ff, Isaiah 55:1-13, John 4:34, 6:26-35.

Verses 31 – 40. The golden candlestick was another major item that would be a focal point for the worship in the Tabernacle. This item also had to be beaten from one piece of gold. It was to be beaten out to form seven branches. Each branch was to have a place for a wick shaped like an almond, with a top knot on it in the shape of a flower open, into which the wick of the candle would be placed. This was an intricate piece of gold work and the weight of gold to be used was a Talent (Kikkar), which is just under 51 Kilograms of pure gold.

The value of this is considerable and the ability to beat out such a weight of gold was asking a great deal of any artist. As we will see the artisan was especially Holy Spirit filled to enable him to complete this work. The shape and appearance of every part of this was to be exactly as Moses had been shown while he was upon the Mountain. This is an editorial note, made when he wrote up the instructions into their final form, as we have them. It is the reminder that everything he was to order be made was to be supervised by him according to the exact shape and size he had seen from the pattern God showed him.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. God had a very specific plan and it was to be followed exactly by Moses in all that was done, for every item of furniture spoke of an aspect of the plan and purposes of God for the salvation of mankind. Moses reminds us that we are to "do it once and do it right" when we serve the Lord. Near enough is not good enough in the Lord's service. The best is only ever to be offered up to the Lord. Malachi 3:5-16.

2. God speaks from His essence only, and He will have nothing to say that is outside of His holy and perfect character. All the revelation of God comes to man through the character of God. If we want to check whether our interpretation of any passage is correct, we simply need to ask whether it teaches us the holiness and glory of God, and does it make us seek to know and worship Him more? If an interpretation of scripture does not bring us to glorify the holy name of God, then our interpretation of that passage is probably wrong.

NOTES

CHAPTER 26**INTRODUCTION**

The Israelites were to build, under Moses direction, a worship centre for the nation. Starting from the centre of the worship at the Ark of the Covenant, and then the lamp stand, the Lord now moves to explain how the tabernacle that is to hold the Ark is to look. The people are to provide the items needed to build the Tabernacle, just as they are to provide all the items needed for the other articles within it. The regular offerings will provide the daily sacrifices, the "Shewbread" for the table, and the oil for the lamp stand, which is to be lit every night. Just as the pillar of fire guides them in the wilderness wanderings, just so the lamp is to be the "eternal flame", reminding them of God's presence amongst them.

The tent in which these items are to be kept is to be unlike anything built ever before by any people. There are no precedents for this building anywhere in the ancient world. It is a "kit set" building that is designed to be put together without sound and be able to be taken apart quickly for transportation anywhere the people are to move.

It is to be the focal point for worship by blood sacrifice; every aspect of its building and the functions completed within it will speak of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a direct revelation of God, and Moses is given a picture of this tabernacle that is special and unique. This is God's place and the artisans are to make it exactly as they are told by Moses, who alone sees the model, image/vision or drawings by the Lord. No-where are we told that Joshua sees these things himself, the Lord shows this to Moses alone and he has the responsibility of passing the information on to those who need to know it. This Tabernacle will be built only once.

The best current book on the Tabernacle is by DAVID LEVY of the Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry – P O Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099, USA. As always our dear brother David writes a readable, informative and spiritually inspirational book on this subject and provides helpful diagrams, drawings and discussions. There is a full replica of the tabernacle in southern Israel and guided tours are taken daily through it. It is worth doing a model, or seeing a DVD of it, as much will make sense when you see it visually.

The Ark was "lost" at some point; certainly it is gone by the days of King Zedekiah. Its whereabouts is a matter of speculation, not of historical certainty, no matter what Hollywood with its Indiana Jones movies pretends! It may have been captured by an Egyptian Pharaoh, or taken by the Assyrians during the reign of Manasseh (the evil king who murdered Isaiah). What we know for sure is that the Ark is not mentioned as part of the booty carried into Babylonian captivity, and had it been there it would have been mentioned and returned when the people returned with everything else. 2 Kings 23:33-37, 25:8-17, 2 Chronicles 36:17-23, Ezra 1:1-11.

The Ark was never remade as were other items; it would serve the people as the focal point of their worship for around nine hundred years and then it would disappear because it had completed its job by then. The new Temple built by Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest, on their return from Babylon, did not have an Ark, but an empty space where it once stood. This temple became the Temple of Herod, (who beautified and expanded it). This was the "empty temple" that the Lord came to and filled with His glory. The Tabernacle is to speak of the presence of the Lord and every aspect of it is to stand for His saving work of redemption that its rituals would picture. The Real Lord replaced the physical Ark.

EXODUS 26:1-19

“1 Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them. **2** The length of one curtain shall be eight and twenty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and every one of the curtains shall have one measure. **3** The five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and other five curtains shall be coupled one to another. **4** And thou shalt make loops of blue upon the edge of the one curtain from the selvedge in the coupling; and likewise shalt thou make in the uttermost edge of another curtain, in the coupling of the second. **5** Fifty loops shalt thou make in the one curtain, and fifty loops shalt thou make in the edge of the curtain that is in the coupling of the second; that the loops may take hold one of another. **6** And thou shalt make fifty taches of gold, and couple the curtains together with the taches: and it shall be one tabernacle. **7** And thou shalt make curtains of goats' hair to be a covering upon the tabernacle: eleven curtains shalt thou make. **8** The length of one curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and the eleven curtains shall be all of one measure. **9** And thou shalt couple five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves, and shalt double the sixth curtain in the forefront of the tabernacle. **10** And thou shalt make fifty loops on the edge of the one curtain that is outmost in the coupling, and fifty loops in the edge of the curtain which coupleth the second. **11** And thou shalt make fifty taches of brass, and put the taches into the loops, and couple the tent together, that it may be one. **12** And the remnant that remaineth of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remaineth, shall hang over the backside of the tabernacle. **13** And a cubit on the one side, and a cubit on the other side of that which remaineth in the length of the curtains of the tent, it shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle on this side and on that side, to cover it. **14** And thou shalt make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering above of badgers' skins. **15** And thou shalt make boards for the tabernacle of shittim wood standing up. **16** Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and a cubit and a half shall be the breadth of one board. **17** Two tenons shall there be in one board, set in order one against another: thus shalt thou make for all the boards of the tabernacle. **18** And thou shalt make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards on the south

side southward. **19 And thou shalt make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for his two tenons, and two sockets under another board for his two tenons.**

REFLECTION

Verses 1 – 3. The first description is of the inner curtains that would form the ceiling, (and possibly also the wall coverings) that faced the Ark and lamp stand. The description is to go from the inner to the outer, for the Ark is the central piece of the Tabernacle and everything is going to be described in it's relation to the Ark of the presence of God. The inner curtains were glorious indeed, in colour and decoration; for cherubim were to be woven into the curtain fabric. It was, in effect, a tapestry. It was a fabric that was Egyptian in origin; with a white linen base, into which was woven, three primary colours, blue for heaven, purple for kingship, and scarlet red for redemption through blood. All the elements that went into making these curtains were taken from Egypt when the people left. Exodus 12:35-36.

Each curtain would weigh a considerable amount and an entire family of priests was responsible for the curtains, and the other coverings of the Tabernacle, with a total weight of several hundredweight. Numbers 4:24-28. The curtains were designed to be woven and then attached together in a way to form a continuous screen over the roof, (and possibly also around the inside of the two parts of the inner sanctuary of the Tabernacle; The Holy Place and the Holy of Holies).

There were ten curtains, and they were to be sown together in two pieces, with five in each. The measurement of each curtain was 28 cubits long (42 feet or about 12.8 metres), and 4 cubits (6 feet, or about 1.8 metres) wide. When sown together the two curtains were 28 cubits by 20 cubits (five pieces in each one = 12.8m x 9m). All ten curtains were to be the same measurement and decorations. The interior of the Holy of Holies was to have this decoration within it; it was to be amazing and the impression upon the priests entering is to be a taste of heaven.

Verses 4 – 6. The two large pieces of curtain are to have, along the side where the five pieces are sown together (the 20 cubit end) fifty woven fabric loops of blue (heavenly colour), and for each loop there were latches of pure gold. The two curtains are to be put up over the golden covered panels that made up the walls (verses 15-30) so that they form one enclosed space. The entire structure is to be held up by these boards, or by rails along the top of them.

Now there is some debate as to how the curtains were hung to form the Holy of Holies and Holy Place. Were they draped from one side over the top, forming a roof and then down the other side (that is on the outside of the board walls)? From Exodus 27:9-15, we know that the entire Tabernacle area was in a space that was 100 cubit long and 50 cubits wide. The tent itself has dimensions that are discovered when we get to the description of the wooden boards that form the outside of the structure, and this also may give us the clue as to how the curtains were hung.

From verse 16 we read that the side panels/boards were ten cubits long (15 feet). As they formed the sides, this gives us the height of the side of the tent. And from this we can see that the 28 cubit lengths of cloth could have been draped from one side over the top and down the other side, but this doesn't help us, for how would the two curtains have been draped in this way to form an enclosed space with only one set of hooks and loops holding the two pieces together?

This brings up another question. The hooks were to be made exactly facing each other on the two pieces of cloth, but were they designed for attaching together? Are the golden latches designed to connect the two pieces of curtain, or are they used to attach the fabric to the rails for the hanging of the curtain as the ceiling and walls? From Exodus 36:8-13 we discover that the two completed curtains, each of the five panels, were attached together by the golden hooks using the blue fabric latches to form one enormous curtain of 56 cubits in length by 20 cubits in width. (84 feet x 30 feet, or 25.6 m x 9 m).

Let us pause and get some facts about the dimensions of the inner space that they covered to form a "dwelling". The dimension of the entire Tabernacle is given in verse 16, when we work out how many boards made up each side. Read verses 15-30, and then also Exodus 36:20-38. Now pause and catch your breath. This is not as easy as some would make it out to be! We cannot be specific, for Moses notes in Exodus 26:30, he saw the way to build it and set it up, and he will show the priests what to do, but no-one else needed to know all the details. We are not meant to make this again, and so Moses omits many details that would be helpful if we were to set it up, but we cannot, and I believe his instructions are deliberately incomplete.

He explains enough to give us a glimpse of the glory of it, but not enough to make it as he would make it; for this was to be built only once, and while it's fabric would be remade at times; it was meant to last only for the nine hundred years that it did, and then be replaced by Solomon's Temple, and later by Zerubbabel's Temple.

The floor dimensions are 45 feet long by 15 feet wide. The Holy of Holies was to be a square 15 feet by 15 feet, and the Holy Place was 30 feet long by 15 feet wide. If you connect the two pieces of cloth together, as we noted above you have an 84 foot length that is 30 feet wide, and such a piece of cloth does not neatly fit anywhere in these floor dimensions. Various suggestions have been made by great scholars, but all fall short in some way. I am personally baffled by this, and am content to remain that way, for Moses saw it and made it, but gives us simply the basic details. To drape the entire cloth over the supporting panels so that it hangs over (or behind) the front and back to the floor level, thus making a complete ceiling, would leave it overhanging the sides, but with a gap of approximately 7 feet to the floor.

This gap, if the fabric hung in front of the panels, would reveal the bottom of the golden covered wooden boards that held up the entire structure. In the light of the lamp stand the walls would have glowed with golden reflected light to seven feet

in height, with the cloth forming the upper sides and ceiling. This is if this fabric covering was hung in some way from the top of the panels. If it was simply hung over them and draped down the outside, then only the golden panels would be seen, and the fabric would form the ceiling only, with the additional fabric down the outer walls holding the roof taut and smooth. This is the best suggestion I have seen made.

If this was the arrangement then there would also be 9 feet of additional cloth on the floor, at the back and/or front. This is unsatisfactory at first glance, although it would make a complete "dwelling", and the additional length of fabric would also act as a weight to tighten the ceiling, and would ensure that no wind would disturb the building or open the front cloth flap to reveal the inside to anyone other than the priest who entered. If the extra cloth was piled (or rolled up) at both the entrance wall and behind the back wall it would be hard to enter, as the cloth would hang solidly to the floor covering the front entrance solidly, and it would be anchored there by at least 4.5 feet of cloth piled up at the bottom, so that access into the Tabernacle was from the corners only. This doesn't at first sight seem to be right given the arrangement of the timber boards, as we will see below, but I suspect it is correct.

Verses 12 and 13 tell us that the cloth was piled up at the base of the back wall on the outside, and over the back of each wall, so this clue tells us that it is likely that all the cloth was over the outside of all the boards, so it formed the ceiling and front curtain only, the rest being hidden over the back of the side and back walls. This will be a reminder to all that the glory of heaven is glimpsed by man, but a great deal with hidden to man this side of eternity. This building itself will illustrate that principle; that man sees only a fraction of what is going on in the great drama of redemption. All of the interior of this building will be hidden to the people; only the rough outside layer of covering and the door curtains and posts will be seen. The overhanging cloth coverings act together to compress/stabilize the walls.

Remember that the two pieces of this first covering cloth were apparently joined together by the golden rings making a total length of 84 feet (2 halves of 42 feet each). Where was this join under this scheme suggested above? If the join was directly above the veil that made the separation between the two parts of the Tabernacle, (the Holy of Holies was only 15 by 15 feet, and the Holy Place was 30 x 15 feet) then there was at least 12 feet of fabric rolled up by the base of (or behind) the back wall, and the front of the Tabernacle had only 12 feet covering it, with a gap of 3 feet to the ground. This is hard to imagine being "tidy" for the back outside wall of the Holy of Holies, although it would make it easier for the priest to lift the curtain to enter at the front, rather than slide around by a corner. If the join was exactly half way along, then it divided the Holy Place ceiling one third of the way along it.

This may have assisted with the placement of furniture in that room, for it would have been exactly over the Altar of incense. This is the arrangement that I believe is correct, but I remain ready to be corrected. As I noted above, there are too many imponderables here to be sure exactly which way things went, and we must leave our questions for Moses when we meet him, although some things may become clear as we advance through the next chapters.

The entire structure was then covered by three further coverings, the last of which was a waterproof coat of skins. The entire shape was a rectangular box, not a traditional tent as we know it.

Verses 7 – 13. The tents of the Bedouin are still today made of black goat's hair that is woven to make a waterproof covering, although with the attachment of the two sheets of cloth together, as we will see below, it would not have been waterproof at the join. It was this fabric that was to cover the entire structure securely. Eleven (11) lengths of fabric were to be woven for this covering. Each one was to be thirty cubits long, by four wide (45 feet long by 6 feet wide). They were to be assembled together in two sheets; the first of five panels, and the second of six panels. The sixth was to be "doubled" to provide a "door", (or more correctly, as we will see from the measurements, a drop sheet over the top of the entrance way) to the front of the tabernacle.

This provided two sheets of black goat's hair fabric of 45 feet by 36 feet, and 45 feet by 30 feet. They were to be joined with fifty hooks and golden latches, exactly as the tapestry fabric was, but the join would be directly above the veil separating the two inner rooms, along the ceiling. Forty five feet is exactly the distance from the ground on one side of the tabernacle, over the top, to the ground on the other side of the tabernacle (15 foot walls, 15 foot ceiling across). Seventy five feet is the distance from the ground at the front, across the top to the back and to the ground level at the back (15 foot high entrance and rear wall, and 45 feet from front to rear).

From these measurements you can see that the front entrance is not covered in by the goat's hair fabric covering, as it was only 66 feet in length. If it was doubled over the Tabernacle entrance, there would be a 9 foot overhang, which if doubled would be a four foot six inch overhang, leaving 10 foot six inches of clearance to the ground level at the front. If the white tapestry covered fabric had only an overhang of 12 feet there would be a view into the Holy Place. This is another piece of evidence that makes me think the join in the white tapestry was over the Altar of Incense, with the goat's hair fabric joint being over the veil between the rooms. This meant that from the inside the white tapestry was visible to floor level; heaven in effect touching earth at the entrance. There were front boards, pillars and curtains to be erected to cover the view of the tapestry from the outside.

Under this viewpoint, there was the roll of fabric at the bottom to anchor this inner covering of the front door of the Tabernacle. It would mean that the priest would have to slip into the Holy Place through the side, although, as we will see below, the wooden panels would make that nearly impossible. We will return to this problem later, for it only as more is revealed of the structure that we **possibly** have an answer to this and see just how far down the first covering goes and how the priests enter the Holy Place.

As we will see with the placement of the golden covered wooden boards, the entry into the Tabernacle was going to be a difficult manoeuvre, but the actual way in is yet to be seen, and that will give us the final piece of information about how far down, if at all, the tapestry that covered the roof hung. This was a tent that only the priests could enter and see into, and it was not meant to be easy to enter it. Things had to be done slowly, prayerfully, with thought, support from others, and very deliberate action. No-one alone could get in, others were needed to hold back the covering to allow entry, especially with anything in your hands. Men were to be prevented from entering God's presence with haste.

It is a lesson for us today, when we often rush into church without the pause for prayerful preparation, and with the things of this world still on our minds. The cloth that blocked the entrance spoke of heaven touching the earth, and the priest, as he edged past it was reminded that he was standing between man and God and was to do all he did with great care and deliberate obedience to the One who had established this system of worship, and he had to enter with the help of others.

Verse 14. Over the black goats hair fabric there were two further coverings, the first of red dyed rams wool, and then the final waterproofing of "badgers skins"; possibly a sea creature skin. This is either seal skin or sea cow skin (Manatee). This was the final water proof covering and the only one seen by the people. The Tabernacle had no "comeliness" of appearance from the outside; all it's beauty was hidden. This was the perfect picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah 53:2ff.

Verses 15 – 19. Moses now explains the boards that form the solid structure of the tabernacle and hold all the coverings up. Now if we pause and reflect on how you or I would describe such a building, we would tend to describe the structure first, and so the boards would be the first items described and then the coverings, for they hang over this framework. The normal order would be, framework, then the first sheet of tapestry to form the roof and front entrance cover, and then the curtains that divide the two inner rooms, and then the items within each room. Moses is "seeing" this as the Lord reveals it to him and describing the items as they appear to him.

As was mentioned in a previous chapter, the way Moses describes this building and it's furniture is as if he is watching a television or computer generated model, not as if he is seeing a physical model. His description is unlike anything before or since, until we get to the last twenty years when such things were possible. He sees the sheets covering the tabernacle as a tent, but without any supports to hold them up, and then, in these next verses he describes the supports, almost as if their shape and structure appears under the coverings. We are used to this on modern computer graphics, but that is what we are seeing here – Moses is writing in a way none do before or since until the 21st century!!!

Initially, as we read through the first verses of this chapter, the coverings are like a tent, and no support poles or solid structure is described. A person trying to make the tabernacle with the information of the first fourteen verses could have a tent of any shape emerge, supported by poles within it, but that was not God's plan. The gold covered boards will form an incredibly strong rectangular structure for the tabernacle, and they will need to be strong to support the weight of the coverings above them.

The boards are made of the incredibly strong and readily available acacia wood of the Arabian peninsula. These trees grew more prolifically in this day and the trees were larger. It was possible then to get straight timber pit sawn into the fifteen foot lengths that will be required. Each board is a great straight slab of acacia, and it is then covered in beaten gold. They will be very heavy indeed and require at least four to eight men to handle.

Each board is fitted together upright to upright to form the open rectangle, and each side is attached together by means of rings on the outwards facing side of each board, through which poles were slid to bind the entire structure together. The weight of the coverings would press the boards together into a solid mass. Each board had a two "feet" (tenons) at the edges of each base, which fitted into silver sockets that were placed on the ground to form the foundation and shape of the building.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Much of what happened on the cross is hidden from our eyes. The work of salvation we see is awesome enough, but much, much more happened that terrible day. Let us reflect upon the depth of the achievement of the Lord for our salvation and give thanks for what He has done. Let us stand amazed before the plan of God, for in this tabernacle the greatness of salvation is portrayed. Leadership doesn't minimize the majestic, nor does it simplify the incredible – it leaves us with real awe as we stand before our creator who we do not understand.

2. Heaven touches earth in this tabernacle, and indeed that is what we celebrate every time we gather with God's people to worship. God steps down to reach us in our need for a Saviour. We are provided with a way of salvation and a holy manner in which to worship. Just as the priest had to pause to enter the tabernacle, just so we need to pause and reflect upon the glory of the Lord. Moses taught all this to the priesthood and so must we.

3. Grace, mercy and peace, are the three messages of this place before us. Kingship (purple), the blood sacrifice (red), the blue of heaven, and the white of purity, are all woven into this building, and are all woven into the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ for us all. Let us celebrate the touching of earth with heaven's gift of deliverance.

EXODUS 26:20-37

“20 And for the second side of the tabernacle on the north side there shall be twenty boards: 21 And their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. 22 And for the sides of the tabernacle westward thou shalt make six boards. 23 And two boards shalt thou make for the corners of the tabernacle in the two sides. 24 And they shall be coupled together beneath, and they shall be coupled together above the head of it unto one ring: thus shall it be for them both; they shall be for the two corners. 25 And they shall be eight boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. 26 And thou shalt make bars of shittim wood; five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle, 27 And five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the two sides westward. 28 And the middle bar in the midst of the boards shall reach from end to end. 29 And thou shalt overlay the boards with gold, and make their rings of gold for places for the bars: and thou shalt overlay the bars with gold. 30 And thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which was shewed thee in the mount. 31 And thou shalt make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made: 32 And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver. 33 And thou shalt hang up the veil under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the veil the ark of the testimony: and the veil shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy. 34 And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place. 35 And thou shalt set the table without the veil, and the candlestick over against the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south: and thou shalt put the table on the north side. 36 And thou shalt make an hanging for the door of the tent, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework. 37 And thou shalt make for the hanging five pillars of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, and their hooks shall be of gold: and thou shalt cast five sockets of brass for them.”

REFLECTION

Verses 20 – 25. Each side wall was to have 20 panels in it (18 inches wide and fifteen feet long = 45 feet length of the wall. The boards/panels at each of the corners were to be secured to the panels for the rear and front walls. This meant that the four corner panels were in effect two panels, joined top and bottom at right angles to each other. The house faced the East, and so the side walls faced north and south, with the back wall towards the West. The western wall was of ten panels, two of which were attached firmly to the last panel of the south and north wall. The front, eastern wall was of six panels, the outer two of which were attached to the last panel of the south and north walls.

This is starting to give us some suggestion of answers about the white tapestry curtain and whether it hung down to the floor at all. Now pause and think of the load on the roof of the tabernacle and coming down each of the side walls. The forces exerted upon this structure were enormous, and would have pressed inwards, tightening the structure, and so the six front panels had to be braced in some way or the panels would have collapsed together. Each side was to have five staves holding or bracing the building, and at least one of these staves was to run the full length of the building. They were acacia wood overlaid with gold.

Verses 26 – 30. From the description of the staves that bind the panels together from behind, it would appear that at least one of these (the middle one at the 7 foot 6 inch point), was able to bridge the gap between the six front panels in such a way to hold the entire front secure to hold the weight of the fabric and skin covering. David Levy's diagram in his book shows a strong lintel over the front panels which would have acted also as a bracing. If the gap was bridged by the acacia staves alone, at least two would have been required above the six foot height mark to hold the panels apart and form the doorway.

At this point there is no mention of any lintel, although there will be a curtain to hang over the door and this may have been held up by a strong beam like lintel, that would have been additional strengthening for the front wall. We must wait on this point however, and see as the vision unfolds. Once again, we are reminded that the Lord reveals this all to Moses piece meal, and we must walk carefully before settling on any final conclusions about how all this fits together.

From the brief description of the staves or “bars” notice that we are not given their dimensions at all and only guesses can be made, and most diagrams show spear shaft thickness rounded bars, or beams. From a brief engineering analysis of the weight bearing required for the coverings and the stresses being taken by these bars, I suspect they were mighty trees in the round, or beams of at least six inches thickness. The word for “rings” for the attachment of the bars to the walls covers any shape at all, and these “rings” may have been square brackets or large circular rings. Either way, they were significant sized brackets and very large pieces of straight timber went through them.

Notice that the middle beam of the five “bars” (I suggest the right translation here is “beams”) is the one that is continuous for the length of each wall, with the one above and below being only part the length. We cannot jump to the conclusion that the other bars were all the same length and only went half way. They may have been of differing lengths to provide additional strengthening to the wall so that at least two continuous beams passed over every joint in the panels. This fact would mean that for the front wall the top two of the beams may have gone the complete length. All these are details missing from Moses description.

Moses reminds us that he was in charge of its details and so he was the one to co-ordinate its building and its erection, "according to the pattern" he saw. Remember it had to be built only once, so the actual thicknesses of beams was Moses call on the basis of what he saw and was told by God, and he made them that way. No-one ever had to remake the entire structure, and as any beams were replaced over time, one for one, there was always an existing pattern for each item's replacement.

Verses 31 – 37. There was to be a separate veil made to go between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. It was made of four freestanding pillars of acacia wood, each fifteen feet high. The decoration of this veil was to be similar to the ceiling tapestry, but possibly with only two cherubim woven into the panels each facing the other, so that it formed a picture of the top of the ark, but was twelve to fifteen feet high. This was an enormous curtain and would have been beautiful to behold, and very heavy to manoeuvre by the priests tasked with setting it up.

The four posts would be placed approximately 45 inches apart, at the centre of each pillar, each one being fitted into sockets (feet to stabilize) of pure silver. Silver is the metal of redemption, and just so, the entire structure rested upon redemption. On the top of each of these pillars there were apparently some fittings for another rail/beam which went across the tabernacle, onto which were hooks of gold, with rings of silver sewn into the curtain by which it was secured. The gold and silver together spoke of the royalty of the redeemer, and silver is the metal of redemption; both together spoke of the person and work of the Lord that the furniture and activities that went on in the Holy of Holies portrayed. Details are omitted from Moses description, so don't fall out with people who draw this tabernacle up differently.

Having discussed the veil between the two parts of the tabernacle, notice that it is solid. There is no opening in the veil and the priest had to go in around the side of it. This possibly provides more information about the possible entry into the tabernacle itself through the white tapestry first covering fabric. However we now discover that there is another veil to cover the entrance way between the six boards. The gap between the boards at the front East wall measured about six feet in width. Now remember, the first total covering of the tabernacle may have been down to the floor over the boards, with 4 foot six inches of fabric rolled up at the bottom of the Eastern wall, completely covering the 6 foot entrance gap that the boards left open.

This roll of fabric could be lifted by two priests to allow a third to enter through into the Holy Place, as sliding around the side was impossible given the placement of the three panels at each corner. If the roll of fabric was not there, then the veil we are to read about now would have been the only thing separating the courtyard from the Holy Place. The veil that separated the two parts of the tabernacle is described above as if it was placed into place after the entire building was up. If this is the case then the first white tapestry covering may not have come down to the floor, or otherwise the manoeuvre would have been very difficult to place the separating veil in place. Once again we are without guidance on this matter at this point.

There were actually three "veils" or doorway hangings in the entire tabernacle structure. The first was the outer gateway curtain. Exodus 38:18-20. The second was the doorway curtain into the Holy Place, Exodus 26:36-37, 36:37-38. The third was the inner veil as we have just seen. Also Exodus 36:35-36. Were each different? Each one had the three colours woven onto the white fine linen, and each had cherubim designs, and each may have been of slightly differing proportions. We simply do not know for sure. Each veil pictorially represented the work of redemption and the perfect acceptance of the sacrifices with the righteousness and justice of God being met by the blood sacrifices.

Each veil was held up differently and with different metals; the most precious being the last veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The doorway hanging that covered the boards (and possibly the white tapestry of the first tent covering) is now described in verses 36 and 37. With five pillars supporting this curtain there would be one of them right in the middle of the gap of six foot that was the actual door way itself. This would leave less than three feet on either side of that pillar to enter and leave.

Most ancient mikvah pools (baptismal pool) that have been discovered in Israel have had two sets of steps, one for going in and one for coming out. Possibly this was the pattern established here in the tabernacle, with the priest entering in from one side of the central pillar and coming out the other side. The curtains were hung between these pillars, possibly from a solid beam attached above them (as in David Levy's diagram). We are not told by Moses. Each pillar was set up upon a socket, or foot, of brass, speaking of judgment for sin. The priest entered through these doors with the blood of the sacrifices, and the judgment for sin alone allowed the priest to enter, hence the brass feet for this first curtain. Once within the feet of the pillars were of silver, speaking of the redemption provided through the blood.

There were four panels of curtains for this front entrance hanging flush with the outside of the pillars, having a gap between them and, I believe, the white inner tapestry fabric covering. From the additional details provided at the end of this chapter, I believe this first tapestry type white fabric tent covering did go to the floor, so that the priest entering with the blood had to enter the tabernacle with the help of at least two others. He would advance through the second or third hanging curtain (to the left or right of the central pillar) and would then have to pause. Two other priests would have to enter with him, and they, with the outer curtain pulled back behind them, to cover them, would then raise the white inner fabric to let the priest carrying the blood sacrifice (or the oil for the lamp, or bread for the table) walk underneath into the Holy Place.

With the curtain door way closed behind them, no-one outside would see these three men once they entered beyond this doorway, or get a glimpse of the Holy Place when the priest who entered went through. The two priests who raised and lowered the inner tent covering would remain behind the curtain doorway to await the offering bearer's return, when they

would lift the inner tent covering again and then once all three were together in the gap between the inner cover and the doorway curtain, they would then move that aside and leave the Tabernacle.

I believe they entered from one side of the central pillar and left by the curtain on the other side. This was achieved as they raised the inner covering, which gave them the opportunity to move to the next doorway. This is however all speculation, for Moses does not tell us at this point. Further details will emerge as we go through the next chapters and into Numbers and Leviticus. I will not run ahead to those books at this point with further details, as I want you to receive these instructions as the Israelites did, by revelation that is revealed over time.

It is the reminder to us as we think of the difficulty of entering and leaving the Tabernacle, that the veils were meant to be barriers between men and God, for the sin, that the brass spoke of, was a barrier between man and God. The veil was beautiful, but it was a reminder of the "otherness" and holiness of God, with the cherubim being the representation of this fact. These beings, the highest order of the angels, were the guardians of the Garden of Eden after man's sin there, Genesis 3:24, and are pictured by Ezekiel in Ezekiel 10, as the guardians of God's holiness. The veils were reminders that men were entering holy ground and had better tread softly and carefully lest they be judged. As we will see later, many were judged, when they thought they could serve the Lord as priests, when God had not called them. Leviticus 10:1, Numbers 3:4, 26:61.

The placement of the inner furniture is now given at this point also in verses 34-35. The Mercy Seat is to be placed above the ark and it is to be centrally located in the middle of the Holy of Holies. The golden lamp stand is to be placed on the left as you enter the tabernacle, with the "Table of the Shew Bread" on the right. The altar of incense is to be placed directly ahead in front of the veil leading into the Holy of Holies. The priest entering had to walk between the lampstand and the table, both speaking of God's provisions for His people, to approach the altar of incense, which spoke of prayer. Prayer can be offered to God on the basis of His grace provisions for us, and upon no other basis. We approach the Lord only because He opens the way for us. We have no right to speak to the Lord of all, other than in and through His provisions for us. Grace was the message of this entire house.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Three veils speak of the perfect unity of God's plan and purpose for man centring in the person and work of Christ. The entry into the Tabernacle spoke of God's work in providing the solution to the sin problem of man, and it was by grace through faith. The only way to God was by means of the blood shed for the sins of man. God's perfect provision for dealing with man's sin meeting the requirements of His righteousness and justice – the two cherubim – and leading to His perfect satisfaction with the sacrifice. It was the playing out and illustration of God's plan and provision for man, and the acceptance of the sacrificial system by Israel was their way to salvation.

2. It was not meant to be easy for men to enter this tabernacle. The priests had to work together to enter and leave this place. It was to picture the need for man's humility and caution in drawing near the Lord of all. We can be too flippant and casual in our worship today and this building is an illustration of the need to pause and reflect a lot more than we do in our worship.

REFLECTION UPON THE NATURE OF THE ATONEMENT – UNLIMITED ATONEMENT

1. Definition:

- a) The totally effective work of Christ on the cross to pay the penalty of sin on behalf of mankind.
- b) Atonement as a noun means reconciliation after enmity and includes reparation made for wrong or injury.
- c) The verb has several related meanings such as to be at one, to be in accordance, to make reparation or amends, to make up for errors or deficiencies, to reconcile.
- d) In the Old Testament, the true meaning of atonement is related to the Hebrew verb "to pass over, to cover" - it is also the word for 'pitch' used to seal Noah's Ark.

2. In Old Testament times, animal sacrifices were used to cover sin.

- a) God forgave and restored where sin was covered by the blood of animal sacrifices.
- b) However, the true basis for atonement was not found in these animal sacrifices. This is why the sacrifices needed to be repeated time and time again.
- c) Animal sacrifices were used as a cover for sin until the true sacrifice, Jesus Christ, could be offered on the cross.
- d) Atonement in the Old Testament refers to the use of animal sacrifices to picture the saving work of Christ.
- e) The two concepts of atonement (Old and New Testament) are brought together in Romans 3:23-26

3. Atonement is unlimited

- a) When Jesus Christ was judged on the cross for sins he paid for the sins of the entire human race, not just the elect. (Romans 5:6, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 1 Timothy 2:6, 4:10, 2 Peter 2:1, 1 John 2:2)
- b) "Limited Atonement", the concept that Christ died for believers only is incorrect.

4. Unlimited Atonement eliminates sin in the unbelievers' indictment at the Last Judgment.

- a) When Christ died on the cross, He was judged for all sins of the human race.
- b) Therefore the issue in salvation is not sin, but faith in Christ. People choose either to accept the work of Christ (John 3:18,36), or their own "good" works to gain the approval of God.

c) Therefore, human good will be the basis of the unbelievers' indictment at the Last Judgment. (Revelation 20:12)

THE REMOVAL OF THE BARRIER BETWEEN MAN AND GOD

INTRODUCTION

1. The Character of God:

- a) God is sovereign, absolute righteousness, justice, love, eternal life, all powerful, all knowing everywhere, unchangeable and truth.
- b) God is one in essence but three in personality: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. These three personalities have the same essence.
- c) God the Father is the planner of man's salvation; God the Son is the executor of the plan of salvation, and God the Holy Spirit is the revealer of this plan.

2. God's Divine Plan:

- a) A conference was held in eternity past between God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Divine Planning) whereby it was made possible for man to have fellowship with God.
- b) God's foreknowledge recognized a barrier would exist in time and that all people would be behind this barrier. (Romans 3:23)
- c) Sin is a failure to measure up to God's perfect righteousness, a failure to possess "The perfect righteousness". Man cannot remove this barrier. God's Righteousness and Justice must be satisfied before His love can come to man.
- d) God the Father is the author of a plan whereby He decided to treat the human race on the basis of Grace (all the Father does for us). Grace is receiving a gift. It is undeserved and unmerited, and contrary to all human concepts.
- e) God the Son removed the barrier by His death on the cross. We receive Him as our personal Saviour, and perfect righteousness is credited to us. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

AN EXPLANATION OF THE BARRIER AND ITS REMOVAL

1. The Problem of Sin:

- a) Sin exists in three categories: imputed sin, (all sinned when Adam sinned) inherent sin (the sinful nature) personal sin (sins committed).
- b) Man is a sinner because Adam sinned and passed down the sin nature to the human race. The penalty of sin is spiritual death (Romans 5:12, 6:23) Every member of the human race is a sinner as far as God is concerned. (Romans 3:23)
- c) In John 8:31-32 Jesus Christ addressed the Jews who believed on Him and told them to go on in truth and use what He provided. Truth sets us free from the Mosaic Law to serve the Lord and operate in grace.
- d) The unbelieving, religious Jews (v 33) said they were Abraham's seed and not in bondage. They were actually in bondage to the Roman Empire, their religious leaders, and the Mosaic Law. He told them about the bondage of sin.
- e) They are all born in the slavery of sin, for no member of the human race can free himself or other members of the human race. Jesus Christ became true humanity to liberate the human race. He was born outside the slavery of sin by the virgin birth as the God-Man. He paid the price for freedom of the human race - this is redemption.

2. The Solution to the Problem of Sin: Redemption and Atonement:

- a) The "son abides in the house forever" (John 8:35), for Jesus Christ is "the son". He is eternal life and holy and when man believes on Him man is free and enters into union with Jesus Christ. Christianity is a relationship to Jesus Christ, not a religion.
- b) The purchase price of our redemption is His blood (1 Peter 1:18,19, Ephesians 1:7, Revelation 1:5, Hebrews 9:11-14, Galatians 3:13) , representing His death. Jesus Christ bore the sins of the whole world (past, present and future) on the cross.
- c) God is absolute righteousness and justice; the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23, Colossians 2:14). Jesus Christ cancelled the "IOU" the human race owed God. The human race owes God perfect righteousness.
- d) God is perfect righteousness and we cannot pay perfect righteousness. Jesus Christ died on the cross, paying the penalty of our sins. This is expiation (Romans 5:8)
- e) The doctrines of Redemption and Expiation are found in Psalm 22:1-6. God the Father and Holy Spirit left the Son because He was bearing our sins on the cross. (Matthew 27:46)

3. The Problem of the Penalty of Sin solved by Expiation (Colossians 2:14)(Romans 6:23)

- a) Expiation and Propitiation are two sides of the same coin with propitiation being in relation to God while expiation looks at the problem from man's side.
- b) By expiation the offence which renders the person guilty in the sight of God is covered from the eyes of God by the effective dealing with the problem by propitiation.

4. The Problem of Physical Birth (John 3) and its Solution: Regeneration:(John 3:1-15)

- a) Nicodemus (v 1) was a Pharisee. He was a very religious man, attending church three times a day and praying seven times a day. He was sincere and was a product of "salvation by works".
- b) He was also a ruler of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night because he was too busy during the day doing "good". (v 2)

- c) He called Jesus Rabbi or "Doctor". He admitted more than most Pharisees for he said they knew Jesus came from God, for no one could keep doing the miracles He did except God was with Him. (v 2)
- d) Jesus interrupted, knowing his problem. "Except a man be born again". Nicodemus needed to be born again. (v 3)
- e) Why is the new birth necessary? Man is born in this world with a soul (ability to understand and categorize human phenomena), a conscience (standard by which we judge right or wrong), and a sin nature (the source of all personal sins). The human spirit is inactivated. We are born physically alive and capable of having fellowship with members of the human race, but we are spiritually dead and cannot have fellowship with God (Ephesians 2:1). We need to be born again.
- f) Nicodemus' response (v 4). He cannot think in terms of spiritual things for he has no human spirit. He asked if he could be born again physically.
- g) The new birth is a spiritual birth (v 5), so Jesus Christ uses spiritual language, - water.
 - i) The context determines the meaning of "water" (1) Salvation - (Isaiah 55:1, Revelation 22:17) (2) God the Holy Spirit - (John 7:37-39) (3) God's Word - (1 Peter 1:23, Ephesians 5:26, James 1:18)
 - ii) Here "water" is used symbolically for God's Word. The new birth is a spiritual birth. The Kingdom of God is the kingdom of eternal relationship with God.
- h) Contrast of two births (v 6). "That which is born of the flesh is flesh (physical birth). That which is born of the Spirit is spirit (spiritual birth)." Nicodemus should not be surprised (v 7). He needed to be born again.
- i) The illustration (v 8) the wind. It can be heard but not seen. The new birth is not visible. Nicodemus still does not understand (v 9).
- j) Jesus Christ used sarcasm (v 10,11) to shock Nicodemus. He is a doctor of divinity and does not understand. The Trinity ("we") knows what they speak (all knowing). Nicodemus does not have an open mind.
- k) No member of the human race (v 13) ever ascended, but Jesus Christ who came from heaven (as the God Man). As God He is everywhere, and as God and Man, Jesus Christ is on earth at the same time.
- l) How to be born again (v 14,15). Jesus Christ refers to (Numbers 21:4-9) the incident of the brazen serpent which was raised on a pole. This pictures Jesus Christ hanging on the cross bearing the sins of the world. (Colossians 2:14,15)
- m) The result (v 15). Whoever believes in Jesus Christ shall not perish but have eternal life. The problem of physical birth is removed by the new birth. We are born spiritually by regeneration or the new birth.

5. The Problem of Human Righteousness and Its Solution: Justification and Imputation:

- a) Man has no righteousness in himself as far as God's viewpoint is concerned although he may be more righteous than other members of the human race when he compares himself with them. (Isaiah 64:6)
- b) God is absolute righteousness and He cannot have fellowship with us when we have human righteousness. Good deeds put us more in debt to God. (Romans 4:1-4)
- c) Perfect or absolute righteousness is credited or imputed to us at the moment of salvation. (2 Corinthians 5:21) - imputation.
- d) We are justified or made righteous on the basis of the absolute righteousness which God gives us.

6. The Problem of the Character of God and Its Solution: Propitiation and Reconciliation.

- a) Propitiation is an act of God whereby He is satisfied with the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Jesus Christ satisfied the righteousness and justice of God.
- b) Reconciliation looks at the cross from man's viewpoint. Man is reconciled to God. God is never said to be reconciled. Propitiation looks at the cross from God's viewpoint.

7. The Problem of Position in Adam and Its Solution: Positional in Christ

- a) At the moment of salvation we enter into union with Jesus Christ (Romans 8:38,39, 2 Corinthians 5:17). This is called the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13)
- b) By our first birth we are "in Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:22). By the new birth we share Christ's eternal life, His righteousness, His destiny, His sonship, His priesthood. etc. Everything He is, we are-, and all He has, we have.
- c) Christianity is a relationship to Jesus Christ that cannot change. The barrier between God and man has been removed by Jesus Christ on the cross.
- d) The issue now is the person of Jesus Christ. He has solved the problem of sin in the human race.

SUMMARY OF THE BARRIER AND ITS REMOVAL

BARRIER	WORK OF CHRIST
SIN (Romans 3:23)	Redemption (1 Corinthians 1:29-30, Colossians 1:14) Atonement (1 John 2:2, 2 Peter 2:1)
PENALTY (Romans 6:23)	Expiation (Colossians 2:14)
BIRTH (John 3:6)	Regeneration (John 3:3, Galatians 3:26, John 1:11-12)
CHARACTER OF GOD (Romans 3:23)	Propitiation (1 John 2:2, Romans 3:25)
RIGHTEOUSNESS OF MAN	Justification (Romans 3:24, Romans 5:1)

(Isaiah 64:6)

Imputation (Romans 3:22, 2 Corinthians 5:21)

LIFE

Position in Christ (1 John 5:11-12) (1 Corinthians 15:22)

CHAPTER 27

INTRODUCTION

The descriptions of the Tabernacle now move outwards to the items in the courtyard itself. The two items in this space were the focal point for visible worship in Israel. They are the Brass/Bronze altar upon which the sacrifices were offered, and the bronze laver. The blood shed upon the bronze altar for the sins of the people, and the water from the bronze laver, to wash impurity away from the hands and feet of the priests were the two central items of “furniture” and activity that the people saw.

The sprinkling of the blood on the ark, the placing of the bread upon the table of Shewbread, and the lighting of the lampstand, were all things hidden from the people. What they saw centred in these two places, and the rituals here taught them about sin, salvation, and sanctification.

EXODUS 27:1-21

“27:1 And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits. 2 And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof: his horns shall be of the same: and thou shalt overlay it with brass. 3 And thou shalt make his pans to receive his ashes, and his shovels, and his basins, and his fleshhooks, and his firepans: all the vessels thereof thou shalt make of brass. 4 And thou shalt make for it a grate of network of brass; and upon the net shalt thou make four brazen rings in the four corners thereof. 5 And thou shalt put it under the compass of the altar beneath, that the net may be even to the midst of the altar. 6 And thou shalt make staves for the altar, staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with brass. :7 And the staves shall be put into the rings, and the staves shall be upon the two sides of the altar, to bear it. 8 Hollow with boards shalt thou make it: as it was shewed thee in the mount, so shall they make it. 9 And thou shalt make the court of the tabernacle: for the south side southward there shall be hangings for the court of fine twined linen of an hundred cubits long for one side: 10 And the twenty pillars thereof and their twenty sockets shall be of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets shall be of silver. 11 And likewise for the north side in length there shall be hangings of an hundred cubits long, and his twenty pillars and their twenty sockets of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets of silver. 12 And for the breadth of the court on the west side shall be hangings of fifty cubits: their pillars ten, and their sockets ten. 13 And the breadth of the court on the east side eastward shall be fifty cubits. 14 The hangings of one side of the gate shall be fifteen cubits: their pillars three, and their sockets three. 15 And on the other side shall be hangings fifteen cubits: their pillars three, and their sockets three. 16 And for the gate of the court shall be an hanging of twenty cubits, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework: and their pillars shall be four, and their sockets four. 17 All the pillars round about the court shall be filleted with silver; their hooks shall be of silver, and their sockets of brass. 18 The length of the court shall be an hundred cubits, and the breadth fifty every where, and the height five cubits of fine twined linen, and their sockets of brass. 19 All the vessels of the tabernacle in all the service thereof, and all the pins thereof, and all the pins of the court, shall be of brass. 20 And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always. 21 In the tabernacle of the congregation without the veil, which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the LORD: it shall be a statute for ever unto their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel.”

REFLECTION

Verses 1- 2. The dimensions are given, and without even basic decoration mentioned in the scriptures. All pictures drawn are estimations, outside the basics of shape, for Moses gives us no measurements of the horns or decorations around the side of this portable altar. It was heavy, but not unmanageable for the four to eight men on the beams that held it up on the march. Most pictures do not give the actual measurements and most show narrow shafts to carry this item.

Pause and reflect upon the size and weight of this altar. It is seven and one half feet long (over 2 meters), the same width, and four and half feet high. Just the wood to make this open box shape would weigh as much as a man. Once the entire surface is covered with a layer of bronze the weight is close to that of two or three men. The bronze has to be of a thickness to not break, or the wood underneath will catch fire, and it has to be possible to have a fire going upon this “box” to burn an entire animal several times each day.

The horns are likely to be bronze and either welded onto each corner, or beaten out of the one piece of metal. These had to be strong, as the live sacrificial animal was tied to these horns, and larger animals do not lie still when tied across a table ready to have their throats cut!

Verses 3 – 5. The altar is to be provided with bronze instruments to service the fire and the sacrifices, and handle the burning coals that will be taken from this place of sacrifice for the altar of incense which speaks of the prayers

of the people. Can you see the symbolism that abounds here in this altar and all that went on upon and around it? The sacrifices open the way for the prayers of the people to be heard. The blood opens the way through to fellowship with God, for it washes away the stain of sin. Hebrews 9:21-23. All the details of the sacrifices speak of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We will come back to this section again and again as we advance through the next section of the book of Exodus and Leviticus, for the Lord is central in both books.

This altar is the place where the offerings were made for the people every day, and where the smoke of the sacrifice rose up to heaven, as the incense from the hidden altar filled the Holy Place. The smoke that rose from this altar spoke of man's recognition of his need for obedience, and God's forgiveness of man's sins, and hearing of man's prayers.

The items need to be examined to understand the things that happened here in the altar. There were five utensils used in association with this altar. All were made of bronze, speaking of the sin of man that leads to the need for sacrifice. Genesis 3:21, 4:1-7. The first utensils were pans and shovels to pick up and carry the precious hot coals/ashes from the altar fire, once the sacrifice had been burned up. These implements were used to shovel the ashes from the old fire and remove everything from the altar before the next sacrifice began.

The ashes were consecrated because of their significance, and so they were taken and given a burial in a set apart (holy) place outside the camp. The basins were used to catch the blood from the animal that was killed. It was killed by a single slice through the arteries of the throat, with the head overhanging the altar facing the Tabernacle. The blood was caught as it gushed out and sprinkled at the base of the altar, on its horns (once the animal had been cut off these), and could be used, once a year to sprinkle the Holy of Holies and the Ark within it.

The flesh hooks were used to cut the animal into pieces once it was dead, so that the pieces would all fit upon the altar and would be able to be burned up completely. The last items were the fire pans, which were used to carry the hot coals from this altar to be used to light the lampstand wicks, and offer up incense upon the altar of incense within the Tabernacle. The fire of sacrifice "lit" the prayers of the people, and through the sacrifice the presence of the Lord was always with His people.

When they stopped believing and obeying the words of the Lord, then they ceased to have the presence of the Lord with them. Ezekiel describes the departure of the Shekinah glory from the Temple of Solomon, and the presence of the Lord left due to their regarding iniquity higher than His Word! Psalms 66:18, Isaiah 1:1-12, 59:1-2, Jeremiah 5:25, Habakkuk 1:13, Joel 2:12-13, Acts 8:22.

The next instruction is difficult to understand, for it speaks of the altar as if it is open, whereas initially the description is as if it was a box with a solid wooden top overlaid with bronze with the bronze horns at the four corners. Now Moses is told to make a grate for the altar that is to sit within it even to half way down the inner sides. This tells us that the bronze/brass/copper covering of the wood must cover completely both inner and outer surfaces to be able to handle the fire. When the altar was stationary and in use it was filled with stones or earth to form a hearth under the grate, and also to protect the insides against the fire, for the grate would catch the hot coals but the ash would fall through it and settle in the bottom of the box if the rocks and earth did not catch it and insulate it. The grate to be secured in some way by the four rings.

Remember the term "rings" can mean a continuous piece of metal of circular, oblong or square shape. Do these attach to the four horns and is the grate suspended from the horns? We have no way of knowing, and most diagrams simply get around the problem by leaving out the four corner rings on the grate and showing it half way down the inner sides of the altar. This is not necessary and would make it very difficult to operate the altar for the priests. Let us look at what we are told, and remember, Moses leaves details out, because he alone had to make this and instruct the priests in its operation. Once Solomon builds his Temple the altar there is different and larger, so later plans from his temple and the one of Zerubbabel as beautified by Herod do not help us.

The grate is to be placed within the circumference of the altar box and to hang down, and once it has been used for a while, the metal may sag down to the mid point of the altar, but no further. My feeling here is that it was attached to the four horns and as metal expands when heated and will sag over time, it was allowed to sag down to the mid point of the altar before a new one was made. It will hold the fire and the animal carcass will be piled upon it, so we are not talking a piece of thin metal; this is a seriously heavy duty piece of bronze "net" work.

The metal casting industries of the Arabian peninsula were active through this time and were able to smelt bronze, and some of the Israelites were likely employed by the Egyptians in this field, so there was no shortage of the abilities to smelt metal here and the physical facilities were present to smelt copper and also to make bronze. With the inside of the altar "box" being filled with rock and a top layer of baked earth to insulate it, the grate would sag a little, but was cushioned by the earth beneath. I believe the middle of the grate was not allowed to sag lower than the mid point of the altar, or it would not operate properly beyond that point. It would be simply too difficult for the priests to operate the fire and manage the sacrifices.

Verses 6 – 8. Moses reminds us again that he is to make these things, "as he was shown in the Mount", and so the details are basic only, as no-one else has to make these items. The staves to carry the altar are significant ones. I argue the correct word again is "beams", for they would need to be at least 4-6 inches thick (10+cm) to carry the

weight of the altar, even with the stone and earth hearth removed before each move. I suspect at least eight or twelve men were required to carry this, with two or three on the ends of each beam.

Verses 9 – 19. The courtyard is now described. The entire courtyard is to be an enclosed space with a high curtain wall of white fabric. The undertaking to enclose this space will require the focused energy of at least a hundred men to set it up each time there is a move. The organization of the moving of the camp was a phenomenal exercise and evidence for Moses amazing organizational ability.

Each of the long sides of the enclosure were 150 feet long (over 50 metres), and the short sides 75 feet long (over 25 metres). This is another reminder that we are not looking at the large numbers the Septuagint mistranslated for the children of Israel. This is an enclosure for a congregation of 30,000 and was a good focal point for such a group. Even with this number there was to be no facility for regular individual offerings here, but rather corporate offerings were to be brought daily on behalf of all the people.

Individual sin and trespass offerings were not really possible for even 6000 families on a daily basis within this space. The area is large enough for each family to visit this space together and share in the experience of the sacrifices several times a month. While the Mosaic code is going to outline individual sacrifices to be brought, they were only brought occasionally, rather than whenever there was a felt need.

We can give thanks for **1 John 1:6-10**, for we are able to enter through the veil in prayer every moment of every day, but for these people there was a waiting list for sacrifices, and most had to be content with the corporate offering. The issue was the same however; by grace the sacrifices were provided by all the people for all the people, and by faith they could be taken for cleansing from sin. All members of the congregation were able to share corporately in the regular daily offerings, as these spoke of confession of sin and redemption and all were able by prayer to join in the forgiveness and covering that each sacrifice provided.

The entire enclosure was shielded from the camp by a high fabric wall held up by great pillars of acacia wood. On the north and south sides there were twenty pillars set in feet of bronze and held in place by bronze pegs that tensioned the fence from the top of each pillar. At the top of each pillar there were silver hooks to which the fabric curtains between the pillars were attached, and they were on a rail, a word translated in the KJV as “fillets”. So between each pillar there was a silver rail on which were curtain hooks of silver from which the curtain was hung.

Silver is the element of redemption and bronze/brass the element speaking of sin, so both metals here speak of the redeeming work that goes on inside this space. The doorway space is 20 cubits wide (30 feet wide) and this space was covered with a veil that covered the entrance completely so that no-one outside could even look in. Only by entering the courtyard were you able to see the sacrifices being offered. People had to deliberately approach the place of God's presence; no casual glance was enough. Worship had to be deliberate and planned.

The fence height is given in verse 18; it is five cubits 7 foot six inches (over 2 metres). No-one could overlook the tabernacle courtyard. All the sockets and tent retaining pins are of brass/bronze; the metal speaking of sin and the need of salvation through the blood. The curtains are white fine linen speaking of the purity of God and the light of His presence. The silver rails and hooks would shine from the top of the curtains reminding all of the silver of redemption wrought through the blood shed for them. The entire impression was of mystery and wonder, and the cherubim woven into the curtains over the gateway reminded them of the guards at the entrance to the Garden of Eden, hindering man from returning there.

Everything about this place taught a doctrine about salvation and sanctification; it taught the holiness and also the grace of God. Everything that happened within the Tabernacle spoke of the challenge to faith for all the people. All had to face the challenge to daily appropriate the sacrifices made as for them, and by faith receive the forgiveness of the Lord their God for their sins. As the smoke rose from the altar all in the camp could see it and all could by faith claim that sacrifice for themselves, just as we do now.

Verses 20 – 21. All the people were to provide the extra-virgin olive oil (cold and single pressed) for the fuel for the lampstand within the Holy Place, and for an “eternal flame” in the courtyard also. Everyone was to have a part in this offering. With 6000 families and only 365 nights per year to light the lamps not a great deal was required from each family, but all that was given was to be “as unto the Lord” and again we are reminded that it is in the little things that we share the joy of giving.

The actual shape and size of this “lamp” is not given, and most diagrams omit it. In Solomon's Temple he had an enormous candle stick outside as well as the seven branched one inside. The inner one was only lit at night and extinguished each evening, but this one in the courtyard was to burn permanently. God was always with His people and the people were to see this eternal flame to remind them of the character of God, ever stable and secure, and that His presence was with them forever. **Deuteronomy 6:3-9, 33:27, Matthew 28:20.**

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. God judges sin and the bronze of the altar speaks of this. The silver of redemption reminds us that the Lord not only deals with sin, but completely saves man, through faith, from the consequences of their sins. All man has to do is obey the commands of the Lord and bring the sacrifice that is required. As this passage makes clear this involved the

animal sacrifices for Israel, but for us it is the sacrifice of praise and confession of sin. For both groups, the church and for Israel, it was salvation by God's grace provision and by the faith expressed of each person.

2. The Tabernacle was hard to enter and an act of worship had to be deliberate and definite. Anything short of this was inadequate. We are challenged by this to reflect upon our attitude when we worship. We are to approach the Lord with deliberate steps that are prayer saturated. There are to be no casual or flippant attitudes, but the humility of a person who sees their need of a saviour.

3. All were able to partake of the regular service of the Tabernacle, by provision of sacrificial animals and of oil and bread. All could be a part of the services by giving and by prayer that reflected their faith that what was happening here was for them. We too are challenged to be a part of the worship of God's people by joining with others to praise Him and give towards the upkeep of the local church and the support of God's local preacher.

REFLECTIONS UPON THE LEVITICAL OFFERINGS – THEY EACH REPRESENT 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)