

Exodus

A Verse-By-Verse Study

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CONTENTS

(Clicking a reference will take you to that location)

Exodus 1:1-14 (Bitterness and Bondage in the Land of Egypt).....	6
Exodus 1:15-22 (Obeying God Rather Than Men)	23
Exodus 2:1-10 (This is One of the Hebrew’s Children)	40
Exodus 2:11-15 (Shunned By His Own).....	57
Exodus 2:16-25 (Seven Daughters Drawing Water From the Well)	75
Exodus 3:1-6 (Standing On Holy Ground)	93
Exodus 3:7-12 (The Call of Moses - A Sign of Promise)	111
Exodus 3:13-15 (I AM THAT I AM)	129
Exodus 3:16-22 (Expected Resistance; Assured Deliverance)	147
Exodus 4:1-9 (Three Signs to His People)	165
Exodus 4:10-17 (Filling Life’s Gaps).....	182
Exodus 4:18-23 (Israel is My Son, My Firstborn)	199
Exodus 4:24-31 (A Bridegroom of Blood and a Divine Visitation)	215
Exodus 5:1-9 (Thus Says the Lord God of Israel).....	232
Exodus 5:10-23 (Gathering Stubble to Make Brick).....	249
Exodus 6:1-13 (I Will Rescue and I Will Redeem)	268
Exodus 6:14-30 (The Family of Moses and Aaron)	287
Exodus 7:1-7 (Notable Obedience).....	306
Exodus 7:8-13 (The Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart)	325
Exodus 7:14-25 (The Plague of Blood)	343
Exodus 8:1-7 (The Plague of Frogs - Part I)	360
Exodus 8:8-15 (The Plague of Frogs - Part II)	377
Exodus 8:16-19 (The Plague of Lice).....	394
Exodus 8:20-32 (The Plague of the Swarm).....	411
Exodus 9:1-12 (The Plagues of Livestock and Boils)	429
Exodus 9:13-21 (The Plague of Hail, Part I).....	448
Exodus 9:22-35 (The Plague of Hail, Part II).....	466
Exodus 10:1-11 (The Plague of Locusts, Part I).....	484
Exodus 10:12-20 (The Plague of Locusts, Part II).....	502

Exodus 10:21-29 (The Plague of Darkness).....	518
Exodus 11:1-10 (Announcing the Final Plague)	535
*The Day of Crucifixion and Resurrection	552
Exodus 12:1-11 (It is the Lord’s Passover)	557
Exodus 12:12-20 (Saved Unto Holiness).....	577
Exodus 12:21-28 (What Do You Mean By This Service?).....	595
Exodus 12:29-36 (The Plague on the Firstborn)	614
Exodus 12:37-51 (The Exodus).....	632
Exodus 13:1-10 (The Feast of Unleavened Bread).....	652
Exodus 13:11-22 (Their Sign)	670
Exodus 14:1-9 (The Lord is Watching)	689
Exodus 14:10-20 (Stand Still and See the Salvation of the Lord).....	705
Exodus 14:21-31 (The Parting of the Red Sea)	724
Exodus 15:1-10 (The Song of Moses - The Song at the Sea, Part I)	743
Exodus 15:11-21 (The Song of Moses - The Song at the Sea, Part II).....	764
Exodus 15:22-27 (The Sweetened Waters)	783
Exodus 16:1-8 (Bread from Heaven).....	802
Exodus 16:9-21 (Quail and Manna)	821
Exodus 16:22-36 (Entering God’s Rest - The Hidden Omer).....	842
Exodus 17:1-7 (Water from the Rock)	862
Exodus 17:8-16 (Yehovah Nissi – The Lord is My Banner).....	882
Exodus 18:1-12 (Jethro, the Priest of Midian)	901
Exodus 18:13-27 (A Man of Wisdom and Understanding).....	921
Exodus 19:1-9 (If You Will...)	940
Exodus 19:10-25 (A Law of Death and Condemnation).....	961
Exodus 20:1-12 (Ten Not So Simple Commands, Part I).....	982
Exodus 20:13-17 (Ten Not so Simple Commands, Part II)	1002
Exodus 20:18-26 (The Earthen Altar).....	1023
Exodus 21:1-11.....	1044
(The Law of the Hebrew Slave)	1044
Exodus 21:12-27 (Keeping Violence in Check).....	1063
Exodus 21:28-36 (The Price of a Life)	1083

Exodus 22:1-15 (The Responsible Thing to Do)	1102
Exodus 22:16-31 (That Which is Morally Right).....	1122
Exodus 23:1-9 (Justice, Justice You Shall Do).....	1142
Exodus 23:10-19 (Set Times and Feasts for Israel)	1162
Exodus 23:20-33 (Covenant Promises and Expectations)	1182
Exodus 24:1-8 (This is the Blood of the Covenant).....	1203
Exodus 24:9-18 (Come Up to Me on the Mountain)	1222
Exodus 25:1-9 (Preparations for the Tabernacle).....	1241
Exodus 25:10-22 (The Ark of the Covenant and the Seat of Mercy)	1260
Exodus 25:23-30 (A Table in the Presence of the Lord)	1281
Exodus 25:31-40 (The Menorah)	1298
Exodus 26:1-14 (The Tabernacle and the Tent).....	1316
Exodus 26:15-30 (A Sure Foundation and a Steady Frame)	1335
Exodus 26:31-37 (The Veil and the Screen - Points of Access).....	1353
Exodus 27:1-8 (The Brazen Altar)	1372
Exodus 27:9-21 (The Court of the Tabernacle).....	1391
Exodus 28:1-14 (The Ephod).....	1410
Exodus 28:15-30 (The Breastplate of Judgment).....	1429
Exodus 28:31-43 (Clothed in Majesty and Righteousness)	1450
Exodus 29:1-14 (The Consecration of Aaron and His Sons, Part I)	1471
Exodus 29:15-25 (The Consecration of Aaron and His Sons, Part II)	1490
Exodus 29:26-37 (The Consecration of Aaron and His Sons, Part III)	1508
Exodus 29:38-46 (I Will Dwell among Them and be Their God).....	1527
Exodus 30:1-10 (The Altar of Incense).....	1547
Exodus 30:11-16 (The Ransom Payment).....	1568
Exodus 30:17-21 (The Bronze Laver)	1588
Exodus 30:22-38 (The Holy Anointing Oil and the Holy Incense).....	1605
Exodus 31:1-11 (Bezalel and Aholiab).....	1625
Exodus 31:12-18 (The Law of the Sabbath)	1645
Exodus 32:1-10 (The Golden Calf – The Testing of Aaron)	1665
Exodus 32:11-24 (The Golden Calf – The Testing of Moses)	1685
Exodus 32:25-35 (The Golden Calf – The Testing of the Sons of Levi)	1705

Exodus 33:1-11 (Everyone Who Sought the Lord).....	1725
Exodus 33:12-23 (My Presence Will Go With You, And I Will Give You Rest)	1745
Exodus 34:1-9 (Take Us as Your Inheritance)	1764
Exodus 34:10-26 (Behold, I am Making a Covenant).....	1785
Exodus 34:27-35 (The Refulgency of the Lord).....	1805
Exodus 35:1-19 (A Call to Service)	1826
Exodus 35:20-35 (Offerings and Artisans)	1844
Exodus 36:1-38 (The People’s Offering)	1862
Exodus 37:1-29 (Christ in Every Detail).....	1880
Exodus 38:1-8 (Justified and Sanctified before Our God).....	1899
Exodus 38:9-31 (The Always Evident Lord).....	1917
Exodus 39:1-43 (And Moses Blessed Them).....	1935
Exodus 40:17-38 (The Lord in Their Midst).....	1978

EXODUS 1:1-14

(BITTERNESS AND BONDAGE IN THE LAND OF EGYPT)

Introduction: As we enter into Exodus, we should look back and see the contrast between what is coming and where we have been. The book of Genesis showed us a snapshot of creation. Exodus will show us a snapshot of redemption. In the book of Genesis, we traveled through approximately 2370 years of human history. Exodus will take us through about 80.

In Genesis we saw three separate dispensations – Innocence, Conscience, and Government. In Exodus, the fourth dispensation will be introduced – Law. This one dispensation will remain through the next 42 books of the Bible. Only at the end of each gospel will the next dispensation, that of Grace, be introduced.

Genesis began with a single line of people, carefully selected to lead to a single united family called Israel. Exodus will begin with Israel and they will continue to be the focus of God's redemptive plans all the way through the Bible. Even during the church age, Israel is still considered a part of God's plans, though temporarily taken out of the highlights and placed on the sidelines.

In Genesis, we have the beginnings of all things which come from the eternal Father. In the garden there was freedom and fraternity between God and man. In Exodus we begin with oppression and bondage leading to deliverance, picturing the work of the Son, the Deliverer of His people.

Genesis focused on many great individuals as God used them to picture portions of future history. In Exodus, God will almost exclusively use Moses for this purpose. We could go on for hours discussing what is coming in the book, but we will be looking into it in detail until we finish it, and so there's no need to go too deep.

Let it suffice to say that because this is a part of God's word, it should be handled carefully, researched completely, and cherished with delight. God chose the details of the book of Exodus to reveal to us the coming Redeemer, Jesus. If we keep reminding ourselves of that, we should find it an absolute delight to our senses.

Text Verse: *"Israel also came into Egypt, And Jacob dwelt in the land of Ham. ²⁴ He increased His people greatly, And made them stronger than their enemies. ²⁵ He turned their heart to hate His people, To deal craftily with His servants." Psalm 105:23-25*

God directed Israel to go to Egypt and to Egypt he went. There they prospered and grew into a vast multitude. But, they remained united as a people and they did not assimilate into Egypt. This caused tension between them and the ruler of Egypt. And so they were brought into bondage and servitude to the Egyptians.

At the same time, their bondage was not undeserved. The people of Israel failed to honor the Lord and so He was not unjust in allowing them to suffer for a time. God is never unfair nor does He cause misery or trial to occur without a reason. This is a lesson we should continually remind ourselves as we face our own trials.

The good news though is that if we have called on Christ, then a time is coming when all of these things will be behind us. We are the redeemed of the Lord and so He will never leave us nor forsake us. This is a constant theme of God's superior word and so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Sons of Israel (verses 1-5)

¹ Now these *are* the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt;

Like many of the other books in the Old Testament, the book of Exodus actually begins with the word "and." The words are *v'elleh shemot bene yisrael* – "And these are the name of the children of Israel." This word "and" begins 13 of the books of the Old Testament and it shows that the writers instinctively felt that they were writing words that belonged to a greater book with a unified message.

The first five books of the Bible, known as the Torah or the Pentateuch, are all ascribed to Moses and so the "and" may seem less unusual, and yet it is a completely separate book from Genesis and so the "and" at the beginning really is no less notable.

This reason we know this is an entirely separate and distinct book from Genesis is because the first verse begins with the exact same words as Genesis 46:8. This was immediately followed with a list of all of the family who went to Egypt with Jacob. Now, a recapitulation of that is going to be made. This then is given to show a definite starting point for an entirely new narrative.

Like at other times, the Hebrew name of the book comes from the first words. And so it is called *v'elleh shemot* or simply *shemot* – "names." The name we use in English,

“Exodus,” is from the Greek which means “going out.” The going out of Egypt by the Israelites is one of the great highlights of the book and so it was given that name. Here in the first verse, we can deduce that the book is going to center on the nation of Israel just as Genesis ended with them as well. God’s funnel of chosen people finally settled on this one family and it is through them that redemptive history will continue for the next 1570 +/- years, until the coming of the Messiah.

Genesis ended with the death of Joseph. He was born right around the year 2260 Anno Mundi. He lived 110 years and so his death came at approximately 2370AM. After the death of Joseph, not another word about the time which the Israelites remained in Egypt was given until now, sometime around the birth of Moses.

This was a period of about 64 years and so it is somewhere around the year 2434AM, but the date isn’t specific. However, the dating of the Bible will become specific again at key points during the book.

^{1 (con’t)} **each man and his household came with Jacob:**

The listing of Jacob and his descendants included 70 names who went to Egypt. However, this was not all who went to Egypt with him. The verse here says, *ish ubetow* – “man and his household.” This word for “household” includes everyone under the authority of the house – wives, children, grandchildren, servants, etc. It is an all-inclusive statement and was used this way in Genesis 14:14 –

“Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained *servants* who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.” Genesis 14:14

Abraham’s household included many people, possibly in the thousands. If he had 318 fighting men, plus women, children, old people, etc., the final number was very large. Isaac inherited this and built upon it. Jacob had a large company even prior to inheriting Isaac’s household. And then the family would have continued to grow in number after that time.

In all, there were certainly many, many thousands of people who went to Egypt with Jacob. Though not literal descendants of Jacob, they are included under the umbrella of Israel and it easily explains the immense number of people who will depart at the Exodus, a number recorded at 603,550 men who are 20 and older. In all, the number will probably be well above 1.5 million people.

This is important to remember for several reasons. The time Israel is actually in Egypt is only 215 total years. If it were only the 70 recorded, it would seem incredulous to have such a large number going out. And many dismiss the record entirely because of this.

Secondly, it shows that the people of Israel, united at Mount Sinai, included a vast number of people who were not actually of natural descent. In fact, the vast majority of them probably aren't. And yet, they will all be counted within the numbers of individual tribes and a part of the collective whole. We will see this validated in several ways during the next few books of the Bible.

² Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah;

These four names begin the list of the sons of Israel who traveled to Egypt with him. The sons here are listed in birth order and are all sons of Leah who was Jacob's first wife. In 1 Chronicles 5:1, 2 we read this –

“Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel—he *was* indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright; ² yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him *came* a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph's.”

The birthright, instead of going to Reuben, was given to Joseph. However, from Judah will come the Ruler, the Messiah.

³ Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin;

These next three are still in birth order by Jacob's wives Leah and Rachel. Issachar and Zebulun were born to Leah, and Benjamin was born to Rachel. Joseph is left out because he was already in Egypt at the time and is excluded from the list of those who travelled with Jacob.

⁴ Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

These four sons were born to the maidservants – Bilhah and Zilpah. The first two were born to Rachel's maidservant Bilhah, and the second two were born to Leah's maidservant Zilpah. And so there is an intentional order and harmony to the listing of these names. First, those born to the legitimate wives, in order by Leah and then Rachel, and then those born to the maidservants, in order of birth.

Only the males are listed here in Exodus, but at the counting in Genesis, two women were named, Dinah and Serah. Despite them being named in Genesis, Jacob could have, and certainly did have, many other daughters. However, only these two were counted at that time because only they were relevant to the account.

The family name travels through the male and so unless there is an additional reason for mentioning a female, they are simply not listed. This doesn't diminish the role of women, but it keeps the records straight according to the line of descent.

⁵ All those who were descendants of Jacob were seventy persons

It might seem arbitrary or unnecessary to begin the book with something that has already been said at the end of Genesis, but it isn't. This listing of seventy persons was given with purpose. There is nothing random or illogical about it. Rather, it was given to again show us a snapshot of redemptive history.

The importance of the number 70 is to reveal that Israel is God's instrument for His redemptive works among humanity leading up to the Messiah. All of humanity is derived from the 70 names which are listed in the Table of Nations recorded in Genesis 10.

Those 70 names in Genesis 10, which correspond to everyone on earth, are to be given the oracles of God through the 70 names recorded in this listing which comprises the covenant people of Israel. This is alluded to in Deuteronomy 32:8, which says –

“When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations,
When He separated the sons of Adam,
He set the boundaries of the peoples
According to the number of the children of Israel.” Deuteronomy 32:8

Seven is the number of spiritual perfection. It is the sum of 3, the divine number, and 4, the number for creation. Ten is the number for completeness. Thus, in those who are noted as Jacob's descendants and who have gone to Egypt, God's divine plans (3) are being worked out in His created world (4) in their fullness (10) through these 70 people.

The list in Genesis wasn't an arbitrary list of names and numbers. Rather it was a prophetic plan and symbolic structure of what God would do in the history of man's redemption. We are being reminded of this now at the beginning of Exodus, the book which will introduce the fourth dispensation of God's redemptive plans.

God bestowed grace on Adam after the fall, and kept a select line of people through the years until Noah, who again received grace in the eyes of the Lord. After the flood, God gave an overall structure of redemption as laid out in the Bible in the account of Noah. This is an outline of humanity in the seventy named people-groups in the Table of Nations.

Following that, He called Abraham and made a covenant of grace to the world, declaring him righteous by faith. Through the chosen line of Abraham's seed, He has refined what He will do in the future, giving us pictures of everything that is coming. This now continues in the second book of the Bible. This is one of the reasons for this recapitulation of the list now.

Another reason for reminding us of the number is to show that even though they started out small, there will be an immense change in the numbers. This will cause a sequence of events which will demonstrate God's sovereignty, His ability to keep His promises, and the continuance of His redemptive plan for the people of the world. What seems arbitrary isn't.

⁵ (con't) **(for Joseph was in Egypt *already*).**

This explains why Joseph's name was left out of the record of the sons of Israel which were given in these first few verses.

*Remember the days of old here in the new
Consider the generations long since past
Ask your father and he will tell you
Your elders, and they will explain how the plan was cast*

*When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance
When he divided all mankind as His word does tell
He set up boundaries for the peoples, not by chance
But according to the number of the sons of Israel*

*For the Lord's portion is His people, you see
Jacob his allotted inheritance throughout redemptive history*

II. The Fruitfulness of Israel (verses 6 & 7)

⁶ **And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that generation.**

Of the twelve sons of Israel, Joseph's death is the only one with any full record in the Bible. The rest of them are merely mentioned in this cumulative statement here. We do know that from Exodus 6:16 that Levi lived to be 137 years old. That was 27 years longer than Joseph, but he was also a little bit older than him.

Regardless of this though, they were all dead by the time of the events we see here. And so, during this period of about 64 years, nothing else is recorded. Of the many weddings, births, family vacations, heartaches, joys, and other memorable times of the individual lives, God's word remains silent.

His word is here to tell us details about history, not a complete detail of history. When the two line up, He uses them for His purposes. When they don't, time eventually swallows up even the memories of what was once the news of the day.

⁷ But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.

Despite the deaths of the early generation that travelled to Egypt, the growth of Israel was immense. One could ask how this was possible if the statement from Genesis 46 was true. There it said this –

“So it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says, ‘What is your occupation?’ ³⁴ that you shall say, ‘Your servants’ occupation has been with livestock from our youth even till now, both we *and* also our fathers,’ that you may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd *is* an abomination to the Egyptians.”

-Genesis 46:33, 34

If the Egyptians deplored the Hebrews because they were shepherds, and if they were kept in Goshen, separately from the multitudes, then how could they multiply in this way? Again, this takes us back to the number of people who would have travelled with Jacob. Only seventy were mentioned, but that was for a reason.

Within each son's household would have been a large number of people. They would have married and intermarried. The vast number of people who would have grown from them in that 215-year period from Jacob's arrival to the Exodus, along with the mixed multitude who left with them, could easily reach the numbers the Bible mentions.

Just because it is a period of only 64 years from the death of Joseph until the time of the birth of Moses, it is a full 215-year period from Jacob's arrival until the Exodus, which occurs when Moses is about 80 years old. During all this time, the Israelites multiplied.

And so the Bible gives us this verse to confirm this. The NKJV doesn't really give the sense of how they are described. Young's Literal Translation reads it in this manner –

“...and the sons of Israel have been fruitful, and they teem, and multiply, and are very very mighty, and the land is filled with them.” YLT

*They were fruitful. In Hebrew, *paru*, meaning that they brought forth children like a tree brings forth fruit. *They teemed – in Hebrew, *yishretsu*. This word gives the idea of teeming like fish, which is the sense that it is given in Genesis 1:20 when God said that the waters should *abound* with living creatures.

*They multiplied – in Hebrew *yirbu*. This is a separate term, not an adverb as so many translations make it. *And they grew exceedingly mighty. In Hebrew *v'yaatmu bimod meod*. It is a way of saying that their numbers were truly astounding as indicated by the double superlative *bimod meod*.

*With the Lord's favor and His blessing great things occur
Even the weak can say "I am strong"
He is the Rock where our footing will be sure
In Him is safety and nothing goes wrong*

*As the people of Israel grew into a great multitude
So God will increase you when your trust in Him is sound
So keep your faith and remember your gratitude
When He blesses you with blessings which astound*

*He is great and has done all great things for us
He is our God, our Lord, our precious Jesus*

III. Bitter Lives and Hard Bondage (verses 8-14)

⁸ Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

Albert Barnes notes that –

“The expressions in this verse are special and emphatic. ‘A new king’ is a phrase not found elsewhere. It is understood by most commentators to imply that he did not succeed his predecessor in the natural order of descent and inheritance. He ‘arose up over Egypt,’ occupying the land, as it would seem, on different terms from the king whose place he took, either by usurpation or conquest.”

It needs to be remembered from Genesis, that Joseph pictured Christ and Pharaoh pictured God’s rule from heaven. The 430-year period from Abraham until the Exodus is divided into two equal parts of 215 years each. This time in Egypt is then reflective of the tribulation in the book of Revelation which is also divided into two equal parts.

If this is a “new king” who doesn’t know Joseph, then his dynasty is a picture of the coming anti-Christ. The pattern is given so that we can see in Israel’s redemption other pictures of history. We can see our own redemption from sin and being brought into the kingdom of Christ. But we can also see the end times where Christ will deliver Israel from the anti-Christ.

Who this king of Egypt is can’t be known for certain and scholars argue over the dating and the person. But if his name were important, it would have been given. It wasn’t and so it really doesn’t matter. What does matter is *who* he pictures and *how* he treats God’s chosen people, Israel.

For him to not know Joseph in such a short period isn’t at all unusual either. First, we don’t remember the great works of our past leaders even a generation later. Some ignore the great leaders within a few years after they’re gone.

Secondly, if he came in by conquest, then he would not be aware of the history of the previous rulers. This is not at all an improbable verse and it reflects what could be said about the anti-Christ quite well. A description of the coming anti-Christ from the book of Daniel reflects this idea perfectly –

“Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done. ³⁷ He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above *them* all.”

-Daniel 11:36, 37

⁹ And he said to his people,

The term “his people” is being used in an antithetical manner to the term “the children of Israel.” The king’s people doesn’t necessarily mean all of Egypt, but rather those who are aligned with him. As we will see, there will be people in Egypt who support Israel and are favorable to them.

We see this in our own government where the leader may despise a portion of the people and yet the general populace may not feel the same way about them.

⁹ (con’t) **“Look, the people of the children of Israel *are* more and mightier than we;**

The adjectives of this verse, “more” and “mightier”, are given as a parallel to the terms “multiply” and “mighty” in verse 7. First the Bible notes their great multiplication and then the new king of the land acknowledges it.

Whether his statement is true in the absolute sense or not, it is certainly true that Israel had flourished in an exceedingly great way. This is true in both numbers of people and in livestock and wealth as well. This was seen already being the case many years earlier while Joseph was still alive. In Genesis 47:27, it said –

“So Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly.”

God had promised Abraham that he would bless him and He did. This blessing passed on to Isaac and then to Jacob. From Jacob, that same blessing rested upon the entire family who came from him. There is no doubt that the wealth and power of Israel was great in the land by the time of this new king.

¹⁰ **come, let us deal shrewdly with them,**

The word “shrewdly” is *khakam*. Literally it means “wisely.” There was a problem which the king perceived as dangerous and it would require wisdom to handle it. What does one do with a group of people who are great in number, living on the borders of the land, and not allied with you?

The Israelites had retained their own identity and had not become a part of the greater Egyptian culture and now it seemed as though they were a threat to the empire. It is a scene which has been repeated countless times throughout Israel’s history. They are a people set apart and who inevitably find themselves to be considered a threat to the nation in which they dwell.

¹⁰ (con't) lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land."

Because they were between Canaan and Egypt, and because that is where the threat of invaders into Egypt was the most prevalent, it was more than a small concern that an invading army might benefit from the presence of Israel. If they hadn't mingled with the Egyptians, then there may have been a reason he didn't understand.

He may think that they were allied with people who already were opposed to him. If this were so, not only would they join them in any battle, but they may also retreat with them when they left. Again, this is the same mindset that has been seen throughout Israel's history as people have interacted with them.

This is a people who are content where they live and in the surroundings they find themselves. In general they are productive members of the society, but their productivity benefits them and their people to the point that both loathing and jealousy result.

¹¹ Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens.

Because of Pharaoh's fears of the Israelites, he set taskmasters over them. The word taskmasters comes from two words, *sa-re missim*. A comparable translation would be "chief of tributes." These taskmasters then would extract tribute from the people in labor, but most probably also in heavy collections that we might call taxes.

Like any oppressive government, they would steal both the people's wealth and their health. In the case of the Israelites, they were afflicted with heavy burdens using a Hebrew word, *siblah*, which is only found six times in the Old Testament and all six are in the first six chapters of Exodus.

It comes from another word which indicates a heavy load. It is as if the burden is being highlighted as a more unusual affliction than any suffered elsewhere in their history. It is unique to the time of Israel's bondage in Egypt.

¹¹ (con't) And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses.

Some translations call these "treasure cities." But "supply cities" is certainly a better choice. In 1 Kings 9, Solomon built cities using the same Hebrew word which are described this way –

“And Solomon built Gezer, Lower Beth Horon, ¹⁸ Baalath, and Tadmor in the wilderness, in the land of *Judah*, ¹⁹ all the storage cities that Solomon had, cities for his chariots and cities for his cavalry, and whatever Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion.” 1 Kings 9:17-19

These cities, built with the effort of the Israelites, were in the general area of Goshen and would have been filled with supplies for any warfare that would be conducted there. The name Pithom means “House of Atum.” Atum is the sun-god, and thus “House of the Sun.” Raamses means “Child of the Sun”

¹² But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.

This is how it works in the world. The more depressed and downtrodden a group becomes, the more they multiply. The more affluent and at ease a culture is, the less they multiply. The very affliction that was levied upon the Israelites is what caused them to multiply even more.

The word from which “grew” comes is sometimes translated as “spread out.” They simply expanded in all directions. The same word was used in Genesis 30 to describe the increase of Laban’s wealth after the arrival of Jacob. There it says –

“You know how I have served you and how your livestock has been with me. ³⁰ For what you had before I *came* was little, and it has increased to a great amount; the Lord has blessed you since my coming.” Genesis 30:29, 30

¹² (con’t) And they were in dread of the children of Israel.

The word “dread” is appropriate. One scholar, Kalisch, says that “They had a horror of the children of Israel.” It is an attitude which has been repeated again and again in history against Israel. It is the same attitude which is seen in the world today and which will result in the coming tribulation period which is being pictured by the very verses which we are looking at.

¹³ So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor.

The word for “rigor” is a rare and unusual word – *bepharek*. It’s used just six times in the Old Testament and it is always used in connection with being unusually harsh to someone as they work under another.

The Aramaic root of the word indicates to break in pieces or to crush. This was the harshness of the taskmaster who ruled over the Israelites. One might ask though, “Why would God allow His own people to suffer in this way.” The answer, though not palatable to most, is that they had forgotten the Lord their God. Two passages from elsewhere in the Old Testament confirm this –

“Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! Joshua 24:14

“Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “On the day when I chose Israel and raised My hand in an oath to the descendants of the house of Jacob, and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, I raised My hand in an oath to them, saying, ‘I *am* the Lord your God.’⁶ On that day I raised My hand in an oath to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, ‘flowing with milk and honey,’ the glory of all lands.⁷ Then I said to them, ‘Each of you, throw away the abominations which are before his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I *am* the Lord your God.’⁸ But they rebelled against Me and would not obey Me. They did not all cast away the abominations which were before their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt.

-Ezekiel 20:5-8

In their move to Egypt, they may not have assimilated with the people, but they did assimilate into their pagan practices. If that doesn’t represent Israel of today, I’m not sure what does. Though they are a united and uniform group, their allegiances to one another do not necessarily follow through to Lord.

Again, the picture we are seeing here is a picture of the tribulation period. The people of Israel will suffer greatly until the time they call on the Lord as they should.

¹⁴ And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in brick,

In their desire to subjugate Israel, the hard service they demanded of them was the making of bricks and then using brick and mortar to build the store cities and whatever other edifices they mandated. The last time that these words, mortar and brick, were used in the Bible was at the building of the Tower of Babel.

Interestingly, they were also both used in the same verse, Genesis 11:3, just as they are here in Exodus 1:14. At the Tower of Babel, they were used to oppose God by defying

His mandate to spread out and fill the earth. Instead, they attempted to unite and build a tower to heaven; a picture of works-based salvation.

They were also working in disbelief of His promise to never flood the world again by building a tower taller than the flood waters. It was an attempt by man to have control over creation; a perfect picture of those who profess to “global warming” and our need to solve the world’s flood problems, which actually don’t exist.

In this account, they are using the brick and mortar to oppose God by harming His chosen people and it is an attempt to thus thwart His purposes in the plan of redemption. If they can destroy the people of God, then God’s promises and His plans will have failed. This is also then a picture of the coming tribulation and the one world government and religion – Mystery Babylon.

It will be a complete opposition to God, just as both testaments of the Bible bear out. In both instances however, God’s plans will prevail because He is God.

The word for “brick” is *levenah*. It is used to indicate a brick which is made by man for man. It is temporary and without true substance. In contrast to this is stone or rock which is made by God and which indicates permanence and that which doesn’t yield. In both of these accounts, there is a contrast.

There is the using of bricks to work against God (Babel), and then there is the using of bricks to work against God’s people (Egypt). They contrast, and yet they confirm the thought that man’s efforts are futile against the works and plans of God. The Bible is showing us this.

^{14 (con’t)} **and in all manner of service in the field.**

Not only were the people subjected to the physical labors of brick work, but “to all manner of service in the field.” The Israelite’s started out as shepherds, but they also moved into agriculture. Deuteronomy 11:10 shows us that. But this is probably not the full extent of their work.

They were probably used to dig canals for irrigation. And so the mud they dug would have been used for the clay which made the brick and mortar. In all, the work would have been tedious, tiring, and oppressive in the heat of Egypt’s boiling sun. The life of the Israelites could surely have been described as misery.

^{14 (fin)} **All their service in which they made them serve *was* with rigor.**

Again the term for rigor, *bepharek*, is used. The taskmaster would have been cruel and relentless. Like the treatment of the slaves of the south in America, the Israelites would have been beaten at will and treated as mere animals of burden. Again, it has to be remembered that the Lord's people suffered *because* they had forsaken the Lord. Ezekiel makes this clear.

His people are not immune from His punishments when they are needed for correction, but God will never leave nor forsake those He has called. Despite all of their rejections, both in Egypt and many times afterward throughout their history, God has promised to keep and save Israel.

He told them in advance of all the horrors that would come upon them and He implied that they would be exiled twice as well. But He also showed them, in advance, when they would be returned and what He would do for them after they did. If nothing else, God's faithfulness to unfaithful Israel should show us that His promises to us are true as well.

In Christ Jesus, we have the surest foundation of all. We have the greatest hope and the most wonderful future ahead of us. Whatever things we're suffering through now may be our own fault or they may merely be His grace by allowing us to be in a valley before He takes us again to a high mountaintop.

So don't be overly frustrated. Israel got through their hardships and you will as well. But this assumes that you belong to God. This can only be true if you have called on Jesus Christ as Lord. If you have, then you are God's child through adoption. If not, you are still God's enemy because of sin. Let me explain to you how you can be free from sin and be reckoned as a child of God...

Closing Verse: *Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver;
I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.*

¹¹ *For My own sake, for My own sake,*

I will do it;

For how should My name be profaned?

And I will not give My glory to another. Isaiah 48:10, 11

Next Week: Exodus 1:15-22 (Obeying God Rather Than Men) (2nd Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it

on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him, and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Bitterness and Bondage in the Land of Egypt

Now these are the names of the children of Israel
Who came to Egypt; each man and his household
Came with Jacob, as the Bible does tell

Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah too
Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin
Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher are who
The sons who are descended from him

All those who were descendants of Jacob we see
Were seventy persons (for Joseph was in Egypt already)

And Joseph died, all his brothers
And all that generation
All the fathers and mothers

But the children of Israel were fruitful
And increased abundantly, like ground properly tilled
And multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty
And the land with them was filled

Now there over Egypt a new king arose
Who did not know Joseph, and to his people he said
“Look how the people of the children of Israel quickly grows
They are more and mightier than we, look how they have bred

Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, alright?
Lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war
That they also join our enemies and against us fight
And so go up out of the land, and we have them no more

Therefore they set taskmasters over them
With their burdens to them afflict
And they built for Pharaoh supply cities
Pithom and Raamses, they were demanding and strict

But the more they afflicted them, it is true
As the word to us does tell
The more they multiplied and grew
And they were in dread of the children of Israel

So the Egyptians made the children of Israel
Serve with rigor, such painful toil
And they made their lives bitter
With hard bondage, there on Egypt's soil

In mortar, in brick they worked we observe
And in all manner of service in the field
All their service in which they made them serve
Was with rigor, in order to make Israel yield

Israel suffered through long years of pain and toil
But eventually God sent them a deliverer
Because God is ever faithful and loyal
To His promises, they are certain and sure

And God has sent a Deliverer to us as well
He has brought us out of our life of sin-earned chains
By sending His Son to deliver us from the grasp of hell
And to be granted a heavenly seat where Jesus reigns

Such is the marvelous workings of God!
So let us praise Him all our days as in this life we trod

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 1:15-22

(OBEYING GOD RATHER THAN MEN)

Introduction: Chapter 1 of Exodus has four major parts to it. The first part is the recapitulation of the names of those who went down to Egypt with Israel and a note that there they had multiplied abundantly. This was seen in verses 1-7. It was an introductory section and a transition from Genesis to Exodus.

After this there are three sections which deal with measures to control and subjugate Israel. The first of them is the transition from Joseph who was the previous person to picture Christ. There, it begins with, “Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.” The last of the three is a transition to the story of Moses, the next person who will picture Christ.

In these three sections dealing with controlling Israel, the first is verses 8-14. It is seven verses which describe the fear of the new Pharaoh at the vast number of the sons of Israel and the way that he treated them in order to subjugate them in hopes of reducing their numbers. It is the first measure of control.

The next section also comprises seven verses, from 15-21. Instead of dealing with the sons of Israel, it deals with the Hebrew’s midwives and the children they delivered. It is the second measure of control.

The final portion is verse 22 which deals with the expected treatment of the children born to Israel and is addressed to all the people of Egypt. It is the third measure of control.

The first and second sets, which are each seven verses long, have some nifty patterns. In the first, the term “Israel” is used three times. In the next, the term “Hebrew” is used three times instead of Israel. In the first, God is not mentioned, but in the second, God is mentioned three times.

And in the first, it merely notes there is a new king over Egypt, but in the second it calls him the king *of* Egypt three times. In each of the three sets of judgment, the term “Pharaoh” is mentioned once. In all of these sets then, there is intentional structure that I had never noticed before.

Our eight verses today center on the final two sets of measures used to control the Israelites. Of these two, the first comprises most of what we will look at. The last is only one verse and is a lead-in to chapter 2 and the life of Moses, the man of God.

In the first seven verses, there are some interesting contrasts. There is the command of Pharaoh which is in contrast to the fear of God in the midwives. There is a contrast in what they are told to do – they are to kill the males but spare the females. There is a contrast made between the Hebrew women and the Egyptian women.

There is the hope of reducing Israel's numbers, and there is the contrasting statement that they multiplied and grew very mighty. There is also a contrast in the lives of the two midwives. It is implied that they started with no households, and it is explicitly stated that they were granted households because of their obedience to God.

Like I said, there is intentional order and structure in this first chapter. In the end, these patterns show logic, order, and harmony. They show intent and purpose and are certainly not random. You might ask of what importance this is, but it is patterns such as these which help show us why the Lord does certain things in the course of history.

By seeing these patterns of the Bible, we can see and be reminded that He is always in control. But even without the patterns, the story is one which is intended to direct us towards the unfolding events of time and the promised redemption of Israel that was spoken to Abraham about 400 years earlier.

In addition, it shows a pattern which reveals the steadily degenerating morals of a society which is not unlike how our own society has progressed in recent years. Without exercising our conscience towards God, there can only be ungodliness.

Without the fear of the Lord, there will only be enmity towards the people of the Lord. And without respect for human life in all of its aspects, there is the certain truth that the lives of those around us will become of less and less value until only self-centeredness remains.

Text Verse: *“He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?” Micah 6:8*

The Lord redeemed Israel and gave them His laws to guide them. They were laws which didn't merely require mechanical obedience, but they were laws which required a heart for Him. In the end, they failed to adhere to this aspect of their instruction.

Eventually, there was religion without relationship, and a culture of God without caring for God. Because of this they were judged for their failures. Even without the Law of Moses, there is a conscience granted to each person so that we should instinctively know right from wrong.

Being obedient to our conscience isn't sufficient to save us, but it shows us that God is a moral Being and that we are obligated to Him because He has bestowed upon us His moral nature.

The midwives to the Hebrews had a conscience, but they also had commands that were given to them by Pharaoh which were in direct conflict with their conscience and with the law given to Noah many generations earlier. How would they respond when faced with this moral dilemma?

Each of us will, from time to time, also face moral dilemmas. How we handle them, especially as Christians, defines who we are as individuals. What course of action should we take, and why?

These are things that are explained to us in God's superior word for our learning and our growth. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Shiphrah and Puah (verses 15 & 16)

¹⁵ Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives,

Our verses today start off with an immediate problem and one which divides scholars right down the middle. Does the Hebrew say that the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, or to the midwives of the Hebrews? Most translations assume they are Hebrew midwives, but the translation could be either.

Flavius Josephus, the great compiler of Jewish history, says they were Egyptians.

¹⁵ (con't) of whom the name of one was Shiphrah and the name of the other Puah;

The names of the women don't help with the first problem as much as one might think. Many scholars find their names to be Hebrew, but others find Arabic roots for them. Each name is mentioned only once in the Bible and no other person has an identical name. There is a third possibility that no one else mentions, but which makes sense. That is that one is an Egyptian and one is a Hebrew.

Whatever is correct, there were certainly many midwives both in Egypt and among the Hebrew people, and yet only these two are mentioned, and they are mentioned by name. The reason for mentioning their names is not given and only in the context of the events of chapter 2 does it make any sense at all as to why their names are even provided.

But once we arrive there, we will come to understand exactly why they are mentioned at all and exactly why their specific names are given. But for now, if for no other reason than because they feared God and worked to save His people, they have been remembered in His word.

The name Shiphrah comes from the word *shaphar*, which means to be pleasing. The derived feminine noun is *shiphra* which means fairness. And so her name is translated as Beauty.

The name Puah is believed by some to come from the word *yapa*, which means to shine or be beautiful and so the name is given to be either Splendid or Light. However, it may also come from another word, *pa'ah*, found in Isaiah 42:12 which says –

“I have held My peace a long time,
I have been still and restrained Myself.
Now **I will cry** like a woman in labor,
I will pant and gasp at once.” Isaiah 42:14

Because of this, her name would mean “one who cries out.” What is more likely is that the name Puah is a pun on both words. Together they give us an insight into the person of Moses and his nativity story. We're being told something through the names along with the moral lessons which the Bible is showing us through the story itself.

As only these two midwives are mentioned, it could be that they were the chief of the midwives. They may have actually reported directly to Pharaoh concerning the number of births and other statistical information that any working society would collect.

Because of this, believing that one is an Egyptian, over all the births in Egypt, and the other is a Hebrew, over all those born to the Hebrews, takes on an interesting possibility. None of the three options for this are given in the Bible, but the logic of this is convincing to me.

¹⁶ **and he said, “When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women,**

Here the Hebrews are singled out. The orders from Pharaoh are in regards to one group of people and none other. It calls to mind the German holocaust, the Russian pogroms, and other times in history when the Jews have been singled out. At times, like during the holocaust, many other groups were targeted as well, but the emphasis has been on the extermination of God’s people.

Satan’s reason for this prior to Christ was to thwart God’s plans leading to His ultimate redemption of the people of the world as was promised right at the beginning, just after the fall. If the Hebrews were destroyed, then there would be no line for Christ to have come through.

Satan’s reason for this since Christ is to thwart God’s plans for His return to Israel. If Israel is destroyed, then Jesus’ words that He spoke to them will have failed. There would then be no millennial reign of Christ among His people and thus God’s word would be a failure. However, God has continuously used these attempts to actually realize His purposes.

¹⁶ (con’t) **and see *them* on the birthstools,**

This is a curious set of words. It reads *ur-re-iten al ha’abenayim* – literally, it means “and see on them on the stones.” Because it is so unusual, some translations, like Young’s, drop a letter which changes the word from stones to children. And so it will read – “When ye cause the Hebrew women to bear, and have looked on the children...”

However, this requires changing the wording as it is written. The only other time that this term, “the stones,” is used in this way in the Bible is in Jeremiah 18:3 –

“Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something at the wheel.” (literally, on the stones)

In Jeremiah, it indicates two horizontal stones which are attached to a vertical pole, just the way modern potter’s wheels are made. There are differing views on what “the

stones” here mean. Some think it is merely a way of identifying a type of chair made specifically for giving birth; hence birthstools.

Others think that the stones formed a type of bathtub that would receive the child and wash it at the same time. It’s a very curious term, but it is not so impossible as to require changing what has been written.

¹⁶ (con’t) **if it *is* a son, then you shall kill him; but if it *is* a daughter, then she shall live.”**

Throughout the Bible, it is the male father who defines heritage and inclusion into the chosen people. In Leviticus 24:10, a person is charged with blasphemy and he is identified as the son of an Israelite woman and an Egyptian man.

In 1 Kings 7:14, a person is hired for temple work by Solomon and he is identified as the son of a widow from Naphtali whose father was a man of Tyre. They are singled out in this regard to show that they are not included in the males’ genealogy. They could be assimilated into Israel, but their ancestry would be so noted.

By killing off the males, the intent was that the culture would diminish twice as fast. There would be no men to continue the line and the women would be forced to marry outside of the society and thus end their ties to the Hebrew culture.

If the hard bondage that was levied upon the men didn’t work, it was hoped that this avenue would. Satan would work through human agency in an attempt to destroy the people of God. As Matthew Henry says this about these words –

“The enmity that is in the seed of the serpent, against the Seed of the woman, makes men forget all pity.”

*Do not keep silent, O God!
Please, do not hold Your peace,
And do not be still, O God!
Let Your hand of protection never cease*

*For behold, Your enemies make a tumult
And those who hate You have lifted up their head
They have taken crafty counsel against Your people
Be not silent, O God, take away our dread*

*They have consulted together against Your sheltered ones
They have said, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation
That the name of Israel may be remembered no more
Lord, let our name not end with this generation*

II. Obeying God Rather Than Men (verses 17-19)

¹⁷ But the midwives feared God,

Of the 20 versions of the Bible I look at for sermons, none of them translate these words as they are written. And of the many commentaries I read, none of them explained what is lacking. The title in Hebrew is *ha'elohim* – And thus it would say “But the midwives feared ‘the’ God.” A definite article is in front of “God.”

This makes a big difference. There were many “gods” in Egypt and even Pharaoh was considered a god, but there is one true God. The term *ha'elohim* is given for a reason. In Genesis 9:1, God spoke to Noah. At that time, it was understood that there was only one God for all people because only Noah and his family were alive on the earth. Thus, there were no false gods known to man.

When speaking to Noah, God gave him these words of instruction –

“Whoever sheds man’s blood,
By man his blood shall be shed;
For in the image of God
He made man.

⁷ And as for you, be fruitful and multiply;
Bring forth abundantly in the earth
And multiply in it.” Genesis 9:6, 7

The time of this account in Exodus is around the year 2434AM. It is only a bit more than 750 years after the flood and there is still a knowledge of the true God and of His words to Noah. This is what is implied in the term “the God.”

It is a gigantic tragedy that translators fail to accurately put forth the words of Scripture as they have been given. Without this one word “the” in front of God, a polytheist could pick up the Bible and come to a wrong conclusion concerning the word *elohim*.

In this, translators assume that everyone reading the Bible knows what they are thinking. But that is a bad assumption, especially when folks like the Mormons believe in many gods and that they will someday be their own little god in charge of their own little universe.

These two women were women of faith, properly directed faith, towards the unseen God who spoke to their forefather Noah and gave them a warning concerning murder.

¹⁷ (con't) **and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive.**

Francine Klagsbrun, the Jewish author, notes that this act here “may be the first known incident of civil disobedience in history.” In order to save the Hebrew children alive, these two women willingly disobeyed the edict of the king. This precept, that following God’s laws first at the expense of man’s laws which are contrary to His laws, follows throughout the Bible.

Civil disobedience is mandatory when an edict would violate the higher rule and authority of God. In the book of Acts, the high priest who is the supposed representative for God in Israel, gave a command to the apostles which was contrary to the truth of God. The exchange is recorded as follows –

“Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!”

²⁹ But Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Acts 5:28, 29

And so it is to be with us. When we are faced with a choice such as this, we must be disobedient to the government if what they ask us to do would cause us to violate our allegiance to God. These two midwives understood this and they set an early example which is not only correct, but which was recorded as worthy of blessing by the God whom they honored.

In their civil disobedience, they upheld the higher authority of God, spoken many centuries earlier to their forefather Noah.

¹⁸ **So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this thing, and saved the male children alive?”**

The verse shows the obvious nature of their disobedience. The reports coming back to the king would have included the live childbirths along with all of the other statistical information of his kingdom. And it was probably the midwives that provided it.

It's unlikely that Pharaoh went to Goshen to look around, and it is unlikely that anyone would have made a report about live births if it wasn't their job. Instead, the information probably came to him right from these two women. The old expression, "It's better to ask forgiveness rather than permission" parallels this.

Eventually, if the king found out of all of the live births through someone else, they would have a poorer argument concerning the matter. But if it were their reports, the confusion of the king would be awaiting their response for a clear defense, something they would be prepared for in advance. And they were...

¹⁹ And the midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women *are* not like the Egyptian women; for they *are* lively and give birth before the midwives come to them."

This report by the midwives has no need to be disbelieved, either by Pharaoh then or by us now. Throughout cultures where the women work hard, they tend to bear children with much less effort than those who don't.

Eskimo women in past times worked right up until the time of childbirth and then would get back to work in a short amount of time. As the people were living under hard bondage and unusually difficult working conditions, the women would have carried many responsibilities the men were kept from.

In all, they would have been just like any other group in such circumstances. And this is certainly so because if it weren't, then Pharaoh would have had a many avenues open to him to find out if it were false. In their words, they are turning the hard bondage back on Pharaoh and using it as an excuse. Adam Clarke, speaking as if one of the midwives, says it this way –

"The very oppression under which, through thy cruelty, the Israelites groan, their God has turned to their advantage; they are not only fruitful, but they bring forth with comparatively no trouble; we have scarcely any employment among them." Clarke

Despite the actions of Shiphrah and Puah, believe it or not, some scholars still chide them for lying. Without thinking this through, they have come to the conclusion that their lying is not justifiable. The Geneva Bible's comment on this verse says –

“Their disobedience in this was lawful, but their deception is evil.” Geneva

Either way, whether they told the truth, or whether they didn't, that is a bad analysis. The law of God at that time for all people was the preservation of life. The Ten Commandments had not yet been instituted and therefore, they were fulfilling the higher calling apart from the law. Their actions are justified and they are noted as such.

*We ought to obey God rather than men
Certainly this is our highest duty to uphold
Gods favor is the sweetest reward, I say again
His favor is worth more than the most precious gold*

*What can man do to me, I ask?
In whom shall I place my fear?
Being faithful and true to God is my solemn task
All the days that the Lord keeps me here*

*To Christ I will be faithful as long as I live
As I await that final heavenly call
When in that day to me eternal rewards He shall give
Because in this life Jesus has been my All in all*

III. That Which Has Been Will Be (verses 20-22)

²⁰ Therefore God dealt well with the midwives,

With bold determination, even in the face of probable danger and possibly death, the actions of these two women speak for themselves as evidenced by God's treatment of them. He was pleased with their actions and the Bible notes that for their faithfulness, He dealt well with them.

Interestingly in this verse, the term *elohim*, not *ha'elohim* is used. They feared “the” God and God (who is “the” God) responded with favor. Because it is understood that this favor is from “the” God, there was no need for the definite article.

²⁰ (con't) and the people multiplied and grew very mighty.

In verse 7, it said, “But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.” The same words, multiplied and grew very mighty” are repeated to show that the effect of both of Pharaoh’s attempts to diminish the people of Israel were instead turned around to increase them.

This type of irony is seen numerous times in the Bible. When Joseph’s brothers meant him harm, God turned it around for good. In the book of Esther, when Haman tried to destroy God’s people, we’re told that the wicked plot he devised against the Jews was returned on his own head.

In the greatest of such moments, the people of Israel plotted to kill the Lord. But in His case, the old saying, “You can’t keep a good man down” rang true. What they did by taking His life led to the greatest multiplication of life in human history. The spiritually dead have been quickened into such a great multitude that the apostle John says it can’t be numbered.

The use of such descriptive terms shows the magnificence of God’s accomplishments in contradistinction to the futility of the plans and schemes of man.

²¹ And so it was, because the midwives feared God, that He provided households for them.

Again in this verse, the translation is lacking. It says once again *ha’elohim* – because the midwives feared “the” God. Again, He is set in contradistinction to the false gods of Egypt and those of Pharaoh. What was implicit and understood in the previous verse allowed for no definite article.

But in this verse, we are being shown an explicit distinction between the gods of Egypt and the true God. Thus there is a need once again for the definite article. Pharaoh himself was considered a living god and so the article makes the verse more poignant. The words of the 56th Psalm are prefigured in the actions of these two women –

“In God I have put my trust;
I will not be afraid.
What can man do to me?” Psalm 56:11

In their fear of the true God, we are told that He looked with favor upon them and that “He provided households for them.” In the Hebrew, the word “them” is masculine, not

feminine. And so some people claim that it is referring to the people of Israel and not the midwives, but the term “households” is a proverbial expression. It means that they married and became mothers in Israel.

This is similar to what is seen at the end of the book of Ruth where the people blessed the union between Boaz and Ruth. There after Boaz accepted the right to marry Ruth, it said –

“The Lord make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. ¹² May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the Lord will give you from this young woman.” Ruth 4:11, 12

In this section of Ruth, the masculine word is speaking of the whole household. Through their fear of the true God, they were built up into a house of their own. Though they aren't ever mentioned again in Scripture outside of this passage, they are included among the faithful none-the-less.

²² So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, “Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive.”

The Geneva Bible says this, “When tyrants cannot prevail by deceit, they burst into open rage.”

Let none of us deem that this is either an untrue verse because of its horrible considerations, nor should we even for a moment think that this is either unusual in our own nation, or something that is unlikely to occur in our own lifetime. In fact, it is the anticipation of a large portion of our own society today.

In the logical progression of wickedness which permeates the world in which we live, we see an edict which mirrors the thought process of our own leadership in America. First, Pharaoh tried to work the people into a decrease in numbers.

When the women were over-taxed, he figured they would abort their babies. It didn't happen. Instead, they multiplied. And so the next logical course of action was partial-birth abortion. Kill them as they are being born. Something desired by the left in the United States and a procedure often argued for by them as necessary.

When the midwives realized the immensely grotesque nature of this, they upheld the law of God and refused to be a part of it. And so now Pharaoh demands that any male child born alive is to be taken to the river and cast in as if it were a rotten tomato or a spoiled piece of beef.

In recorded hearings on the issue of terminating lives of babies outside of the womb, our current president, while still a senator in Illinois, can be heard calling these babies “fetuses” and that they had not yet reached the age of viability. In other words, they are not worthy of constitutional protection. These are right on You Tube and can be listened to anytime you wish.

His voting record on this issue shows three separate occasions where he voted to keep infanticide legal. Since the passing of Obamacare, his supporters can be seen on a video published on You Tube signing petitions to make it legal to kill children up to 3 years old in order to “relieve the burden to deal with the children themselves” or to “help keep the population down.”

One of the signers was actually holding his own child while signing the petition which was intended to “support infanticide for small children.” Although this is a sermon concerning Pharaoh’s actions towards Israel, the passage itself is an indictment on the sheer depravity and wickedness of those who are willing to attack God’s image bearers because of their hatred of God.

This is Pharaoh, and the memory of his wicked actions are recorded to remind us of our own obligations concerning the sanctity of human life. In order to destroy an entire population of people and end a culture which was given to bring restoration between God and man, Pharaoh demanded the lives of the males and the destruction of the female’s inheritance among their people.

Having seen this, before we finish, I want to show you an interesting parallel which is found in Numbers. This exodus account is just before the coming of Moses. In Numbers, just before Moses’ death, an account occurs which is almost parallel to what we have seen today. Let me read it to you –

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ² “Take vengeance on the Midianites for the children of Israel. Afterward you shall be gathered to your people.”

³ So Moses spoke to the people, saying, “Arm some of yourselves for war, and let them go against the Midianites to take vengeance for the Lord on Midian. ⁴ A thousand from each tribe of all the tribes of Israel you shall send to the war.”

⁵ So there were recruited from the divisions of Israel one thousand from *each* tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. ⁶ Then Moses sent them to the war, one thousand from *each* tribe; he sent them to the war with Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, with the holy articles and the signal trumpets in his hand. ⁷ And they warred against the Midianites, just as the Lord commanded Moses, and they killed all the males. ⁸ They killed the kings of Midian with *the rest of those who were killed*—Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword. ⁹ And the children of Israel took the women of Midian captive, with their little ones, and took as spoil all their cattle, all their flocks, and all their goods. ¹⁰ They also burned with fire all the cities where they dwelt, and all their forts. ¹¹ And they took all the spoil and all the booty—of man and beast. ¹² Then they brought the captives, the booty, and the spoil to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of the children of Israel, to the camp in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, *across from* Jericho. ¹³ And Moses, Eleazar the priest, and all the leaders of the congregation, went to meet them outside the camp. ¹⁴ But Moses was angry with the officers of the army, *with* the captains over thousands and captains over hundreds, who had come from the battle. ¹⁵ And Moses said to them: “Have you kept all the women alive? ¹⁶ Look, these *women* caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord. ¹⁷ Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known a man intimately. ¹⁸ But keep alive for yourselves all the young girls who have not known a man intimately.

-Numbers 31:1-18

After giving this instruction, the Bible records that there were 32,000 women who had not known a man intimately. What does this mean? Assuming there were an equal number of boys as there were girls, Israel exterminated at least 32,000 boys and all of the grown women. In all, probably more than 100,000 people died that day.

An entire population was destroyed in this manner and the virgin women were assimilated into Israel. One must question why *this* was acceptable and yet the same wasn't concerning Pharaoh's actions toward Israel. The answer comes down to a simple precept, obedience to God. The two midwives understood this. They served “the” God. Midian however was ripe for judgment for having rejected Him.

In our nation, we are following the same path and we are set for the same judgment. The deaths of more than 50,000,000 innocent lives will not go unpunished by this same God who watches over the affairs of men. It is a lesson that must not go unheeded, lest we perish.

On this seemingly depressing note, we will close for today, but in reality, there is nothing depressing about God's word, nor His love for us. It is we who turn our backs on Him, as He continually reaches out His hands in love to us. Even in our lies, our abortions, or drunkenness, or our drug addictions, He is willing to forgive all and forget all if we will simply turn to Him.

And so not knowing whether you have actually called on the Lord or not, I'd like you to allow me a moment to tell you how you can come to know Him by sharing with you the good news of Jesus Christ...

Closing Verse: *Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again." 1 Kings 18:37*

Next Week: Exodus 2:1-10 (This is One of the Hebrew's Children) (3rd Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him, and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Obeying God Rather Than Men

Then the king of Egypt spoke
To the Hebrew midwives, words of shame
Of whom the name of one was Shiphrah
And of the other, Puah was her name

And he said, "When you do the duties of a midwife
For the Hebrew women, as I instruct you
And see them on the birthstools
There is something I want you to do

If it is a son, then you shall kill him, no mercy give
But if it is a daughter, then she shall be allowed to live

But the midwives feared God and took a stand
And did not do what he said to them
As the king of Egypt did command
But saved alive the male children

So the king of Egypt called
For the midwives and said to them
“Why have you done this thing
And saved alive the male children?”

And the midwives to Pharaoh said
“Because the Hebrew women as we say
Are not like the Egyptian women, but instead
They are lively and give birth right away

Before the midwives come to them
And so they have already had their children

Therefore God dealt well with the midwives, it is true
And the people multiplied and very mightily grew

And so it was, because the midwives feared God
That He provided households for them
A reward for the faithful walk in which they trod

So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying
“Every son who is born you shall into the river cast
And every daughter you shall save alive
And we will be free of these Hebrews at last

Such is the nature of man’s enmity with God
How we fight against his plans and purposes for us!
On a wicked path we would gladly trod
And turn our backs to His Gift of love, His own Son Jesus

But until our last breath, He continues to call
Because of His great and undying love for us
And in one act He can in us reverse the fall
Just by receiving that great Gift of love, His own Son Jesus

Thank You for patiently waiting, even for me, O Lord
Thank You for patiently waiting for each one of us
Until the day when someone showed us in Your word
About the most marvelous Gift of love, Your own Son Jesus

Praises to You for this our matchless King!
For all eternity our souls to You will sing

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 2:1-10

(THIS IS ONE OF THE HEBREW'S CHILDREN)

Introduction: There's a common proverb we use which is firmly rooted in the Bible – "From small beginnings come great things." How many times do we see this theme repeated in Scripture? The life of Moses, like any human, was one which started out small. Other than Adam, we were all born as infants.

But the story of Moses takes on an additional likeness to the proverb simply because we have the record of his birth and then the most unusual of circumstances which surrounded his infancy. Today's account is a favorite of most people because it's so touching and human.

Throughout it, we can almost feel the emotion of the mother, the anticipation of the sister, and the heartfelt pity of Pharaoh's daughter. We see all of these emotions from time to time, but rarely are they combined into a single occurrence. But the story of Moses skillfully weaves them together so that they do.

Small beginnings don't always mean small endings. And it would be a mistake to think they do. And so Solomon gives us wisdom in Ecclesiastes concerning the work of our hands. There he says –

"In the morning sow your seed,
And in the evening do not withhold your hand;
For you do not know which will prosper,
Either this or that,
Or whether both alike *will be* good." Ecclesiastes 11:6

Seeds are small, but they may end in a great harvest. Picking up pennies along life's highway seems almost futile, but for each one saved, there will be a greater return when the piggy bank is finally opened. From small starts, great things can and do come about.

Text Verse: *For who has despised the day of small things? Zechariah 4:10*

Billy Graham started out his revival meetings in a circus tent in a parking lot, but eventually his crusades would go out to audiences of tens of thousands of people. His

largest crusade was held in Seoul, South Korea where he preached to an estimated 3.2 million.

As South Korea at that time only had a population of 30 million people, he preached to more than 1/10 of the nation in person and many, many more by television. Whatever great thing you aspire to, let it be founded on a heart for the Lord and I'm sure He will use you in the perfect way to obtain the most perfect results.

He sure did it with Moses. The words of the man who spoke to the Lord face to face are still read, studied, and cherished 3500 years later. Not bad for a person who started as a baby seemingly destined to perish in the waters of the Nile River. This is the greatness of God – that He can take what the leaders of the world find below contempt and He can turn it into the greatest of stories.

The superb workings of this marvelous God are to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Beautiful Child and a Little Ark (verses 1-4)

¹ And a man of the house of Levi went and took *as wife* a daughter of Levi.

Chapter two begins with an amazingly simply pronouncement which follows directly after the words of woe which ended chapter 1. There in the 22nd verse it said, "So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, 'Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive.'"

This first verse of chapter 2 gives no names except of the line of descent from which they came. Both of these people are of the tribe of Levi. This thought then sets up the events which follow, and the tribe of Levi will continue to be highlighted all the way through the rest of the Bible.

Leaving out the names here is significant because it is intended to show us that a higher Power is working behind the scenes, apart from and yet in connection to, human activity. It is not the names of the people who are important, but that God is using the people and events to work out His plans.

Though we don't know it yet, their identification as Levites is intended to show that He has chosen this particular family to introduce the chosen family for the priesthood of Israel as well as to lead to their great lawgiver Moses. Reading verses like this

throughout Scripture gives us an advanced notice that something is coming which will be connected to them.

And so the verse begins with “and.” It shows a direct continuation of what was mandated by Pharaoh while also leading us in a new direction at the same time. Because the Hebrew language is deficient in tenses in comparison to English, it sounds like this verse is actually happening after Pharaoh’s edict, but it’s not.

Rather, he had gone some time before the edict to marry. From that time, they had already had two children. However, the narrative isn’t given to tell us any of these things. It steps into the picture at this point to show that these two, who were already married, will now have to face the edict of Pharaoh.

In order to understand the times then, there is the need to know who the man is, who the wife is, and who the siblings are. The man’s name is Amram, a son of Levi’s son Kohath. The woman’s name is Jochebed. Their details are mentioned in Exodus 6:20 –

“Now Amram took for himself Jochebed, his father’s sister, as wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses. And the years of the life of Amram *were* one hundred and thirty-seven.” Exodus 6:20

She is actually Amram’s aunt, the sister of his father. But even this needs to be further explained because in Numbers 26:59, it appears that Jochebed is actually a daughter of Levi. There it says –

“The name of Amram’s wife *was* Jochebed the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt; and to Amram she bore Aaron and Moses and their sister Miriam.”
-Numbers 26:59

The term “daughter of Levi” doesn’t specifically mean she was his direct daughter, but a descendant of him. She is a daughter of his household. And from this verse, we can see the names of the whole family who have, with the exception of Moses, actually been excluded from the narrative in Exodus 2. The family is comprised of Amram, Jochebed, Miriam, Aaron, and Moses.

Miriam is the oldest of the three and was probably born not long after the marriage. Aaron was born about twelve years later and he is three years older than Moses (Exodus 7:7). And now, shortly after the Pharaoh’s edict, a third child is born. The fate of this third child is now the focus of the biblical narrative.

²So the woman conceived and bore a son.

Again, the Bible has skipped over all of the other details that we might think are necessary, but which are actually unneeded at this point. Those lacking details will be filled in at the right time, but the specific wording shows us that there is precise purpose and intent to establish the rest of the account.

The lack of the woman's name is not unlike the account of Genesis 38. In the first paragraph there, eight people or places are named and yet the one person you would expect to be named isn't. She is the daughter of one named person, the wife of another, and the mother of three more, and yet *her* name isn't given.

In this, we are provided just what we need to not be distracted from what God is revealing, because through concealment, there is actually often marvelous disclosure. It is a special note to consider that no sooner has the Pharaoh devised his cruelest of plans against the Hebrews than God determined to bring forth the deliverer of His people.

What the devil thinks will be his greatest victory is always turned around to be his most stunning defeat. In this case, out of the mouth of Pharaoh in his own edict literally comes the reason for the downfall of the kingdom of Egypt.

^{2 (con't)} And when she saw that he *was* a beautiful *child*, she hid him three months.

This portion of verse two is so important to the Jewish tradition and culture, as well as to all of the people of God, that it is recorded twice in the New Testament. In Acts 7, Stephen refers to it in his speech to the high priest and his council. There it says –

“At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father's house for three months.” Acts 7:20

Later, in Hebrews 11, Moses' parents were rewarded for their faith in the record of those whom God singled out for their steadfast devotion to Him. There we read these words –

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw *he was* a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.” Hebrews 11:23

What's interesting is that the specific amount of time, three months, is mentioned and it is mentioned three times in the Bible. What is it about the three months that showed the parent's possessed proper faith? What if it were two months or four months?

According to EW Bullinger, the number three "stands for that which is *solid, real, substantial, complete, and entire*. All things that are specially *complete* are stamped with this number three."

There was a pre-appointed time for Moses to be hid for the events of this story to unfold as they should. In fact, the next verse will tell us that this time of three months met that time of completion, but it doesn't tell why. Only by understanding the meaning of individual numbers do the words come to make sense.

Otherwise, they seem rather arbitrary and random, even unnecessary. These three months were needed in order for history to unfold in a proper manner. The words used to describe Moses in this verse are *ki tov hu*, or literally, "and good he."

The beauty of the child must have only heightened the parents attention to the wickedness of Pharaoh's decree so that instead of obeying the king's command, like the Hebrew midwives Shiphrah and Puah they determined to disobey the edict and save their son.

And believe it or not, the reason for the giving of the names of these two women in the previous chapter is to alert us to incidents here in the second chapter and then to parallel them. As I said then, the name Shiphrah comes from the word *shaphar*, which means to be pleasing. The derived feminine noun is *shiphra* which means fairness. And so her name is translated as Beauty.

Thus her name is given to show us a parallel to the child Moses. The parents saw that their child was beautiful and so they spared him, showing the faith of Shiphrah, a woman whose name means "Beautiful" and whose example to the Hebrew people of sparing the children was enough to give them the same courage.

For all we know, the courage of those midwives may have been evident in the saving of Aaron who might have been one of the children saved by the midwives when they were told to kill the males at birth. That example could have been the impetus for the parents to follow in the same courageous fashion. The name of the second midwife will have a parallel as well in just a few verses.

³ But when she could no longer hide him,

This is parallel to what occurred in the previous chapter. There was a time where the Hebrew's midwives could no longer hide their actions and they were asked to explain them to Pharaoh. And their explanation is what led directly to the third measure taken to destroy the Hebrews.

Now during this time of that third measure, the actions of the mother are what lead us directly to the events of the story ahead. Every step is so precisely detailed to show the absolutely perfect plan of God in a fashion which drips with irony as He continuously frustrates the plots and schemes of man.

^{3 (con't)} she took an ark of bulrushes for him,

The word for "ark" is the Hebrew word *tevah*. It indicates a box or a chest or even a basket. Some have attempted to tie the word in with a coffin, but there is no substantiation for this. Rather, its use in Scripture gives no indication of this at all. The word is used 28 times in the Bible, but in only two stories – that of Noah and that of Moses. In the first, the ark was made of wood and it was intended to be used as God destroyed man through judgment, but to preserve mankind through grace. It was used to float over the entire world as the waters prevailed during that time, saving a man of righteousness who would usher in a new dispensation, that of Government.

In this account, it is made of bulrushes, a kind of papyrus. It is intended to float within the boundaries of the earth which is merely divided by a river. It was used to save a child who would go on to be God's instrument of redemption for His people while at the same time overseeing God's judgment on a different group of people. The person to be saved in this ark, Moses, will also usher in a new dispensation, that of Law.

And so we can see a contrast between the two accounts while at the same time they confirm God's sovereignty and His attentive care, both for and over the people of the world through the unfolding of His dispensational plan of the ages.

^{3 (con't)} daubed it with asphalt and pitch,

The word for asphalt here is *khemar* and is used just three times. Once at the building of the tower of Babel in Genesis 11, once in Genesis 14 during a battle in the Valley of Siddim when Lot was taken captive, and once here. It is referring to a mineral pitch.

The other word for pitch is the Hebrew word *zepheth*. It's also used only three times, once here and twice in Isaiah 34:9. It is a vegetable pitch which was used in the embalming process. This tiny basket of rushes, is daubed with materials linked to death, but which are here intended to preserve life.

³ (con't) **put the child in it, and laid *it* in the reeds by the river's bank.**

Unlike how this story is often depicted, mom didn't plop the ark in the river and let it float away. Instead, she placed it in the reeds, probably hoping that they would keep it from floating away. The term for "the river's bank" in Hebrew is *al sephat ha'yor* – "at the lip of the river." It is an expressive way of showing the river is like a mouth with two lips.

The Geneva Bible says that she was "Committing him to the providence of God, whom she could not keep from the rage of the tyrant." There in the very river which the Pharaoh had purposed for the destruction of the Hebrew's male children, mom was purposing the safety of one of them, and God was purposing the deliverance of all of them.

⁴ **And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him.**

This is Miriam who is the only recorded sister of Moses. After the exodus she will be called a prophetess as she sings of the Lord's deliverance from bondage. It is more than probable that while singing, she was reflecting on the day when she took her stand, and watched to see what would become of her little brother there in the reeds by the river.

Her song of deliverance at that time was with these words –

"Sing to the Lord,
For He has triumphed gloriously!
The horse and its rider
He has thrown into the sea!" Exodus 15:21

The Lord rescued Moses from the river through the house of Pharaoh and yet He later hurled Pharaoh's house into the sea. She was a witness to both magnanimous events. Matthew Henry sums up God's care of Moses there on the river in this eloquent fashion–

“Moses never had a stronger protection about him, no, not when all the Israelites were round his tent in the wilderness, than now, when he lay alone, a helpless babe upon the waves. No water, no Egyptian can hurt him. When we seem most neglected and forlorn, God is most present with us.” Henry

*God used an ark of reeds, Moses to save
And He used a boy named David to defeat the Philistine
With what may seem useless or weak, a grand road He can pave
And He can turn that which was once vile into something pristine*

*God has chosen the foolish things of the world
To put to shame those wise in their own sight
And He has chosen the weak things of the world
To put to shame the things which seem to have great might*

*And the base things of the world which seem rejected
And the things which are despised, objects of scorn
God has chosen these things, yes these He elected
Because through His Son, they have been reborn*

II. Behold, the Baby Wept (verses 5 & 6)

⁵Then the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river.

Who was the greatest female financier in the Bible? (*Pharaoh's daughter. She went down to the bank of the Nile and drew out a little prophet.* 😊)

By the providence of God, the child was placed where the daughter of Pharaoh would come to and at the time that she would come. And even if it could be speculated that the mother knew of this as an ordinary custom or not, the Bible doesn't hint at it, thus showing us divine providence rather than human guidance.

The fact that the previous verse shows that the sister stood and watched to see what would come about shows that there was uncertainty as to how events would unfold. The word here for “bathe” is *rakhats* and means “to wash.” Whether she was there to bathe, to have her servant bring water to wash her, or to be there as they washed their clothes isn't known. She simply came to wash.

⁵ (con't) **And her maidens walked along the riverside;**

This little section of verse appears to confirm that Pharaoh's daughter didn't actually go into the river. Maybe because of the possibility of a crocodile nibbling her up, or for some other reason, it appears that she remained further back and watched as her maidens either went and got water, or washed the clothes, or did whatever they were doing. While they were busy with that, the eyes of Pharaoh's daughter roamed the shoreline...

⁵ (con't) **and when she saw the ark among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it.**

The word for "maid" here, *amah*, is different than "maidens," or *naar*, that was just used. This would probably be her personal servant or slave while the others may have been friends of hers or household attendants.

Although there is nothing to indicate this, I would like to think this was a Hebrew. The imagery is too wonderful to not at least enjoy the thought. Whether a Hebrew or not, the one who would free the slaves of Egypt would himself be brought out of the waters by a slave.

⁶ **And when she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby wept.**

Everything in God's good timing, even the tears of a baby in a basket. When the light shone into the once dark tomb of the ark, it caught the eyes of the child and stirred him to tears for the meal he was missing or the tender caress he desired. And nothing like a child's tender cry will rend the heart and soul of a young lady.

Hence the two possibilities for the midwife Puah's name from the first chapter are seen here. Her name, Puah, is believed by some to come from the word *yapa*, which means to shine or be beautiful, and so the name is given to be either Splendid or Light. However, it may also come from another word, *pa'ah*, found in Isaiah 42:12 which says—

"I have held My peace a long time,
I have been still and restrained Myself.
Now **I will cry** like a woman in labor,
I will pant and gasp at once. Isaiah 42:14

Because of this, her name would mean “one who cries out.” There on the banks of the river, the light shined in and the child cried out. Thus we have a reason why the two midwives’ names were included in the exodus story. Just as they were rewarded with their own households, so will the house of Amram be rewarded as well.

From him will come the household of the high priestly line of Aaron, and also the household of Moses, the great lawgiver.

⁶ (con’t) **So she had compassion on him, and said, “This is one of the Hebrews’ children.”**

She would know for several reasons why this was a Hebrew child. The edict of casting the children into the river would make it obvious. Though not following the law directly, putting a baby in a basket and letting him go into the river would eventually have the same effect.

Another obvious way to tell he was a Hebrew would be to see the sign of circumcision. It was plainly evident to Pharaoh’s daughter that the child was a Hebrew. But despite his ethnic origin, the Bible specifically mentions her feelings of compassion as an overriding reason to ignore her father’s commands.

For a third time, the edict of Pharaoh has been overturned by events which stem from the edict itself. The irony is perfectly evident in each step of the process leading to the release of the captive people Israel.

In this story we see where Moses resembles Christ. Both were subject to death by a wicked ruler, Moses under Pharaoh and Jesus under Herod when he ordered all the male children to be killed in Bethlehem, but both were delivered in order to become deliverers.

Concerning the emotions of Pharaoh’s daughter there on the banks of the Nile, the Pulpit commentary says, “One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.” It is that common spark of humanity which has brought her to ignore her immediate family commands and to hold to the higher tie which binds.

The very place which should have been the final grave of Moses became the place which brought about the unfolding events of Israel’s redemption. The same is true with Jesus. While the tomb should have been His final resting place, it turned out to be the very place by which we have a confirmation of our deliverance.

*The little basket in which Moses was laid
Did its job and kept him safe from the water
Until the time when Pharaoh's daughter's maid
Took it from the river and gave it to Pharaoh's daughter*

*And when she opened it, the little baby did cry
And her heartstrings were tugged at the sight
She surely felt pity knowing the reason why
Such a beautiful baby was found in such a plight*

*But God knew what would happen on that day
And He watched over the baby until he was found
And so Moses' life would turn out in a marvelous way
This is the norm with God; His plan will always astound*

III. He Who Draws Out (verses 7-10)

⁷ Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women,

"Oh what an adorable baby! Did I hear you say it was a Hebrew child? Well aren't you an Egyptian? It's mother must have loved him very much to place him in a basket, and now she will never see him again. It's so sad! But if you'd like, I could find a Hebrew nurse for him and save you the trouble of finding someone else to nurse him. Would you like that? I'll do it. Poor, beautiful baby!"

Timing is everything and Miriam's timing was perfect. The baby is crying, the child needs milk, and Pharaoh's daughter's heartstrings have been tugged just enough to make any other option impossible.

⁷ (con't) that she may nurse the child for you?"

And the wording by the sister is perfectly calculated to endear the princess to the child even more. "I can go find a Hebrew to nurse the child *for you*. You're a mother now and *your child* needs attentive care. Look at it cry. Poor, beautiful baby."

She has successfully looked into the heart of the princess and then both anticipated her need and also shaped the outcome of the situation through her words. If Pharaoh's

daughter was even a bit reticent to have the child, that was washed away like the sand in the Nile at the words of Moses' noble sister.

⁸ And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the maiden went and called the child's mother.

With her mind all made up, the suggestion is approved and the directive is given – *leki*, "Go." And so she went, straight back to her own mother, who by the way, is the child's own mother. No tale ever penned has exceeded the level of emotion or excitement which is seen in each character.

And no tale, true or imagined, has ever encompassed such ironic circumstances. Not only is the child rescued, but it is rescued back into the arms of the once mournful mother. And even more than that, there is an added bonus for the faithful actions she has displayed...

⁹ Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give *you* your wages."

The natural mother will nurse her own child for his new adoptive mother. The added grace is that his new mother will be able to provide for him in a way that was almost beyond imagination. And even more, he will continue for a time to live in his own home of birth.

There he will begin to learn the culture and traditions of his family and his people. And even more than that, the home will be given wages for their efforts, which are really no efforts at all, but rather the greatest grace of God they could have ever imagined.

What Pharaoh intended for evil, God turn into good. And He did it in a manner that still leaves people of faith both smiling and praising Him for it 3500 years later.

^{9 (con't)} So the woman took the child and nursed him.

Imagine the giggles around the dinner table. Imagine the joy of Miriam as she tickled her little brother, and imagine Aaron, just a few years old, enjoying his little brother and never realizing the amazing events which surrounded the home life he was a part of.

When all seems beyond hope, this is when God shows Himself the most marvelous to those who understand His acts of tender care. If we can remember this as we face even

the most terrifying prospects of life, we will be able to handle them much more responsibly and with the faith that is most pleasing to Him.

These individual stories show us that He is never far away and that He is attentive to what is best at all times.

¹⁰ And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son.

His age isn't given, but the boy eventually came to the age where it was time to enter into a new phase of life. It was probably between 2 and 3 years old. Whatever the age, he was old enough to know his own people and to have them firmly set in his heart and in his emotions. This will be seen as his life story continues to unfold.

At the appointed time, the mother once again gave up her son, but this time she did it knowing that he would live and prosper. The pain was certainly there, but no doubt there was also a sense of gratitude to God for being given the grace they had received towards their beautiful child.

^{10 (fin)} So she called his name Moses, saying, "Because I drew him out of the water."

The name Moses is frustrating to scholars because it resembles both Egyptian and Hebrew words and they carry a variety of significations. The explanation for the name is given, and it at least provides a clue as to its meaning. "She called his name Moses" because she "drew him out of the water."

The phrase she uses is *min ha'mayim meshitihu* "out of the water I drew him." The Egyptian word for "son" is *mesu*, which sounds like "Moses," and she is claiming him as a son. However, the same word is derived from a verb which means to "produce" or to "draw forth."

And so in one sense, in her mind he is the son drawn forth from the water. This is the same meaning as the Hebrew word used in her exclamation which is *mashah* and means "to draw." But there is one more aspect to consider. The name Moses in Hebrew is *mosheh* and it is a masculine, singular, active participle, and so it means "He who draws out" instead of "He who was drawn out."

His name then isn't based on what she did so much as it is a *play of words* on *what* she did. Because she drew him out, he is the one who draws out. As an example, if a baby

were born on a train, he might be nicknamed The Engineer. If a child was born while crossing a bridge, he might be called The Bridge Builder.

Moses is “He who draws out” and it is a perfect representation of the work he will do by bringing his people out of the bondage of Egypt. This same word, *mashah*, from which Moses is derived is used only two other times in the Bible. Both are from David in parallel psalms of praise.

In the 18th Psalm, speaking of the Lord, he uses the word which is a mirror reflection of the work of Moses, thus picturing the greater work of the Lord –

“He sent from above, He took me;
He **drew me** out of many waters.
¹⁷ He delivered me from my strong enemy,
From those who hated me,
For they were too strong for me.
¹⁸ They confronted me in the day of my calamity,
But the Lord was my support.
¹⁹ He also brought me out into a broad place;
He delivered me because He delighted in me.” Psalm 18:16-19

From this point until many years later, nothing more is said of the life of Moses. Only in the New Testament do we get a taste of his upbringing while in the house of Pharaoh. In Acts 7:22, during Stephen’s great speech to the high priest and the ruling council, he notes this about his great forefather –

“And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.” Acts 7:22

The evidence of this education is found all over the writings of Moses. While all Scripture is inspired by God, He uses humans as the way conveying his word to us. The songs of Moses found in Exodus 15 and in Deuteronomy 32, as well as his blessing upon the tribes of Israel and the psalm he recorded, which is the 90th Psalm, all give insights into his knowledge of Egyptian literature.

In other portions of the Torah, his knowledge of particular weather conditions and locations indicate that he was versed in those aspects of Egyptian life as well. This

marvelous beginning of the life of Moses will lead to a more marvelous life which is recorded in great detail.

He will come to be called a prophet of God, the most humble man who ever lived, Israel's human deliverer, and the man with whom the Lord spoke face to face. But it all had to start somewhere. The story of his birth shows us that great things can come out of the most trying of circumstances.

It also shows us that even out of the greatest of heartaches can come joy ever-lasting. God is in the business of doing the marvelous, but the display of His marvelous hand goes both ways. It can go towards us in grace, love, and fellowship, or it can go against us in wrath and judgment. The dividing line between the two is Jesus.

What we choose to do with Him will be the deciding factor in how God deals with us. And so, as I do each week, I'd like to ask for a moment to explain to you how you can become a friend of God and be the object of His affection and blessing because of the work of His Son, Jesus...

Closing Verse: *The Lord is on my side;*

I will not fear.

What can man do to me? Psalm 118:6

Next Week: Exodus 2:11-15 (Shunned By His Own) (4th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Moses

And a man of the house of Levi went by and by
And took as wife a daughter of Levi

So the woman conceived and a son she bore
And when she saw that he was a beautiful child
She hid him three months behind her door
Because Pharaoh's edict was cruel and wild

But when him she could no longer hide
She took an ark of bulrushes for him to fit
Daubed it with asphalt and pitch on the outside
And put the child inside of it

And laid it by the river's bank in the reeds
And his sister stood afar off
To know what would be done to him through these deeds

Then the daughter of Pharaoh came in stride
Down to bathe at the river, which is the Nile
And her maidens walked along the riverside
Where they had come to spend a while

And when she saw the ark among the reeds along the shore
She sent her maid to get it to see what was the score

And when she opened it, she saw the child
And behold, the baby wept just then
So she had compassion on him, her manner mild
And said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children

Then his sister to Pharaoh's daughter said
"Shall I go and call a nurse for you
From the Hebrew women that she may nurse instead
The child for you; shall this thing I do?

And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go."
So the maiden went and called the child's mother as we know

Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her
"Take this child away and nurse him for me
And I will give you your wages for sure
So the woman took the child and nursed him tenderly

And the child grew, and she brought him
And he became the son of Pharaoh's daughter
So she called his name Moses, saying
"Because I drew him out of the water."

Sometimes the irony of the Bible story
Is so rich and wonderful to behold
God turns even the worst things out for His glory
And shows us treasures worth more than gold

When we see His mighty hand so displayed
We have a sure foundation on which to stand
Never should the faithful be fearful or dismayed
Because our God is glorious and His deeds are grand

Just when all seems lost and it's all out of control
That is the time when God's glory is most clearly seen
Away from us the troubles and trials He does roll
And He leads us into soft pastures, lush and green

O great God who does such marvelous things for us!
Precious Creator revealed in the pages of the word
You who came in flesh, our precious Lord Jesus
To You all praise is due, our wondrous, glorious Lord

To you we will praise and to you we will sing
Throughout all eternity, let our voices ring

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 2:11-15

(SHUNNED BY HIS OWN)

Introduction: Not everyone who is famous or wealthy was successful on their first attempt. History is replete with people who were rejected once or even many times before making their mark. One famous American of the 19th century went to war as a captain and returned home as a private – a rather sizable demotion.

After that, he failed as a businessman. He tried being a lawyer, but it's said that he was too impractical and temperamental to be successful at that. And so he did what many crummy lawyers do and he turned to politics where he was defeated in his first try for the legislature.

He was then defeated in his first attempt to be nominated for congress, defeated in his application to be commissioner of the General Land Office, defeated in the senatorial election of 1854, defeated in his efforts for the vice-presidency in 1856, and then defeated in the senatorial election of 1858.

At about that time, he wrote in a letter to a friend, "I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful face on the earth." Such was the life of an obscure loser named Abraham Lincoln, until things turned the corner for him.

Each one of his steps ultimately led him, whether he knew it or not, one step closer to his eventual success. Being rejected then isn't the end of the story, nor does it indicate the fault is with the individual. Sometimes extenuating circumstances are involved.

This was the case with a man named Moses. He had a calling but he was rejected by those he was called to. And the rejection of Moses only pictures a greater rejection in human history. We're in church and there's a cross on the wall to remind us of that.

Text Verse: *"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." 1 John 1:11-13*

If you have faced, or if you are facing, rejection don't let it bring you down. Instead, look at it as an opportunity to do other things until you're recognized for the potential you

possess. This is what Moses did, this is what Christ is doing, and this is what we should do as well.

In the end, it will all work out as it should. God has a plan and if you're in Christ, then you are a part of that plan. Be confident of this and stand firm on the promises which are given to You in His superior word. And let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. One of His Brethren (verses 11 & 12)

¹¹ Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown,

The preceding verse said, "And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. So she called his name Moses, saying, 'Because I drew him out of the water.'"

That was while Moses was still a young child, certainly no more than three and quite possibly even younger than that. In just one verse, the Bible has skipped over all of his adolescence and teenage years, stating that he is grown. And in fact, in the New Testament, Stephen, during his speech to the ruling council says that he was now 40 years old.

This means that a total of 37 years or more of the life of Moses are completely overlooked by the Bible. This is one of the many important clues found throughout Scripture that reminds us of the fact that God is not giving us a detailed record of history, but rather He is giving specific details recorded from history.

Time and time again, the focus is on specific occurrences which have been selected to reveal significant points in His redemptive plans. Because of the importance of people like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and so many others, one might think that detailed biographies about their lives would be appropriate.

But the Bible doesn't give them. Even in the life of Jesus, there is scant information about his childhood. Other than the time of His birth and very early childhood, there is only one recorded detail about His life at 12 years of age. After that, the next specific part of His life which is detailed came when He was about 30 years old.

By contemplating this, it makes the things that are recorded all the more special. The selected details show attentive care and call out to us to look over them carefully. Why

God has so meticulously focused on the events then is what we should consider. What is it that He wants us to see, remember, and learn?

In the case of Moses, he is about to enter into a new part of life. He will go from the high position of being in Pharaoh's household to a life of considerable difficulty and uncertainty. Why he chose this path or why he didn't make his decision to take this avenue sooner isn't known, but it could be that the years of high life left a void in him which needed to be filled.

Solomon, writing in Ecclesiastes 2, spent many verses writing about all of the great things he accomplished through his skill and wisdom, but after this effort, he wrote these words –

“Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done
And on the labor in which I had toiled;
And indeed all *was* vanity and grasping for the wind.
There was no profit under the sun.” Ecclesiastes 2:11

His conclusion concerning the vain existence we live under the sun is that life apart from God is useless and ultimately has no lasting point to it. It seems that Moses figured this out and desired to be a person of God and united with God's people. And this is what the author of Hebrews tell us –

“By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶ esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.”

-Hebrews 11:24-26

In this time of learning and growth, Moses is not unlike Jesus. In Luke 2:52, before He revealed Himself to the people of Israel, it says this about Him –

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

-Luke 2:52

Both had long periods of unrecorded life-events which molded them and shaped them for the work they would perform. And both of them were initially rejected by their own

people. Eventually, Moses led his people out when they accepted his leadership. And someday Jesus will deliver Israel when they accept His.

And so to understand that precept, and what is about to occur in the coming passage, we should hear Stephen's word in Acts 7 that detail these same events. By seeing what he had to say about this portion of the life of Moses, we can then more properly comprehend what will transpire –

“And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.

²³ “Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. ²⁴ And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. ²⁵ For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand. ²⁶ And the next day he appeared to *two of them* as they were fighting, and *tried to* reconcile them, saying, ‘Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?’ ²⁷ But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?’ ²⁸ Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?’ ²⁹ Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons.”

-Acts 7:22-29

As Stephen said, Moses was “mighty in words and deeds.” It is an exacting comparison to Jesus. In Luke 24:19, while talking along the road to Emmaus, the men said that Jesus “was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.” Despite this, both men were rejected by their nation.

Moses fled to Midian in order to continue being prepared for freeing his people, and Jesus ascended into heaven until the times of refreshing would come to pass. Knowing these things in advance, we can then more clearly sort out what lies ahead.

¹¹ (con't) **that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens.**

Moses is a man of forty years who has dwelt the majority of his life in the grand halls of Pharaoh's courts, and yet he still has a heart for the people of his ethnic origin. Whether his adoptive mother openly shared his birth status with him or not, he had the short time with his true mother to instill in him who he was and who his people were.

He was with her until he was weaned and that would have been enough to ensure the bond needed to soften his heart towards his own people. As a wise person once said, “No throne in the universe is so potent as the mother’s knee for good or evil.” The knees on which he was dandled, and the milk that nurtured him as he developed, were permanently ingrained on his young mind.

And so ingrained with this indelible mark, it says “that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens.” It is the first recorded sign of his affection for his people, but it was only an outward reflection of a reality that had been with him all along. Throughout the rest of his life, the bond would only grow stronger.

Even when they came to the point of the most absurd rebellion against their God, he would continue to speak for them and put himself in harm’s way for their sake. At the time when they made a golden calf to worship, Moses stepped forward on their behalf and said this in Exodus 32:30-32 –

“You have committed a great sin. So now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.”³¹ Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, “Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold!³² Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.”

Moses always held fast to his people, never forsaking them even when he was offered his own dynasty in their place. In this, he reflects Christ Jesus who loves His people Israel with an undying love, even despite their rebellion and rejection of Him.

Here in verse 11, the word *siblah* is used to describe their burdens. It is the second of only six times it will be used in Scripture. All are in the first six chapters of Exodus and it is the same word first used to describe their burdens in verse 1:11.

In other words, this unusual bondage and load placed upon the Hebrews has been on-going since more than forty years earlier. During all of that time, Moses has been free of the afflictions. Instead, he lived in Pharaoh’s house, looking at his people from a distance. Now he has come to attend to their burdens.

In this, he again represents Christ who from eternity past dwelt in the Great House, heaven, and who left the riches and glories of that most noble abode to come and dwell among us. Because the duration is known from the New Testament, that of forty years, it is right to determine what the significance of the number forty is.

From his book, *Number in Scripture*, EW Bullinger says that forty is associated, “with a period of *probation, trial, and chastisement.*” He further refines it to be a “chastisement of sons, and of a covenant people.”

Understanding this, we can see that Moses’ heart has been turned toward his people at this time in hopes of ending their time of chastisement. However, we will see as we continue that they will reject his advances and thus their probation will continue for another forty years. And so it was with Christ and Israel. And so they continue on to this day awaiting their final deliverance.

¹¹ (con’t) **And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren.**

Referring back to the speech of Stephen, we read his words about this account, “And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong,” Acts 7:24

In other words, this beating wasn’t justified, but rather it is was a malicious and spiteful beating. It is believed that the taskmasters’ rods were made of a tough and yet pliant type of wood that was actually imported from Syria. It would have been a painful experience to be beaten with one.

And to further highlight Moses’ reason for a response, we are again told that this was “one of his brethren.” But even more, he is called “a Hebrew, one of his brethren.” The bond is one which is deeply ingrained in him as a man. He is one of the people of God. The last time the term Hebrew was used was in the story of his nativity. There it was used twice. Here is what it said –

“Then the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river. And her maidens walked along the riverside; and when she saw the ark among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it. ⁶ And when she opened *it*, she saw the child, and behold, the baby wept. So she had compassion on him, and said, ‘This is one of the Hebrews’ children.’

⁷ Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, ‘Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?’” Exodus 2:5-7

He was identified with his people then, and he is identified with his people now. Why is it important to know this? The answer is that this term, Hebrew or *ivri*, is used only 34 times in the Old Testament and 14 of them are in the book of Exodus, more than any other book in the Bible. Only 1 Samuel comes close and that is with 8 occurrences.

Moses and the book of Exodus are being used to highlight the uniqueness of this group of people and the bond that should exist between them. The Hebrew people look to Abraham as their great father, they look to Jacob, who is Israel, as their family patriarch because all of the tribes descend from him. But they look to the exodus account and to Moses as their great redeemer and prophet.

It is for this reason that the uniting bond among them is that they are Hebrews, not just Israelites. They are people of God who have crossed over, as the term “Hebrew” implies.

¹² So he looked this way and that way,

These words are given to show us that what will occur is not a heated rage or an impetuous act. Rather, Moses took thoughtful consideration to stop and review his surroundings in order to ensure that what he would do would be unnoticed.

^{12 (con’t)} and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian

After looking around, he took an action which is either glossed over by Jewish commentators, or is hailed by them as a heroic or even patriotic act. At the same time, most Christian commentators term it “impetuous,” “wrongful,” “undisciplined,” and so on. With only a few exceptions, they find it to be unjustifiable.

And yet, from the context of Stephen’s words to the ruling council in Acts 7, it appears to be an act of faith. There Stephen says –

“For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand.” Acts 7:25

Stephen seems to suggest that Moses knew he would be used of God to deliver the Hebrews from their bondage. He was a Hebrew raised in Pharaoh’s palace and so if for no other reason, he could logically believe that he had been spared from the river and raised in the wisdom of Egypt for this very purpose.

In fact, just prior to the exodus, the Lord will say this to Pharaoh concerning his own position and status –

“But indeed for this *purpose* I have raised you up, that I may show My power *in* you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.” Exodus 9:16

Moses understood that time, place, and position were gifts of God to be used *for* God's purposes, and which God uses in us for His own purposes. Because the Bible records that he took the time to look around first, it indicates his belief that he was doing the right thing in his attempt to rescue his Hebrew brother.

Regardless of this, it became an act which would involve the complete severance of his ties with Egypt and also a lengthy severance from His Hebrew people as well. And yet, the time would be used by God to further mold him in preparation for his coming role and it would also allow for the continuance of God's mercy upon the people of Canaan.

In Genesis 15, the Lord spoke these words to Abraham –

Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.” Genesis 15:13-15

The Hebrews were not ready to be delivered, and God was not yet ready to judge the Amorites. Everything is timed according to God's plan and if we can remember this, then we can trust that all of the things we don't understand are still being handled exactly as they should be by Him.

¹² (con't) **and hid him in the sand.**

The word for “sand” is *khol*. In the Bible, with a few exceptions, it is used as a simile which equates the sand with a great multitude of people, such as “like the sand of the seashore.” The genuine nature of these words, “and hid him in the sand” show that Moses was certainly the author of this account.

If anyone else had written this, they would have said that he “buried him in the ground” or that he “dug a hole and placed him there.” But the words “in the sand” show a personal knowledge of the area where it occurred, including the type of ground – that of sand. It's little details like this that show us the authenticity of what we are looking at.

*I have come to rescue you from the bondage you face
Chosen by God, I will lead you out*

*No longer will you languish in this place
But you shall leave with a triumphant shout*

*I have stepped down from a great place to meet you here
And have joined Myself to you as your Hebrew Brother
Trust in Me and have no fear
We are of the same blood and are joined to one another*

*The time of your redemption is surely at hand
I will lead you out of this woe-filled land*

II. Who Made You a Prince and a Judge Over Us (verses 13 & 14)

¹³ And when he went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were fighting,

The NKJV translated this just right when they said “the second day.” Many translators simply say “the next day.” But the term is *b’yom ha’shnei* “on day the second.” What might seem rather unimportant actually isn’t. The reason is that there is another term which can mean the same thing, *mimakhorat* – “on the morrow.”

Moses uses both of them in his writings, even in Exodus, and so there must be a reason why he chooses them as he does. In this verse, right after saying “the second day” he next says that *v’hinneh shnei anashim ivrim nissim* – “behold two men, Hebrews, disputed together.”

There is in this the indication that we are to focus on the number two because it is listed twice in this specific manner. And so we go to Bullinger to see the meaning that we are asked to not miss –

Two affirms that there is a difference, there is *another*; while One affirms that there is not another! This *difference* may be for good or for evil. A thing may differ from evil, and be good; or it may differ from good, and be evil. Hence, the number Two takes a two-fold colouring, according to the context. It is the first number by which we can *divide* another, and therefore in all its uses we may trace this fundamental idea of *division* or *difference*. The *two* may be, though different in character, yet one as to testimony and friendship. The *Second* that comes in may be for help and deliverance.

But, alas! where man is concerned, this number testifies of his fall, for it more often denotes that difference which implies *opposition, enmity, and oppression*.*

In what took a few words, Bullinger shows that concerning the number two, there is a contrast of things, and yet there is a confirmation between them. For example, there are two testaments in the Bible – the Old and the New. They contrast – law and grace, and yet they confirm the totality of the word of God.

There are two natures to Christ, they contrast – Man and God, and yet they confirm the incarnation. One day has daytime and nighttime. They contrast – darkness and light, and yet they confirm a day's duration. Moses is asking us to look at the two accounts and determine a contrast between them while still confirming the message. And so when the thought is finished, we will do that.

^{13 (con't)} **and he said to the one who did the wrong, “Why are you striking your companion?”**

Instead of “the one who did the wrong” the Hebrew here actually says *la'rasha* – “the wicked one.” Most translators use the Greek translation which says *adikounti* – “the one who did wrong.” But the Hebrew is trying to show us the contrast through its choice of words. It is an evil act in Moses' eyes.

It is because of this evil act, one Hebrew fighting another, that he steps in and asks “Why are you striking your companion?” Moses is simply trying to get them to think the issue through properly and to contemplate the bonding principles of unity and justice.

In unity, he tells them that they are brethren. And in justice, he shows them that evil towards one another can only disrupt their unity. It is his first attempt to wake them up to the realization that these forces are needed in order to cast off the greater burden they suffer under Pharaoh.

And yet they take offense at what he says. He thought that his words would lead to their liberation, but in his zeal for his people Moses has left out the key and principle factor in their deliverance. He has left out the God whose name they bear.

In this entire chapter, the word “God” or “Lord” is never used until the very last paragraph and then it is used five times. Eventually, when he is ready to lead his people, it is the name of the Lord that he will give them to show that he has been chosen to bring them out of Egypt.

¹⁴ Then he said, “Who made you a prince and a judge over us?”

Moses resided in the Great House, that of Pharaoh. At the same time, the Hebrews suffered in bondage. Moses stepped down from his exalted position to come and teach them a better way. Further, he intended to bring them out of the bondage they were in, and yet they rejected his claim by asking “Who made you a prince and a judge over us?”

If we simply substitute a couple names and words in that paragraph, we can see the connection to Christ: “Jesus resided in the Great House, that of heaven. At the same time, Israel suffered in bondage. Jesus stepped down from his exalted position to come and teach them a better way. Further, he intended to bring them out of the bondage they were in, and yet they rejected His claim by asking “Who made you a prince and a judge over us?”

In this story, we’re being asked to see the work of Christ.

¹⁴ (con’t) Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?”

If Moses is the picture of Christ, and the Hebrews in Egypt picture the nation of Israel, then Egypt must picture the work of the devil – sin in a world of sin. In each person who comes to Christ, the devil is defeated. The individual Egyptian was killed by Moses for an individual Hebrew, but now the word has gotten out by the person who was saved that Moses is the one who saved him.

However, instead of seeing the deliverance from the Egyptian, they see a ruler whose authority they don’t recognize. Again, it is a picture of the work of Christ. And thus, in the book of Revelation, Jesus uses these words concerning those Jews who rejected His authority during the church age –

“I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and *I know* the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan.” Revelation 2:9

The Hebrews chose continued bondage in Egypt over freedom at Moses’ hand. The Jews of Jesus’ time chose continued bondage in sin over freedom at the work of Christ.

¹⁴ (con’t) So Moses feared and said, “Surely this thing is known!”

In order to set up a continuing parallel between the work of Christ and the life of Moses, we are shown why Moses will flee from His people and from the land of Egypt. His good deed towards his fellow Hebrews has been taken in an ill light. And not only that, it has become generally known as well.

The Hebrews weren't ready to accept Moses as their leader and Israel at Christ's first advent was not yet ready to receive Jesus either. But the thing that Moses did was known and couldn't be hidden. Likewise, what Christ did was known. It was something that couldn't be hidden.

Now that we're finished with this second section, we need to take a moment and see the contrast between the accounts in the first two sections. In the first, an Egyptian is beating a Hebrew and Moses took action necessary to save him. He slew the enemy and rescued his fellow countryman. It was a positive action towards one of God's chosen people.

And it had to be received as such because the matter became known. The Bible says that Moses looked this way and that which means that nobody else knew what occurred, and yet the saved person told the good news of his deliverance. It is reflective, for example, of the deaf mute who was healed in Mark 7:36 –

“Then He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed *it*.” Mark 7:36

On the second day, two Hebrews were fighting and the offender is described as *la'rasha* – the wicked one. But instead of being received favorably, the wicked offender turns on him. It is reflective those Jews of Jesus' time who laid burdens on their own people and afflicted them and yet turned and questioned Jesus' authority, which was clearly evident by his actions.

The two contrast in what occurs and yet they confirm that Moses' actions were intended for good towards his countrymen. What has occurred is an excellent picture of the work of Christ towards His people, and yet also the hostility displayed towards Him by the wicked of the people, just as the gospels record.

*I have come to set the captive free
And yet you fight among each other?
Look to My example and come, follow Me
Do not be oppressive towards your brother*

*Who made You a prince and a judge over us?
We don't recognize Your authority at all
Who do You think You are Mr. Jesus?
We are God's people and only to Him will we call*

*Surely if God were your Father
You would listen to Me, for Me He sent
But there are others who will listen
If you don't want Me, then to them I will be sent*

III. The Place of Judgment (verse 15)

¹⁵ When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses.

It has to be remembered that what Pharaoh pictures here isn't the same as what Pharaoh pictured during Joseph's reign. In chapter 1, it said this about the new dynasty of Pharaoh, "Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph" (Exodus 1:8). This Pharaoh then is set in contrast to the Pharaoh of Joseph's time.

Jesus came from heaven and he was raised by His Hebrew family, but He was also raised in this fallen world. The king of this world at Jesus' coming was Satan. That is confirmed in Luke 4 where it says –

*"All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish." Luke 4:6*

Upon Jesus' rejection by His people they sought out to kill Him and they accomplished that. But death couldn't hold Him. And so the pattern still rings true. The ruler of this world did seek to kill Jesus, just as Pharaoh sought out to kill Moses.

There is the historical record of Moses' life, and there is the pattern that it is showing us in the work of Christ. It's exciting to see these things. It allows us to know that the plan is still being worked out.

^{15 (con't)} But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian;

As all Scripture is God-breathed and because complimentary passages may show things from a slightly different perspective, we should go back and see Stephen's words about this verse. There in Acts 7 he states it this way –

“But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?’²⁸ Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?’²⁹ Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian...” Acts 7:27-29

In Stephen's words, it shows that Moses fled “at this saying,” meaning at what the Hebrews said to Him. In this then, the integrity of the picture of Christ is upheld. He was rejected by His own and thus the kingdom was not ushered in at that time, something that would have otherwise happened.

In other words, both accounts, though stated a bit differently, confirm the work of Christ beautifully. But Christ didn't actually flee from anything in the sense of fearing. The word used by Moses for “fled” is *barakh*, a verb which carries the “basic meaning of ‘going through’” (HAW).

The same word in Greek used by Stephen means to flee, but its use can include fleeing by “shunning something,” such as in “fleeing from idolatry.” And the Greek of this verse in the Old Testament *apo*, is simply the word “from.” In other words, there is nothing here that would speak against picturing the work of Christ and everything to speak for it. In his move from Egypt, Moses is said to have dwelt in the land of Midian. The term for “dwelt” is *v'yeshev* or “and sat.” It is an idiom which means the place where one dwells. The name Midian means “Place of Judgment” and thus it is an exact picture of the work of Christ who departed from His kinsman of the flesh, meaning the Jews, and went to preside over the Gentiles where He *sits* in His place of judgment.

This is perfectly summed up in the words of Hebrews 10 –

“But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God,¹³ from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.” Hebrews 10:12

Moses' life was sought by those who hated him and he passed through to a Gentile location called the Place of Judgment until he would be called to subdue his enemies in the years ahead.

In like fashion, Christ's life was sought by those who hated Him, but He passed through from the Hebrews to the Gentiles and is now at the right hand of God, the place of judgment, until His enemies are made His footstool.

And to finish out our verses today, we see one more short thought which seems almost curious to be affixed to the verse as it is. And yet it completes the picture of Christ's work in this passage...

¹⁵ (fin) **and he sat down by a well.**

Unfortunately, out of the 20 versions of the Bible that I checked for this sermon, only two were correct. The Hebrew says that he sat down by "the well" *ha'beer*, not "a well." A third version at least said a "certain" well to show more than just any well. The definite pronoun is not a mistake. It is given to show us something specific.

And again it says "and sat." Moses "sat" or "dwelt" by the well. Each time a well was introduced throughout the book of Genesis, it generally pictured an outpouring of the Spirit. The pattern follows here. It is the Gentile-led church of which Christ is the Head, which has received His Spirit during this dispensation.

Moses dwelt, or sat down, by "the well" making an exact picture of Christ. We are granted His Spirit because His work is complete for us. The fact that Stephen used this entire account in his speech shows that he was equating it directly with the work of Christ whom He was speaking of as he addressed Israel's leaders. But they couldn't see what your eyes are being opened to.

Moses was rewarded several times with accounts from his life being recorded in Hebrews 11, the Hall of Fame of Faith. This passage today is one of them. And the reason why is because he so perfectly mirrored the faithful work of Christ. Here is what Hebrews says –

"By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶ esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward."

-Hebrews 11:24-26

Satan tempted Christ and He refused to be called into that unholy house. Instead, He chose to suffer affliction with and for the people of God rather than to fall into the same

trap that Adam fell into. Christ esteemed the greater riches of heaven and the honoring of His Father more than all of the world's riches. Just like Moses, Christ looked to the reward.

Now we have a chance and a choice. We can look to the reward and we can receive the crown of life because of the work of Christ. He prevailed over the devil and He alone can lead us out of the bondage of Egypt, the world of sin, and bring us to the holy Promised Land.

I would hope that you have called on Him and received Him as Lord. If you have, you are eternally saved by His work. You have been redeemed from the land of bondage and are God's child by adoption. However, if you haven't yet called on Christ, please let me tell you how you can...

Closing Verse: *Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,²⁰ and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,²¹ whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. Acts 3:19-21*

Next Week: Exodus 2:16-25 (Seven Daughters Drawing Water From the Well) (5th Exodus Sermon)

Having travelled to all 50 state capitols, I can tell you that the man who was continually shown to be a failure in his earlier years, Abraham Lincoln, is honored in statues and paintings more than any other president in our history. Even if you've faced continual failure in your own life, there is still the possibility for you to become great. Trust the Lord and let Him use you for such greatness.

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Shunned by His Own

Now it came to pass in those days
When Moses was grown

That he went out to his brethren
And looked at their burdens, to his eyes they were shown

And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew
One of his brethren as he knew

So he looked this way and that way
And when he saw no one
The Egyptian he did slay
And hid him in the sand, covering what he had done

And when he went out the second day
Behold, two Hebrew men were fighting
And to the one who did the wrong he did say
“Why are you your companion striking?

Then he asked inquisitively
“Who made you over us a prince and a judge?
Do you intend to kill me
As you killed the Egyptian? Do you bear me a grudge?

So Moses feared and said
“Surely this thing is known!
This thing about the dead

When Pharaoh of this matter heard
He sought to kill Moses in that place
But as we are told in the word
Moses fled from Pharaoh’s face

And dwelt in Midian’s land
And he sat down by a well as we understand

Like many great men before Him recorded in the word
Moses is now used as the Bible’s central figure
In order to give us portraits of Jesus the Lord
And the great works He wrought are seen in each picture

And as we see in this story once again
There are those who fight against what God has planned

They reject His authority and against Him complain
And yet He still reaches out His loving hand

Let us not reject His kind offer of grace
But instead let us accept what is recorded in His word
He offers us a new home in a heavenly place
If we will just call out to Jesus as Lord

And so let us receive Jesus Christ and be reconciled to God
So that for all eternity in His glorious presence we will trod

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 2:16-25 (SEVEN DAUGHTERS DRAWING WATER FROM THE WELL)

Introduction: Curious stories seem to pop up among other curious stories. Today's verses show one of them, don't they. In a period which spans forty years of Moses' life, just seven verses are given. After that, three more verses are provided to take us right back to the plight of the Israelites in the land of Egypt – ten verses in all.

One has to ask, "What is so important about these seven verses in comparison to all of the other things that must have happened during those forty years?" Why is this single event recorded? The answer is, as always, because God wants us to see pictures of other things in redemptive history and to understand that His plan is precise and preplanned.

To me, that's the most comforting thing about knowing the Lord. If He has everything already planned as to how it will come out, then He must know how things will turn out for me as well. And if His word says that because of Jesus, I'm included in the good things to come, then what an absolutely satisfying feeling that is.

If we see our name is listed in the will of a rich family member, it gives us something to look forward to with anticipation. Not anticipation that the person will die. But rather that death is inevitable, that they are old and will inevitably die, and that we have an inheritance which will come from that inevitable situation.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 1 that in Christ we have an *eternal* inheritance in store for us. He goes on to say that we even have a guarantee of that inheritance, which is the sealing of the Holy Spirit. It is the surest guarantee that could ever be given. Unlike an earthly inheritance which could be lost before we receive it, or which may never come to us because we get run over by a car first, nothing in heaven or on earth can separate us from the inheritance we have coming because of our faith in Christ.

These stories which show us pictures of God's plan are especially wonderful to understand because they remind us that the future is set. We have a sure path to glory and it is all because of the work of Jesus Christ. What a great feeling that should leave us with.

Text Verse: *"Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again,¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."* John 4:13, 14

Everlasting life. We can't even imagine what that will be like. Now, we get tired and we grow old. Things are temporary and more often than not, they bring us as much pain as they do pleasure. We might enjoy our pets, but when they die, we suffer through the loss.

We might have a car that we are crazy about, but when it gets a spot of rust or a dent, we tend to lose heart and get frustrated over it. Everything wears out, runs down, or fades in the bright sun. But Jesus promises us a fountain of water that will refresh us for all eternity. This is offered to those who call on Him.

It is He who waters His flock. A small picture of that is seen in today's verses. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Father's Flock (verses 16 & 17)

In the last short account, Moses set out to join with his Hebrew brethren and to deliver them from bondage, going so far as killing an Egyptian in order to rescue one of them. However, when he came to two others fighting the next day, they rejected his attempt to reconcile them and they rejected his authority over them.

Because of this, and because the word had gotten out that he killed the Egyptian, he fled from the face of Pharaoh. The last verse looked at said, "But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well."

We saw that it all pointed to the first advent of Christ and His appearing to His own people, but He was rejected by them. From there He went to the Gentiles. And this is where we start today...

¹⁶ Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters.

The "Priest of Midian" is the term *kohen midyan*. As we saw last week, Midian means "Place of Judgment." The term *kohen* actually has two meanings. It means "priest" but it also means "prince." And thus, this person is probably a man similar to Melchizedek who was seen in Genesis 14.

He would then fulfill the dual role of prince and priest. However, most translators simply call him a "priest" because he, or one of his descendants, is noted as performing priestly

functions later in Exodus 18 where it says he “took a burnt offering and *other sacrifices to offer to God.*” (v. 12)

This person is likely a descendant of Abraham, born to his ancestor Midian who was born to Abraham’s concubine Keturah. This is recorded in Genesis 25:1, 2 –

“Abraham again took a wife, and her name *was* Keturah. ² And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, **Midian**, Ishbak, and Shuah.” Genesis 25:1, 2

As a descendant of Abraham, he may have carried on the traditions of his father and been a priest and worshipper of the true God. There is no reason to think otherwise, especially because of his prominence in the life of Moses.

God directed Moses’ feet to this particular well where a seemingly chance encounter would take place which is actually not at all by chance. This priest of Midian is said to have seven daughters. Saying that may seem like an unnecessary addition unless it is trying to show us a picture of something else.

If not, it could have left the number seven out and not changed anything. Why are the seven daughters mentioned so specifically and right at his introduction, even before his own name is given?

¹⁶ (con’t) **And they came and drew water,**

The seven daughters are all out together, thus setting up the story in a specific direction. They have stuck together and have come to the well together. The word for “drew” is *dalah*. It’s used only five times in the Bible and 3 are in this chapter. Also it’s used once in the Psalms and once in Proverbs.

It means “to dangle” which then leads to the thought of letting down a bucket which would be for drawing out water. And so figuratively it would mean to “deliver.” This is the use of it in the 30th Psalm where it says –

“I will extol You, O Lord, for You have **lifted** me up,
And have not let my foes rejoice over me.” Psalm 30:1

The only other time it’s used is in Proverbs 20:5 –

“Counsel in the heart of man *is like* deep water,
But a man of understanding will **draw** it out.” Proverbs 20:5

These girls have come to draw water from the well. It is a scene wholly reminiscent of the accounts of Rebekah and of Rachel, both of whom came to wells to draw water at the time of chance meetings which brought them to their future husbands. And yet, neither was chance and both were used to picture the work of Christ, just as this passage will as well.

¹⁶ (con’t) **and they filled the troughs to water their father’s flock.**

After drawing, they use the water to fill the troughs of their father’s flocks. Another interesting word to look at is the word for “troughs.” It is *rahat*. It was used twice in Genesis 30 when Jacob peeled rods of trees and placed them in watering troughs for the flocks to mate in front of.

All of that account pictured the work of Christ. The word is used again here and only one other time, in the Song of Solomon –

“Your head *crowns* you like *Mount Carmel*,
And the hair of your head *is like* purple;
A king *is held captive* by *your tresses*.” Song of Solomon 7:5

It might seem unusual to say that locks of hair are like a gutter used for watering animals, but the idea is that the beloved’s hair was flowing down like water, even like ringlets. And who doesn’t love the look of flowing hair on a beautiful young lady!

There is nothing to suggest that this account isn’t true. Rachel tended Laban’s flocks and even into modern times, a man named Burckhardt notes that the unmarried daughters of Bedouins have been the ones to tend to the flocks of the family. In this case, they are tending to the flocks of their father.

¹⁷ **Then the shepherds came and drove them away;**

Adam Clarke notes that the verb used here for “drove them” is the word *yegareshum* which is in the masculine gender and it therefore implies that the shepherds drove away the flocks of the daughters, not the daughters themselves.

This is certainly the case. The daughters took the time to fill the troughs and once the work was done, the worthless shepherds proceeded to drive away the animals in order to benefit from the hard work of those who came before them. What is this telling us?

First, it tells us that the priesthood of their father was not held in any esteem by them. If it were, they would have been considerate to them. Secondly, it showed a desire to profit off the work of another and to use it for their own benefit by directing it towards their personal flocks.

And finally, we will see that this was not uncommon. In the coming verse, their father will be surprised at their early return which means that this was a common occurrence which they had simply put up with and kept silent about in the past.

17 (con't) but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

The last time Moses was mentioned was in the last sermon. It said in verse 15 that "he *sat down* by a well." Now it says he "*stood up*." The account is showing action on behalf of the daughters and thus for the flock.

But again, we need to ask why. Why the descriptive words when it could have simply said "but Moses helped them." A picture is being given and we are being asked to reflect on what it is. Moses personally intervened and "watered their flock."

The story is so remarkably similar to what happened in Genesis 29 that it cannot go without note. That is the account of when Jacob met Rachel. At that time Jacob pictured Christ, now Moses fills that role. Moses is watering the flock of the priest of Midian, a man who is an upright Gentile seeking the one true God. It should be noted that when Moses lived in Egypt, he lived as a royal in the royal and Great House of Pharaoh. He left that position and went to dwell among his own, but his own did not receive him. And so he instead went to the land of the Gentiles. He has found an opportunity now to be a servant and he has prevailed in that task. Does this sound like any other figure you may be aware of?

*The father has seven daughters
Who tend to his flock, watching over His sheep
They are to pass to them the well's healing waters
And to bring out for them the Bible's mysteries deep*

*But there are other shepherds who would chase the sheep away
And disturb their peaceful lives, leading them astray*

*Yet the Lord is there to watch with tender care
And will carefully water the flock, all who are His own
And when He sees any danger there
To the false shepherds His anger will be shown*

II. In Drawing He Drew (verses 18 & 19)

¹⁸ When they came to Reuel their father,

The father's name is finally given, Reuel, which means "Friend of God." As a connection back to Abraham, we read this in James –

"And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' And he was called the friend of God."

-James 2:23

The name Reuel, or Friend of God, ties him back to his great ancestor, Abraham. And he, like Abraham, is living in faith towards this true God, seeking to be His friend. As an added squiggle for your brain, the fantasy author JRR Tolkien is partially named after this guy. His full name is John Ronald Reuel Tolkien.

¹⁸ (con't) he said, "How is it that you have come so soon today?"

In this statement of surprise, we can see that the actions of the unruly shepherds were common. But we can also see that the daughters kept the matter quiet, not troubling their father with it in the past. They simply allowed others to push them out of the way and then they watered their flocks and headed back home.

¹⁹ And they said, "An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds,

The daughters probably thought he was an Egyptian either by his clothes or his speech and so the shepherds would have seen this as well. The fact that Moses records their words is a sound indication that he is the true author. Someone else would have just called him a stranger or a foreigner.

There could be several reasons why he was able to overcome more than one shepherd. The first is that he wouldn't be expected to be alone. It would seem improbable that an Egyptian would have travelled all this way by himself.

Another reason is because of the mere boldness in his demeanor, they may have been wary of him. Moses certainly had physical training in his years in Egypt and probably carried himself in a manner which reflected that. Whether for one of these reasons or another, he prevailed and was able to run off the offenders until the flocks were fully tended to.

19 (con't) and he also drew enough water for us and watered the flock."

This is another hint that Moses is certainly the author of the account. The fact that he tells that he drew more water shows that the other flocks had already been moved in and had started drinking the water that wasn't for them.

In this, the final two uses of the word for "drew" in this chapter are used. In Hebrew it says *v'gam daloh dalah lanu* – "and also in drawing he drew for us." It is an expression which shows that he drew abundantly and zealously for them.

It's interesting that the man named Moses, which means "He who draws out," is shown to do so in the story and to do so in a manner of diligently drawing. The flocks were given an abundance, right from the hand of Moses. All of this allowed them to return home earlier than normal.

20 So he said to his daughters, "And where is he?"

Reuel here asks what would be an obvious question, "And where is he?" In modern language, it would surely have been preceded by the elongated "Helloooooooo. This guy has put himself out for you and you have done nothing in return!"

Having heard the story that one man defended against a number of shepherds, he knew him to be trustworthy. If he wasn't, what would he have done? He would have chased off the shepherds and then gone about violating the girls. Because they came home unscathed, he knew he was dealing with a man of integrity.

20 (con't) Why is it that you have left the man?

And if a man of integrity, then a man who was not to be left unwelcomed into his own home. As he could figure this out, he was curious as to why the daughters, all seven of them, couldn't. Why would someone be practically at the door and not welcomed into it. His words show that what is right and proper is to open the door and allow him in.

²⁰ (con't) **Call him, that he may eat bread."**

The term "that he may eat bread" means more than just bread. The intent is that he be brought in to be entertained and have a meal. We would say, "so that he can dine with us." The word "bread" is substituted for the entire process of dining. He defended them, so now he instructs them to call out for him.

*Where is the Man who defends the daughters?
Why haven't you brought Him home with You?
He has passed out the life-healing waters
Surely this one is Faithful and True*

*Bring Him into your home, don't leave Him outside the door
Because when you invite Him in, He will protect you forevermore*

*And then tell others of the great things He's done
Don't keep it a secret or hide the word away
Be sure to let the world know of God's glorious Son
That He has saved and will come again for us someday*

III. A Bride and a Son (verses 21 & 22)

²¹ **Then Moses was content to live with the man,**

It's obvious that Reuel found Moses to be a decent guy, j

ust as he expected after hearing his daughters' words. At some point he welcomed him into his home on a permanent basis. From this, it appears that Israel's deliverer was set on a new and permanent course that led away from them.

Would he be the deliverer of these seven daughters only? At this point in time, it must have seemed like it to Israel. It will be a full forty years until he will be ready to return and deliver them. Until that time, he will live among the gentiles and come to have a gentile wife...

²¹ (con't) **and he gave Zipporah his daughter to Moses.**

It should not go unnoticed that none of the other daughters are mentioned by name. Thus, Zipporah represents all of the daughters who were rescued by Moses. She is given to Moses as a wife. Her name means “bird” which is from the word *tsippor*.

It’s a word used to describe birds throughout the Old Testament, even in the Genesis creation account. But in a great parallel to Zipporah becoming Moses’ wife and what it pictures, the 84th psalm shows that the bird can find a home where the Lord dwells –

“Even the **sparrow** has found a home,
And the swallow a nest for herself,
Where she may lay her young—
Even Your altars, O Lord of hosts,
My King and my God.” Psalm 84:3

And this isn’t unique to the Old Testament. Jesus gives the same basic idea in the New –

“Then He said, “What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? ¹⁹ It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches.”

-Luke 13:18, 19

The giving of Zipporah to Moses is certainly reminiscent of Laban giving his own daughters to Jacob many years earlier. He stayed and labored, thus receiving his wives. Moses is staying and has certainly come into Reuel’s family as a helping hand as well. Thus in return, he receives a bride.

A final point about this verse is that in marrying his daughter, Moses is symbolically adopted into the tribe of Reuel. We see this later in Exodus 4 when Moses receives his call to return to rescue Israel. At that time, he actually asks for permission to fulfill his calling. There in Exodus 4:18, it says –

“So Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said to him, ‘Please let me go and return to my brethren who *are* in Egypt, and see whether they are still alive.’” Exodus 4:18

²² **And she bore *him* a son. He called his name Gershom, for he said, “I have been a stranger in a foreign land.”**

Time and again, when a child is born in the book of Genesis, he was given as a picture of something in redemptive history or even as a picture of Christ himself. Such is the case here. The name Gershom indicates being a stranger in a foreign land.

The first half of the word, *ger*, means “stranger.” The second half *shom*, comes from either *sham*, “there” or *shem*, “name.” And so his name means “Stranger There” or “Stranger is His Name.” However, Abrarim notes that the verse –

“... merely says that the boy was named such-and-such because his father was a so-and-so. There is no law that demands that the such-and-such should be etymologically akin the so-and-so. For all we know Moses might have been expressing his gladness for having finally settled, or grief for having been expelled from his familiar homeland. A verb that may have been on Moses’ mind is גרש (*garash*), meaning to drive or cast out.”

Thus his name may also mean “Exile.”

*While the Lord is building the church, a beautiful bride
He has a son who is gone into exile
And someday soon the church will be at His side
And once again on the firstborn son God will smile*

*The story is given to show us of God’s faithful and tender care
To His people, those who call on Him, at all times and everywhere*

*See the marvelous things that God has done for all of us!
For any and all who will call out to Him through Jesus*

IV. So God Heard Their Groaning (verses 23-25)

A sudden, even dramatic shift now takes place in the story. In the first 22 verses of the chapter, God was never mentioned. In these last three verses, he will be mentioned 5 times. Where the focus has been on Moses, it will now be on Israel.

As Stephen shows us in Acts 7:30, about forty years have passed with complete silence. And yet the details of this next year will be overflowing in the biblical account. As seen in the last sermon the number forty is associated “with a period of *probation, trial, and chastisement.*” And more specifically a “chastisement of sons, and of a covenant people.”

Understanding this, we can see that Moses' heart was turned toward his people when he was forty, but they rejected his advances and thus their probation continued for another forty years. That time is drawing to a close and Moses' heart will again be turned towards his people.

²³ Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died.

The Hebrew says, *v'hi bayyammin ha'rabbim ha'hem* – “And it came to pass in time much the same.” It is a superlative way of saying that a whole bunch of time passed and things remained unchanged. But suddenly, there *was a change* which matters to the redemptive narrative. The king of Egypt died.

Notice that it doesn't say Pharaoh, but the king of Egypt. The position remains, but the ruler changes. Certainly at a time like this, the people would look for a change in their fortunes as well. Maybe a new policy towards the people would be enacted and there would be an acceptance of them instead of the years of bondage they had thus-far faced.

^{23 (con't)} Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out;

The bondage didn't change, the slavery continued, and the people groaned in their agony. When they looked for a lessening of their anguish, they were rewarded with only more of the same. And so they cried out.

While Moses was dwelling among the Gentiles, the Hebrews toiled in the land of double distress. While he was in the open fields tending sheep, their lives were filled with the narrow confines of slavery and bondage. He was free to enjoy contentment of life while they faced nothing more than oppression and trial.

But when they cry out to Him, there is good news for God's people. He is the covenant keeping God and His ears will not forever be shut to the sound of His people's trials...

^{23 (con't)} and their cry came up to God because of the bondage.

Once again, out of twenty versions of the Bible that I check for each sermon, and out of the multitudes of commentaries I researched for this passage, not even one seized upon the importance of these words. It says *v'taal shavatam el ha'elohim* – “and came up their cry unto ‘**the**’ God.”

It presupposes that their cries of the past 40 years had not been to “the” God. Rather, if they cried out it was to a god or maybe between one another, but “the” God had been left out of the picture. Now He is petitioned once again. How translators can skip such an important definite article is beyond imagination. A point is being made which is completely lost in the translation.

God will allow His people to go their own way and to face their own difficulties until they are prepared to call out to Him. Such is the wonder of how He deals with His children. When they are ready to reach out to Him, He will hear and He will respond. As the Geneva Bible succinctly states it –

“God humbles his by afflictions, that they should cry to him, and receive the fruit of his promise.” Geneva

²⁴ So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

Here in verse 24, and verse 25 to come, God will be mentioned four more times. All four times, it will simply say *elohim*; God. With the matter of the true God being restored to the hearts of His people, God, meaning that same true God, hears and responds. Their groanings have come to His ears and in turn He is said to have remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. He never forgot as we tend to think of such a term. But rather, in the Bible when something is forgotten it is simply pushed out of the mind.

When something is remembered, it is called back to the center of attention. As you can see, the remembrance was based on His faithfulness to the covenant and to His covenant people. When God makes a promise, it will never fail. God promised to the patriarchs and when their descendants returned to Him, He has determined to return to them.

It is the fulfillment of the words He first spoke to Abraham in Genesis 15 –

“Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.” Genesis 15:13-16

The four hundred years are ending, the iniquity of the Amorites has now reached its fullness, and the people of Israel have at the same time returned to *the* God, the true God. It is a confluence of events in redemptive history that seems beyond astonishing. And yet it is a confluence of events which has been repeated in history and which will again be repeated, maybe in the span of our own lives.

²⁵ And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged *them*.

Albert Barnes notes that, “The whole history of Israel is foreshadowed in these words: God heard, remembered, looked upon, and knew them. It evidently indicates the beginning of a crisis marked by a personal intervention of God.”

The many times that the word “God” is mentioned in these three verses hints to us that something great is to be expected in the pages ahead. And so it will be. Great things are just around the corner for Moses and for the suffering Hebrew people. God heard, remembered, looked upon, and knew His people once again.

*If you depart from God, not calling on His name
He will let you wander off though you may suffer harm
But if you return to Him, He will do the same
And restore you to His favor by His mighty right arm*

*He will never leave you nor forsake you
But He will allow you to set your own trail
So choose to follow Him in all you say and do
And He will guide You, His word will never fail*

*Stand firm then upon that precious word
And fix your eyes resolutely on the Lord*

V. Wonderful Pictures

Now that we’ve looked at the surface of the story, the historical and cultural aspects of what happened, we need to ask ourselves, “Why is this story here? What is it that God wants us to see? The answer is, as always – Jesus.” Here is the Light –

Time and again, the Bible focuses on receiving a Gentile bride by the man who is the main focus of the narrative. At the same time, the Bible never departs from the concept that God's covenant people Israel are still on His mind. Even if they have rejected Him.

Last week we saw Moses' rejection by his own and His departure from them while they remained in bondage. It pictures Christ who came to Israel and they rejected Him. And so He went to the Gentile people. As Moses went to Midian, the Place of Judgment, so went Christ to the Place of Judgment on heaven's throne.

Moses sat by a well where water comes forth; Jesus sits at heaven's throne from whence the Spirit issues. Along came the seven daughters of the Priest of Midian. These seven daughters represent the seven churches of the church age mentioned in Revelation. In fact, the term "church" in Revelation is a feminine noun.

The daughters come and draw water from the well, picturing the churches drawing from the Spirit during the church age. The word used to describe their effort was *dalah*. It figuratively means to deliver. This water is used for the flocks which in the Bible consistently picture individual groups of people under a shepherd.

The water is brought out and put into the troughs for the flocks, just as the Spirit is intended for the people of the church. The same word for "troughs" was used in the story of Jacob watering the flock and there it carried the same pictorial connotation, a source for the people of the church to drink from.

However, there was a problem. Other shepherds came and drove the flocks away. It is the false shepherds of the church age, the heretics, the money-grubbers, the cult leaders and those who care nothing for God or the people of God. But rather, they care only for themselves and the flocks who they have already led astray.

But there was good news. Moses was there and stood up for the daughters. Likewise, Jesus is there and He is ready to stand up for those churches who are faithful to Him and His word. Though He is there by the well in the Place of Judgment, He is not idle.

In Revelation 2:1, which is a record of the church age, it says, "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.'" There He is, even now, walking among the seven churches, the seven golden lampstands, tending to the flocks of His faithful churches.

It's no coincidence that the daughters then tell their father that the man who rescued them was an Egyptian. Though Moses is actually a Hebrew, this was all but hidden from them. And it is the same with the church. For 2000 years, the fact that Jesus is a Hebrew and a Jew has been almost completely overlooked, both by the Jews and by the church as well.

He has almost carried the appearance of a Gentile in the minds of the people, but His true nature didn't change because of that. It is a misperception that will be corrected in the story of Moses and it is a misconception that is being corrected more and more each day in the minds of the church and in the eyes of the Israeli people. The Christ of the nations *is* the Messiah of the Jews and He *is* a Jew.

After this, Reuel asks, "Why *is* it *that* you have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread." The Lord doesn't force himself into the seven churches, rather he awaits his invitation, only then will He come and dine with us. In Revelation 3:20, it says this – "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."

After this, the next words said were, "Then Moses was content to live with the man." This is exactly what Paul says would occur in the Gentile church –

"I will dwell in them
And walk among them.
I will be their God,
And they shall be My people." 2 Corinthians 6:16

And of course, like many of the major figures used in these pictures of redemptive history, a Gentile bride is received. Isaac received Rebekah, Jacob received his beloved Rachel, Joseph received Asenath, and now Moses receives one. As only one daughter's name is given she is representative of all of them.

It is the continuing theme of the Bible. While Israel is in exile for disobedience, God is taking a different course of action, not frittering away the hours, but using them wisely until Israel is finally ready to call out to their Messiah.

If you go back and read the two quotes about the birds that I read from the 84th Psalm and from Luke 13, you will see how Zipporah, the little bird, pictures those in the church who have found a home among the Lord's temple and in His kingdom.

Along with Zipporah though, there is a son. His name is Gershom. Curiously, Moses has another son, Eliezer, whose birth isn't recorded and he won't even be mentioned until Exodus 18:4, kind of as an afterthought. The Bible is focusing on this one son, the firstborn. He is a picture of Israel.

In Exodus 4:22 it will say, "Thus says the Lord: 'Israel is My son, My firstborn.'" At the time of his birth, his name is given as Gershom. During the time of Jesus' reign over the church, the son named Exile, the Stranger There, is in exactly that state. His name is Stranger; he is a stranger there; and he is in exile.

If you can see it around us, we must be close to the end of the church age now. The story of Moses' time in Midian, until the time that God hears the cries of Israel, is almost completely empty with the exception of a few verses and names.

The time of calm is coming to an end, Israel is back in the land, and God's focus is even now being redirected to the end times, all of which will be prefigured in the coming chapters of Exodus – filled with plagues and the glory of God being revealed.

As the Hebrew of verse 23 said, *v'hi bayyammin ha'rabbim ha'hem* – "And it came to pass in time much the same." The years have gone by and things have remained unchanged. The Church Age has had many ups and downs, but it has been the Church Age. Things have remained much the same.

But all of a sudden, the ancient prophecies have been coming to pass, even before our eyes. The time is at hand. When Israel's groanings are finally directed to "the God" the true God, meaning the Lord Jesus, He will hear and He will reveal Himself to them. We saw it clearly in the Joseph sermons and we will see it in the coming chapters of Exodus as well.

This is the marvel and this is the beauty of the age in which we live. But this age will end. The church will be taken to glory in the twinkling of an eye and the great plagues of Egypt will come on a global scale. There will be horror and dread and terrifying choices to make.

The Bible says, "Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation." If you have never come to know the salvation which is found in Jesus Christ, I would ask you to not wait another day. The Bible gave us these ancient stories to show us of what is coming and how to avoid it.

It is coming individually in each of our deaths, and it is coming collectively upon an unrepentant world. But God sent His Son in order to bring us back to Himself before one or both occur. Let me tell you what you need to know to be a part of His great work of salvation...

Closing Verse: *"In my distress I called upon the Lord,
And cried out to my God;
He heard my voice from His temple,
And my cry came before Him, even to His ears." Psalm 18:6*

Next Week: Exodus 3:1-6 (Standing On Holy Ground) (6th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Watering the Father's Flock

Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters
And they came and drew from the well's waters
And they filled the troughs for their livestock
Yes, they filled them to water their father's flock

Then the shepherds came
And drove them away
But Moses stood up and helped them all the same
And watered their flock that day
When they came to Reuel their father, he said
"How is it that you have come so soon today?"
And they said, "An Egyptian delivered us instead
From the hand of the shepherds who treated us in a bad way

And he also enough water for us drew
And watered the flock until they were through

So he said to his daughters, yes to them he pled
And where is he? Why is it that you have left the man?
Call him, that he may come and with us eat bread
Then Moses was content with the man to live
And to Moses, his daughter Zipporah he did give

And she bore him a son we understand
He called his name Gershom, for he said
“I have been a stranger in a foreign land
And not been among the people from whom I am bred

Now it happened in the process of time
That the king of Egypt died
Then the children of Israel groaned
Because of the bondage, and out they cried

And their cry came up to God because of the bondage
So God their groaning He heard
And God remembered His covenant
With Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, yes His spoken word

And God looked upon the children of Israel
And God acknowledged them as the Bible does tell
Surely it is better at all times to remember God
Never departing from His love and grace
Than to forget Him while in this life we tread
Until we come to a difficult or an unhappy place

If we can keep our eyes always focused on Jesus
Then whether things are good or difficult it will be the same
We will know that He is always attentive to us
Because we have held fast to Him and His wondrous name
In this there will be great rewards when we are ushered into glory
And we stand in front of our great and awesome Lord
So let us always hold close to the Bible and the gospel story
Keeping hidden in our heart God’s precious saving word
Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 3:1-6 (STANDING ON HOLY GROUND)

Introduction: There are times when I struggle to fill up an evaluation of a passage to make an entire sermon. You know I'm not one to add a lot of fluff. Rather I want to give you insights into what God is telling us and let *you* add the fluff in later with your own thoughts.

But then there are times when I have to cut so much from what I want to say that I cringe. Today's six verses are that way. There simply isn't enough space in a single sermon to cover it all and even then we'll be a little long.

I started to accumulate the material last year on September 10th when my Israeli friend Sergio sent me an email about these verses. I saved it and it is a part of what we'll look into. I hope you love the details, because today is a sermon of details. No fluff for you.

Text Verse: *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace..." Ephesians 1:7*

Paul, writing to the Gentile church, says that we have redemption through the blood of Christ. If Paul is the Apostle to the Gentiles, then what about the Jews. Are they included in this only individually, never to be considered as a united group again? Or is this period of the Gentiles temporary until God again sets His attention on Israel?

Does the Bible give us hints into these things as to which is correct and why? The answer is an obvious "Yes." The Bible is replete with both pictures of what is coming, as well as explicit prophetic references to it. All we have to do research what He is telling us and it will all come out as He intends.

Today's verses show us yet another picture of a period of time which is future to us even now when God will return His attention to His wayward people, Israel. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Tending to the Flock (verse 1)

¹ **Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian.**

We've seen beautiful patterns of history so far revealed in the first two chapters of Exodus. There was the time of Israel's rejection of Christ, just as Moses was rejected by his people. We saw the Church Age after that in the seven daughters of Reuel.

Now we are seeing the time when God is getting ready to redeem Israel and bring them out of their place of hardship and bondage, leading them into the kingdom age. Matthew Henry clued into this pattern in part when he said the following –

“The years of Moses's life are remarkably divided into three forties; the first forty he spent as a prince in Pharaoh's court, the second a shepherd in Midian, the third a king in Jeshurun.” Matthew Henry

Israel has not been forgotten by Him and their period of trial and testing after exile will come to an end. It is pictured in Moses' next portion of life in which the call to that life begins to be seen in today's passage.

Christ is at this time in redemptive history our Good Shepherd, leading the flocks of the church from the Place of Judgment, pictured by Moses tending to flocks in Midian, which means exactly that. Here is Moses, tending to the flocks, but immediately we have a new name – Jethro.

He is identified as Moses' father-in-law and the priest of Midian. However, scholars debate as to whether this is the same man as Reuel or not. The term for “father-in-law” is also used to describe other marital relations, such as son-in-law, brother-in-law, etc.

Some argue that if Reuel was older when Moses married his daughter 40 years earlier, then this may be his son or nephew who has become the priest in his place. Without getting bogged down in that, what the account asks us to do is determine the meaning of his name, not really how he is now related to Moses.

Reuel means “Friend of God” and he was used to picture the corporate body of people from whom the collective church is derived. As the seven churches are the friends of God, they willingly invited Jesus into their abode, just as Reuel willingly called Moses into his.

Now we have a new figure – or at least a new name, Jethro. This comes from the word *yatar* which means “to remain over,” or “to be at rest.” The HAW Theological Wordbook submits, “It refers to one portion of a quantity which has been divided. Generally it is the smaller part and sometimes it is the part of least quality.”

Therefore, Abarim translates the name Jethro as “remnant.” If Reuel was there to picture the time of the church age, then Jethro must be introduced for another reason. If the church age is ending and God is ready to restore Israel to its inherited place in redemptive history, then this name must be tied to that.

This word *yatar*, from which Jethro is derived, is used in Ruth 2:18 concerning the food which Ruth had kept back for her mother-in-law Naomi. There it said, “So she brought out and gave to her what she **had kept back** after she had been satisfied.”

That was a transfer of food from a Gentile to her Jewish mother-in-law. That story, if you know it’s meaning, showed Naomi as picturing Israel in captivity awaiting their restoration, which came at the end of the story. This word *yatar*, is also used in this set of verses from Ezekiel 39 –

“When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies’ lands, and I am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations, ²⁸ then they shall know that I *am* the Lord their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their land, **and left none** of them captive any longer. ²⁹ And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,’ says the Lord God.” Ezekiel 39:27-29

A study on this word time and again gives hidden clues of the return of Israel to the land and to its exalted place as chief among the nations in the end times. It is fitting then that the name Jethro is introduced after Reuel.

There is the church age and then there is the restoration of the remnant of God’s people, Israel – pictured by Jethro. Seemingly unimportant names actually bear directly on what is about to transpire and what will continue to occur, even thousands of years later. Every detail fits like a God-manufactured glove, perfectly aligning with His redemptive plan.

^{1 (con’t)} **And he led the flock to the back of the desert,**

It is here in this portion of verse 1 that my friend Sergio emailed me with questions concerning the passage. The words “to the back of the desert” are *akhar ha’midbar*. *Akhar* means “behind,” or “the following part.” It is also translated as “west” and this is how some translate it. The second word, *ha’midbar*, means “the desert.”

In the Hebrew way of dividing the points of the compass, if the east is before a person, the west then is behind him. The south would then be right and the north would be to the left. The east is a place of exile. When Adam was kicked out of the garden, it was to the east that the cherub was placed to guard against entry.

When the tabernacle was erected, cherubim were woven into the veil which then pointed east, symbolizing restricted entry into the Holy of Holies. When Moses died, he was buried east of Canaan as punishment for his transgression. And when Israel was exiled to Babylon, it was east. The east wind is used many times in Scripture as a harsh and destroying concept. This is seen for example in Jeremiah 18:17 –

“I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy;
I will show them the back and not the face
In the day of their calamity.”

And so more than a year before typing this sermon, in September 2013, Sergio emailed me with this comment –

“Interesting verse: there is a pattern in the bible of ‘going east’ is usually judgment and exile (east of Eden, east of Israel to Babylon, east wind...) but in this verse, right before Moses is called to lead the nation of Israel out of ‘exile’ he led his flock to the west to the mountain of God...”

He was specifically asking about what this was picturing. I was too busy with life to get to it, but now a year later, here we are. Understanding the pictures which have been drawn out from the preceding passages, what do you think it’s picturing? I have an idea and will share it at the end of the verse.

^{1 (con’t)} **and came to Horeb,**

Horeb is the same area as Sinai. The names are used to indicate the same place, but the words are selected to be used for different reasons when they are, in fact, used. Horeb means “Arid” or “Desert” which, interestingly, is similar to Zion, the mountain of God, which in one sense means “Dry Place.”

^{1 (con’t)} **the mountain of God.**

Once again, every single translation I read failed to properly note what this says. In Hebrew, it says *el har ha’elohim* – “to mountain ‘the’ God.” The definite article is before “God” not “mountain.” This is showing us something and it is specific and particular.

If it was the mountain of God, it would have said *har elohim*, such as in Psalm 68:15. Rather, it is the mountain of “the” God. It is intended to show us that the flock is being taken to a specific location to worship the One true God.

Later, in chapter 4, we will be told that Moses returns to Jethro, but the flock is not mentioned. This is the first and last time it is referred to. What is that picturing? Before I explain this and we go on, I’d like to continue with Sergio’s thoughts from a year ago –

Charlie – The translations are a bit off.. quite a bit actually. you are correct: Ahar means ‘after/behind’ (time / location), together with the following word it forms “after desert” (ahar ha-midbar). So location wise if he was east of mt Horeb and it’s desert then he would be going west. But here’s another interesting point (most likely way overstretched...) -> the sentence in hebrew goes like this: *Ve-inhag et ha-tson ahar ha-midbar ve-yavo el har-elohim horba* what’s interesting is that the word “midbar” means word/mouth – for example “dabar elohim” (God’s word). so the sentence could be read like this: And [he] drove the herd [of sheep] according to the words and [he] came to the mountain of God, Horeb.

And then Sergio finished with the thought, “probably changes nothing...” Sergio, it changes everything. The dual meaning of the verse is showing us a picture of something. Sergio’s thoughts are confirmed by another translator concerning “word” instead of “desert” and so I have all the confidence in the world that this isn’t stretching a thing. Abarim states the following concerning the root words of the word *dabar* – “These two root-verbs are really quite adjacent in Hebrew thought. Note that the word מדבר (*midbar*) means wilderness (or desert), and the related verb דבר (*dabar*) means to speak. When Paul augments Isaiah’s spiritual armor, he adds the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God ... Words commonly protrude from one’s mouth, and the mouth is typically a wet place, not a dry place. But it should be noted that the Meribah incident occurred at Horeb (Exodus 17:6), “Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.”

This may sound like way too much information, but let’s look it over. The pictures have shown that Israel is in exile and it is now the church age. Suddenly, with almost no information in 40 years of his life being given to us, we suddenly come to the end of the 40 years. And Moses is heading *west* with his flocks.

If east is exile and from whence comes destruction, and the flocks are being led west, then it is to a place of safety and from whence comes life. Horeb means “Arid” or “Desert,” just as Zion means “Dry Place.” It seems curious that the mountain of “the” God would be defined this way, but what is it that gives life? Water.

The word proceeds from the wet place, the mouth, and the Word of God is where the water of life issues from. Horeb, as Abraim noted, is where the water from the rock came from. Paul in the New Testament say this about that account –

“...all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.”

-1 Corinthians 10:3, 4

So is anyone seeing it yet? In the New Jerusalem, the heavenly Mount Zion (remember Zion means “Dry Place”) where does the water proceed from? From the throne of God and the Lamb. Anyone seeing it yet? Here is Sergio’s translation again – “And [he] drove the herd [of sheep] according to the words and [he] came to the mountain of God, Horeb.”

Who does Moses picture? Christ Jesus. “And Christ drove the herd according to the word and came to the mountain of the God, even to Horeb.” Have you got it? What is the passage showing us? It is the transition from the Church Age to the time where Israel will be redeemed from Egypt.

What does it say in 1 Thessalonians 4 concerning the end of the church age? Here is the passage –

“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

This transition verse is given, and I am completely convinced of this, to show us the end of the church age at the rapture; at the word of the Lord. Without abusing either the text, the Hebrew, or the concepts which permeate Scripture concerning Israel and the dispensational model, we can paraphrase the words, “And (Christ) drove the flock (the

church) according to the word, and (they) came to the mountain of THE God, even Horeb.”

*O God, we wait for You to send Your Son for us
To guide us safely home to His side
And forever we will be with Jesus
As we walk in heaven’s expanse so wide
Thank You for this wondrous and sure promise, O God
We praise You for You have done such marvelous things for us
And as we praise You now, ever shall we when in heaven we trod
Glorifying You for our precious Lamb, our beloved Lord Jesus*

II. The Burning Bush (verse 2 & 3)

² And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire

From this point on, the Church Age is over. A new direction takes place and the coming passage is given in preparation for the great workings of God ahead as He delivers Israel from their bondage. The Lord will now reveal Himself to Moses in one of the most famous passages in all of Scripture. Stephen refers to this incident in his speech to the elders of Israel in Acts 7. Here are his words to them –

“And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. ³¹ When Moses saw *it*, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, ³² *saying*, ‘I *am* the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ Acts 7:30-32

From his words, we know that forty full years have passed. Again, we should review the meaning of the number forty so that we understand why this period of Moses’ life was chosen. In his book, *Number in Scripture*, EW Bullinger says that forty is associated, “with a period of *probation, trial, and chastisement*.” He further refines it to be a “chastisement of sons, and of a covenant people.”

The second period of 40 years has ended and the second time of probation, trial, and chastisement is now over. This is specifically referred to by Isaiah where he wrote this –

“Comfort, yes, comfort My people!”
Says your God.
“Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her,
That her warfare is ended,
That her iniquity is pardoned;
For she has received from the Lord’s hand
Double for all her sins.” Isaiah 40:1, 2

Now is the time for the captives to be released. Now is the time for Israel to be exalted. In this verse there is no definite article in front of the word “Angel” but it is not necessary. There is only one Jehovah who will call out to Moses from this bush, and so translators rightly call Him “the Angel of the Lord.”

And so the Angel of the Lord appears to Moses in a flame of fire. The word for “flame” here is *labbah* and is used only this once in the Bible. However, it comes from the word *lehabah* which is a common word for flame, but it also means “blade.”

To us, flames of fire appear like the blades of a sword and so the two concepts merge into one. The voice of the Lord is equated to flames of fire in the 29th Psalm, and the tongue is equated to a sword in Revelation 19. And so the two concepts unite in this bush.

^{2 (con’t)} **from the midst of a bush.**

There are lots of bushes in the world, and there were certainly lots of bushes around Moses, and yet there is a definite article in front of the word “bush.” Only Young’s Literal Translation got this correct by stating “the” bush. It is specifically designating a specific bush and so it does it dishonor to say “a” bush.

This word for “bush” in Hebrew is *seneh* and it is only used six times in the Bible. It means “thorny.” Five of those times are right here in Exodus 3 and the final time is in Deuteronomy 33 when referring to the Lord who dwelt in this bush.

The New Testament refers to it four times. Twice by Jesus and twice by Stephen. It is the word from which Sinai is derived which means “Bush of the Lord.” Although there are no commentaries on this and it is my speculation, the *seneh* or thorny bush, which is the basis for the name Sinai, Bush of the Lord, may be the very type of bush that was used for a crown of thorns on Christ’s head.

The six times it is used in the Old Testament may be tied to the meaning of the number six, the number which relates to man. And therefore it is pointing to the Person of Jesus in His Manhood. As the Lord dwelt in the Bush in the Old Testament, he wore it as a crown of thorns in the New. Just speculation, but possible.

² (con't) **So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire,**

This certainly caught Moses' attention. Any fire, particularly in a bush, would be visible from some distance. In the Bible, fire itself has a dual signification. First, it is something which destroys. It is often used as a symbol of judgment and wrath because of this.

However, fire also has the ability to purify, and it is often used this way as well in Scripture. In Malachi 3, it is used in this dual way. It is speaking of the coming of the Lord in judgment and yet at the same time to purify –

“But who can endure the day of His coming?

And who can stand when He appears?

For He *is* like a refiner's fire

And like launderers' soap.

³ He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver;

He will purify the sons of Levi,

And purge them as gold and silver,

That they may offer to the Lord

An offering in righteousness. Malachi 3:2, 3

Therefore, fire is a picture of the jealous desire of the Lord. He is Jealous. He is jealous in love for His people, and yet He is jealous for His holy name. The fire will purify people and yet it will destroy people as well. This is seen in the continuation of verse 2...

² (con't) **but the bush was not consumed.**

The bush wasn't consumed in the fire and thus it is not something set in contrast to the Lord, but rather it is a representation of the work of Lord Himself. Israel is being prepared for purification and yet as a whole, they will not be consumed. Likewise, God's divine judgment on Egypt will be poured out at the same time.

In the same way, Israel of the future is prophetically being pictured just as Malachi and the other prophets show us. They will be purified and yet not totally consumed. At the same time, God's judgment and wrath will come upon the world.

³Then Moses said, “I will now turn aside and see this great sight,

Here we’re given another indication that Moses is the true author of the account. Rather than it being in his immediate area, whether on the path he was on or whether right where he was standing, he says he will “turn aside” in order to see the great sight. And great it must have seemed, and for good reason...

³ (con’t) why the bush does not burn.”

If you’re in a dry and aired land, a bush that caught on fire may still be unusual, but a bush that was on fire and didn’t jump into a large blaze and almost as quickly die down would be astonishing. Things in such a place are dry and brittle and would be consumed in a moment; in a flash.

But this bush continued to burn after it’s expected time was over. There in the bush, the Lord patiently waited for Moses’ curiosity to take over, and eventually it did. But even more amazing things will happen in regards to this bush – life changing things; world-changing things.

*The fire of the Lord will go out in splendor
It will purify the people who bear His holy name
But on the unrepentant, judgment and wrath it will render
Two purposes are accomplished with His burning flame*

*Great and awesome is the marvelous sight
Of the work of the Lord, both His judgment and His grace
What a marvelous display of His infinite might
Blessed is the Lord in His throne’s holy place*

*It is a wonderful blessing to behold the works of the Lord
Which are written for us in His superior word*

III. Standing On Holy Ground (verses 4-6)

There is a form of Bible scholarship, a very confused and theologically inept form of Bible scholarship, known as the Documentary Hypothesis. It suggests that the first five books of the Bible, known as the Torah or the Pentateuch, was actually derived from four independent sources, not from one.

It has become the standard in most liberal circles in order to try to reconcile, as they say, “perceived inconsistencies in the biblical text.” In other words, these scholars see only contradiction, confusion, and error in the Bible. And so instead of researching how to resolve the difficulties from a biblical perspective, they do so from a man-centered perspective.

They divide the books of Moses into four separate authors – J or Jehovahist, E or Elohist, D or Deuteronomist, and P for Priestly. Line by line, they cut up the Bible claiming this person wrote this line and this person added in this line. However, verse 4 of Exodus 3, along with many other evidences, shows how utterly ridiculous this type of theology is.

⁴So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush

In one verse it says, “the Lord” meaning Jehovah, and God or *elohim*.” One cannot ascribe this verse to J, nor can they ascribe it to E. If they used the same term in both places originally, then anyone who revised it would have revised both.

Liberal theology is both ungodly and perverse, and it is also about as stupid as one can get. We are given an insight into the nature of God in this verse, not an insanely convoluted look into the work of some crazy Jews who lived many hundreds of years later.

Jehovah saw and God called. The Lord is God. As the Lord, He is the monitor of the covenant within Creation, and as God, He is the one “over there” who controls all of creation. Interestingly, I checked for fun and found that the Lord is mentioned 7 times in this chapter, God 21, and the combined term Lord God 3.

Thus you have 3, 7, and 21 which is a multiple of 7×3 . The stamp of divine perfection permeates the words recorded here, not a confused grouping of irrelevant words. God calling to Moses from the bush shows that an objective reality, not a mere vision, is being described. The Lord is visibly and audibly present with Moses.

^{4 (con't)} and said, “Moses, Moses!”

Calling out a name or a word twice is a way of showing emphasis. When Jesus wanted to emphasize his words, He would say “Amen. Amen,” or as we often say it “Verily, Verily.” When the Jews wanted Jesus done away with, they shouted “Crucify! Crucify!”

When God calls out to one of His people for a matter of the utmost importance, He will call out their name twice. This happens to be the third time in Scripture that God has fondly and purposefully called out to a man in this fashion. The first time was in Genesis 22 when the Angel of the Lord called to the man of **faith** –

“But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’” Genesis 22:11

The second time was in Genesis 46 when God called out to the man of **family** –

“Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, ‘Jacob, Jacob!’”
-Genesis 46:2

And now, in the same climatic and emphatic fashion, God calls out the name of the man of the **flock**, “Mosheh, Mosheh.”

⁴ (con’t) **And he said, “Here I am.”**

When the Angel of the Lord called out to Abraham with emphatic purpose, Abraham’s immediate (and much relieved) response was “Here I am.” When God called out to Jacob in His emphatic and comforting way, Jacob’s response was “Here I am.”

Now, the same powerful voice with the same emphatic call goes out unto Moses’ ears and his immediate response is “Here I am.” When the Lord calls to you, be it audibly or deep within the recesses of your soul, make sure to respond as these great men of God did – “Here I am.”

Moses didn’t see anyone around with a box of matches. There was no one standing around him to produce the call of his name, and there was no motion except the continuously burning flames which didn’t harm the bush. Moses knew this was a divine visitation and his response reflected it – “Here I am.”

⁵ **Then He said, “Do not draw near this place.**

Moses was probably curious about the fire that didn’t consume, wanting to see if it was really fire or not. And the welcoming voice which called to him certainly seemed to be no threat. It knew him personally and so it must be a friend at hand.

And so in a manner of curiosity and feeling welcomed, he stepped forward, not realizing that a distance was demanded between him and the great sight before him which he beheld.

⁵ (con't) **Take your sandals off your feet,**

Not only was a distance required, but he was further instructed to remove his sandals. There is much to learn about shoes, their use, and their removal in the Bible. And this is true even though they are only mentioned about 35 times.

In this command, and it is a command, God is instructing Moses from One who is greater to one who is lesser. In essence, “Resign yourself to me.” He is the possessor of, and in authority over, the land. Moses’ shoes, whether made by him or by someone else, were the work of man’s hands. The footprints of Moses were created by God, implying God’s mastery over him.

There is then a uniting of the created foot with the dust from which it was created. Nothing of human origin would be considered acceptable in the presence of such a place of holiness. This is seen later in Exodus 20 which says –

“And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it.” Exodus 20:25

God made the stones, not man. If man’s efforts are placed along with God’s holiness, only defilement can take place. God calls, God sanctifies, and God glorifies. The process of holiness is “of and by God and God alone.”

Only twice in the Bible is someone told to take off their shoes because the ground is holy. This is the first and the second is in Joshua. To understand this better, that account needs to also be given –

“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, ‘Are You for us or for our adversaries?’
¹⁴ So He said, ‘No, but *as* Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.’
And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, ‘What does my Lord say to His servant?’
¹⁵ Then the Commander of the Lord’s army said to Joshua, ‘Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand *is* holy.’ And Joshua did so.”

-Joshua 5:13-15

When two things, or two similar occurrences, are noted in the Bible, there is a reason for it. There will be a contrast of the two and yet they will confirm something. In the case of these two accounts, one is before Israel is delivered from bondage; one is after they have been safely led into the land of promise. He is the covenant keeping Lord.

One is outside of Canaan, one is in Canaan. The Lord is God over the whole earth – over both Jew and Gentile. In one there is the Lord unseen and the voice of God from “over there.” In the other, there is the Lord visible, tangible, and in human form. The Lord is the incarnate Word of God; He is Jesus.

In one, He is the Lord who will give the Law – the Angel or Messenger of it; in the other He is the Lord who defends the Law which is given – the Commander of the Lord’s army. He is the Lord of the Law; it’s herald and upholder. For these, and certainly other reasons, we are given these two accounts to compare and ponder.

⁵ (con’t) **for the place where you stand *is* holy ground.”**

The word for “holy” here is *qodesh*. This is the very first time it is used in the Bible. So far, over 2500 years of human history have been recorded, and yet this is the first mention of anything connected to God’s holiness since the creation.

A parallel word to *qodesh* is *qadash* which means to sanctify. That has been used just once in the Bible thus far, in the creation account in Genesis 2:3 where it says “God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.” From this point on, the two terms will cumulatively be used about 640 times in the Old Testament.

The holiness of God is being introduced now because this man of God and son of Levi will become the human mediator of God’s law for His chosen people. He is being taught right now a lesson of God’s holiness which he will carry with him all the days of his life.

He will even see on many occasions what it means to step over the bounds of propriety concerning that state of holiness in His Creator and Lord. This will be seen in others, both within the covenant community and without, and it will be seen in himself as well.

His final resting place will be outside of the Land of Promise because he will fail to take it to heart during a brief moment of anger. The account is found in Numbers 20 –

“And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, ‘Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this

rock?’ ¹¹Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

¹²Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, ‘Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.’

¹³This *was* the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the Lord, and He was hallowed among them.” Numbers 20:10-13

Here though, Moses now stands on holy ground, or literally “ground of holiness” for the first time. It is ground which has been rendered holy by the presence of God upon it. Let us remember this ourselves as we conduct our affairs in His presence.

⁶Moreover He said, “I *am* the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”

The word “father” here is singular, not plural. This then indicates first that he is identifying himself with the same God of Amram, Moses’ father, but whom was also worshipped by the patriarchs before him.

However, in Acts 7, Stephen says it in the plural. He focused on the combined patriarchs for the benefit of the council. Why would this be? It is because Stephen was addressing the Jews. But there is more than the Jews in God’s plans. Abraham was the father of Isaac and Ishmael.

Isaac was the father of Jacob and Esau. Jacob was the father of the twelve patriarchs as well as the adoptive father of Ephraim and Manasseh. Ephraim would become the “fullness of the Gentiles” as Jacob prophesied. And therefore, the entire scope of humanity is included in the words to Moses now.

Paul explains this in Galatians 3 when he says that we become sons of Abraham by faith. Yes, He is the God of the Hebrews, but He is God of all creation and over all mankind, be they from Ishmael, Esau, Ephraim, or any other group of people. If they call on Christ, they become sons of Abraham by faith and sons of God through adoption.

^{6 (con’t)}And Moses hid his face,

Two commands were given to Moses – “Do not draw near this place,” and “Take your sandals off your feet.” Now, in an expression of over-awed dread, Moses adds in a third aspect of man in the holy God’s presence. He hides his face from His glory.

He suddenly has an insight into God that he had never before contemplated, one which Jesus later explained to the leaders of Israel when He said –

“But even Moses showed in the *burning bush passage* that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’³⁸ For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him.”

-Luke 20:37,38

The expression, “the God of Abraham” enlightened Moses to the fact that his fathers, even to Abraham, continued to exist. God can only be the God of that which exists, not of things which don’t exist. And therefore He is the God over time and outside of time, eternal and unchanging.

When God reveals Himself in such wondrous ways, the only thing one can do is hide his face. Elijah found this out on this same mountain many years later when he wrapped his face in a mantle at the call of God.

Even the Seraphim of God, the burning ones, are said to hide their face before His presence. When one truly comprehends the holiness of God, it is so far above the five senses that the only reaction to seeing it is that of fear...

^{6 (fin)} **for he was afraid to look upon God.**

Again, the translation is lacking. It says *yare mehabbit ha’elohim* – “He was afraid to look at ‘the’ God.” The definite article shows the sudden and overwhelming realization of Moses that he is in the presence of “the” God; the one, true, and only God.

He had left the land of many gods, Egypt. Then for many years he lived in Midian, but now he is suddenly found to be in the presence of “the” God and he is in fear to look upon Him. In the future, he will talk face to face with Him, and the glory will be such that it will continue to reflect off his own face.

He will have to veil it from the people because of their own fear at the glory which they will see radiating off of him. Such is the splendor and the glory of the God who rules over time, space, and matter. His glory is infinite and He is holy.

Someday all flesh will come before Him for judgment. On that day, those who are not covered in the righteousness of Christ will be consumed by what their eyes will behold. With that memory forever in their mind, they will be cast from His presence for all eternity. There they will suffer the pain of what their eyes had beheld in relation to their fallen state. It will eternally consume them, it will infinitely destroy them.

But God gives us hope and He gives us a choice. He graciously grants us terms of peace and purification from the sins we bear. It is found in the giving of His Son, Jesus. Through Christ, we can be restored to a propitiously perfect peace with God, covered by His blood and reckoned pure and holy because of it. Let me explain to you how this can happen for you...

Closing Verse: *“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
The whole earth is full of His glory!” Isaiah 6:3*

Next Week: Exodus 3:7-12 (The Call of Moses) (7th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Standing on Holy Ground

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro
His father-in-law, the priest of Midian, you know

And he led the flock
To the back of the desert he did trod
And came to Horeb
To the mountain of God

And the Angel of the Lord
Appeared to him in a flame
Of fire from the midst of a bush
To his eyes this wondrous sight came

So he looked, and behold
The bush was burning with fire

But the bush was not consumed
It certainly made his mind inquire

Then Moses said, "I will now
Turn aside and see this great sight
Why the bush does not burn somehow
And yet it gives off the fire's light

So when the Lord saw
That he turned aside to see
God called to him from the midst of the bush
And said, "Moses, Moses!" And "Here I am" said he

Then He said, "Do not draw near this place
Take your sandals off your feet
For the place where you stand is holy ground
Where you and I now meet

Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father
The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob too
And Moses hid his face for he was afraid
To look upon God and so He kept Him from his view

How do we treat God, as a friend? Yes it is so
And yet He is also our Lord to whom honor is due
We can be friendly with God because of Jesus, you know
But we should do so with His holiness in view

Let us honor Him and thus grant to Him glory
And to Him let respect and praise come from each of us
As we hail the Lamb who is the center of the gospel story
With resounding shouts of praise to our magnificent Lord, Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 3:7-12

(THE CALL OF MOSES - A SIGN OF PROMISE)

Introduction: As we go through today's verses, it will seem like God is doing something for Israel that was previously unplanned. It kind of sounds that way as you read them, doesn't it? Israel is in Egypt, Israel is in distress, and because of that, God is going to deliver Israel. We can leave it at that, can't we?

But that isn't at all the whole story. The promise of being brought out of Egypt preceded their journey into Egypt. And the promise of possessing Canaan preceded even that. The reason for Israel's deliverance from Egypt is based on several things which have now all come to pass at the same time.

In other words, it is the perfect time for it to come about based on those things which were already promised and also which are in accord with the very nature of God. Now why is this relevant to us? The answer is that the exact same thing has happened in our own lifetime and it is still on-going.

God said, in advance, that Israel would be returned to the land. Like when He spoke to Abraham about the exodus from Egypt, He in advance also gave the exact time that they would be returned. Further, He has made more promises to them which are future to us right now.

We can read the words spoken to Abraham and say, "Sure it came about just as expected. God said it would and it did." And so we can feel good about how nifty it was and how sure God's word is because of it. But do we have the same confidence in that same word about the issues which surround us today?

Apparently not! Most of the Christian world either rejects the notion of predictive prophecy, or they say it only applies to the church now, not to Israel. There is actually an immense lack of faith in the surety of God's word when it deals with things that we either disagree with or purposely misunderstand.

Let's not have that attitude. If we aren't sure of an issue, we should research it and then accept or dismiss it, not dismiss it first. I can tell you with all confidence that the surety of God's word is tied up in how God deals with Israel which exists in the world right now.

Text Verse: *“I am the Lord, that is My name;
And My glory I will not give to another,
Nor My praise to carved images.
⁹ Behold, the former things have come to pass,
And new things I declare;
Before they spring forth I tell you of them.” Isaiah 42:8, 9*

I’m not the biggest fan of Israel as a people, but I am the biggest fan of Israel as *God’s people*. This is why I support them. And I know this because this is what the Bible shows us. And that same word has made many wonderful promises to us as well. The promises are a sign to us that they will come about.

If we have faith in the sign, then the journey getting *to* that sign is guaranteed and nothing can hinder us in the process. The down and outs that we face are simply a part of us getting there. That should be a wonderful reassurance, especially because the down and outs can really, really stink.

But if the sign is true, then what really stinks will pass and the good, pleasant, and aromatic promises which are ahead are a great hope and anchor for our soul. Moses will be given a sign today to give him hope and help him through something he won’t want to do. Let’s cherish the signs we have been given because they offer us the same hope and help.

It’s all to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Deliverance is Promised (verses 7 & 8)

⁷ And the Lord said:

Because we take sermons in small bite-sized nuggets, we need to remember what it said in verse 4 of our previous sermon –

“So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, ‘Moses, Moses!’” Exodus 3:4

It said then that the Lord saw and that God called. Now it says that “the LORD said.” It is Jehovah, the establisher and keeper of the covenant who is speaking. He is God. Though

they are being used interchangeably, they are also used to form distinctions in our minds. If it were not so, either only “God” or “Lord” would be used. Because both are, we’re asked to reflect on the role of each.

7 (con’t) **“I have surely seen the oppression of My people who *are* in Egypt,**

There is a lot in these few words. First, the Hebrew says *raoh raiti* – “seeing I have seen.” This phrase isn’t saying that all of a sudden He noticed the oppression, but rather that He had continually seen the oppression. His eyes had not be inattentive to their plight, but the fullness of time had not arrived.

God told Abraham a definite amount of time that the people would be afflicted, he told him that those who afflicted them would be judged, and he also gave the reason for what would occur. All of that is found in Genesis 15:13-16 –

“Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.” Genesis 15:13-16

As a display of grace and mercy upon another group of people called the Amorites, the affliction of the covenant people was allowed to continue. But we did see in a previous passage that the affliction was not wholly undeserved. Israel followed after other gods while in Egypt and they suffered for their actions.

However, they finally called out to “the” God, the true God in their plight, and so the attentive ears of the Lord had heard. As this verse says, “I have surely seen the oppression of **My people.**” They are His people, He had called them, and He would never leave them nor forsake them.

Here, in the last moments of the allotted time which was spoken to Abraham 430 years earlier, the Lord calls out to Moses from the burning bush. The moment of Israel’s deliverance is drawing near.

7 (con’t) **and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters,**

The word for “taskmasters” is not the same as was used previously. Before it was *sare missim*, or the “chief of tributes.” These would have extracted tribute from the people in labor, but most probably also in heavy collections that we might call taxes.

This word is *nagas*, which comes from a word meaning to drive like an animal, a workman, a debtor, or an army. The implication is to tax, harass, and tyrannize someone. The people were constantly afflicted and were never given rest from it. It sounds a lot like what Israel faces today with all of their enemies around them, constantly needling them. But it is a state which can only be expected to get worse, not better, until they call out to the Lord for His deliverance.

This concept of the people crying out for deliverance is not an unusual thing in the Bible. In fact, Scripture is replete with examples of it. The people turn from God, they suffer, the people call out to God, and He responds.

No sooner does He respond, then the people turn back to their old ways, forgetting the Lord. Because of this they once again face oppression. In turn, they call out to Him, and He responds. It is a repetitive cycle of arrogance, followed by immense disobedience, followed by humility, followed by torn heart-strings which result in the bestowing of mercy.

In one of the most memorable examples of this, we can go to the book of Judges. The pattern had repeated itself four previous times in that one book. The people turned from the Lord, the Lord let them have their own way, they didn't like how it turned out, and so they cried out to Him. In response, He delivered them. However, in Judges 10, it appeared that they had gone too far –

“So the Lord said to the children of Israel, ‘*Did I not deliver you* from the Egyptians and from the Amorites and from the people of Ammon and from the Philistines? ¹² Also the Sidonians and Amalekites and Maonites oppressed you; and you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hand. ¹³ Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods. Therefore I will deliver you no more. ¹⁴ Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress.’” Judges 10:11-14

But, the people continued to acknowledge their guilt and in the next verses we read this–

“And the children of Israel said to the Lord, ‘We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray.’¹⁶ So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the Lord. And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.” Judges 10:15, 16

Although America is not Israel, we have followed this same pattern several times. When things have gotten bad, we’ve turned to the Lord and He has heard. I’m afraid though that we may be past our time of final restoration. We have gone from arrogance to complete wickedness. Without a true change, I believe we may be at the end of our story.

⁷ (con’t) **for I know their sorrows.**

The expression, “I know their sorrows” implies understanding and comprehension which must then include feeling, compassion, and even a tender desire to help. As Adam Clarke words this –

“I have considered their sorrows, and my eye affects my heart.” Clarke

In this one verse, we have seen four distinct attributes of the Lord. First, it said “the Lord said.” Next the Lord *saw*. Third, the Lord *heard*. Finally, the Lord *knew*. To speak implies a mouth, to see implies eyes, to hear implies ears, and to know implies a mind.

The question is, “Are these physical attributes or not?” In the case of God, the answer is, “Surely not.” God doesn’t have parts. In the case of the Lord, He has appeared in the garden, he appeared to Abraham, He wrestled with Jacob, and He will continue to appear throughout the Old Testament. Finally, He will come in the Person of Jesus Christ in the New.

How do we interpret the attributes of the Lord, Jehovah, of the Old Testament? It is perplexing and difficult to grasp, but I believe in the eternal Christ, not a pre-incarnate Christ. The Lord of the Old Testament is the same Lord in the New.

⁸ **So I have come down**

The Lord descending, or coming down, is something seen again and again in the Bible. He is in heaven, we are on earth. At times, He comes down in judgment upon the earth, such as when He came down to see and attend to Sodom and Gomorrah.

At other times, He comes down to help the downtrodden and the afflicted. In His grace and mercy, He condescends to come down to view our miserable plight and attend to it. In the case of what will happen in Egypt, both will actually apply. He has come down in pity upon Israel which will in turn result in coming down to judge Egypt.

8 (con't) to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians,

Because of the circumstances which surround His people, the Lord tells Moses why he has come down. It is specifically to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians. Forty years earlier, Moses thought he would be their deliverer, but they rejected him. His time hadn't come. Now, the Lord is there to tell him that it has.

But we don't want to lose sight of the bigger picture. In the greatest sense of all, deliverance from the bondage of Egypt pictures deliverance from the bondage of sin. While looking at the true story of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, as well as the pictures this story is making concerning Israel's deliverance during the tribulation period, we need to remember this above all else.

The work of Christ on our behalf is what should come to our minds. Jesus makes this explicitly clear in John 8 –

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

³³ They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How *can* You say, 'You will be made free'?"

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. ³⁵ And a slave does not abide in the house forever, *but* a son abides forever. ³⁶ Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

-John 8:31-36

The apostles refer to this several times in the epistles as well. Man is in bondage. When man tires of that bondage, He calls out to the Lord and the Lord rescues him. If we can keep this thought in our mind – that the mercy upon the Israelites is reflective of the Lord's mercy upon us, it makes the story all that much more relevant to our own lives and circumstances.

Just as the Lord came down in pity towards Israel and in judgment upon Egypt, the Lord Jesus came down in pity upon humanity and in judgment upon sin which separates us from the Father.

8 (con't) and to bring them up from that land

In Exodus 1:7, it said that Israel filled the land. They had outgrown Goshen and at the same time they had caused the Egyptians to fear. Now the Lord is ready to make good on his promise to Abraham which He made 430 years earlier. At that time, he said to him –

“I *am* the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it.” Genesis 15:7

The Land was promised to Abraham, and then to Isaac, and then to Jacob. Just before entering Egypt, 215 years after speaking to Abraham, and 215 years before now speaking to Moses, the Lord said this to Jacob –

“I *am* God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. ⁴I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up *again*; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes.”

-Genesis 46:3, 4

8 (con't) to a good and large land,

The actual size of the land promised to Abraham is much larger than they possessed for most of their history. Only for a very brief time did they possess the entire land of promise. It includes all of where Israel is today, Gaza, the Golan Heights, through Syria, and all the way up to the Euphrates. Deuteronomy 11:24 gives a good outline of it.

In all, it is about 450 miles long and it varies from 60 to 120 miles wide and it comprises about 50,000 square miles of land. Surely it is to be considered “a good and large land.” The spiritual picture we are given is similar.

We live in the narrow confines of a sin-filled world, but the Lord has promised to deliver us to the broad spaces of the infinite realm of heaven. We live in the narrow confines of time which eventually consumes us at our death, but the Lord has promised to deliver us unto eternal life. The 118th Psalm gives us a hint of this –

“I called on the Lord in distress;
The Lord answered me *and set me* in a broad place.” Psalm 118:5

Interestingly though, the only way to reach this place of infinite broadness and eternal duration is through a very narrow gate. As Jesus said –

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴ Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

-Matthew 7:13, 14

The contrast couldn't be clearer – a narrow path to an infinitely wide and unrestricted paradise, or a broad path to the narrowest confines of hell itself. Choose wisely.

⁸ (con't) **to a land flowing with milk and honey,**

This is the first of 20 times that this expression will be used in the Bible. The last time will be in Ezekiel 20 where it is also called “the glory of all lands.” A land flowing with milk and honey implies richness and fertility.

Milk comes from cows and so it means there will be abundant pasture lands. Honey comes from bees which pollinate flowers and so it implies all sorts of fruit trees, herbs, and flowers. Deuteronomy 8:7-10 gives a beautiful picture of the land –

“For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; ⁸ a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; ⁹ a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones *are* iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. ¹⁰ When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you.”

I should note because I have been there that the land of Israel today is once again like that. It is a land overflowing with abundance. And yet, scholars of the not-too-distant past described it as a desolate land lacking people or produce. Adam Clark who lived in the early 19th century says about the land of Israel –

“...cultivation is now almost entirely neglected in this land, because of the badness of the government and the scantiness of the inhabitants.”

I bring this up to highlight the lie that there never was *any* sizeable portion of “Palestinians” residing in the land before Israel returned and brought it back to usefulness. It was a wasteland, devoid of people and unfit for any type of productive use.

And one more point about the term “a land flowing with milk and honey.” It isn’t just speaking of the physical abundance of the land, but also of the spiritual abundance. It is the land of God’s word and the people through whom that word has come. The word of God is said to be sweeter than honey. It is also equated with milk which nourishes. Thus, this is a reference to that as well.

^{8 (con’t)} to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites.

Six groups of people are mentioned here. At other times, five or seven or eight are mentioned. At Abraham’s time, ten people groups were mentioned. It isn’t certain why the names are stated sometimes and overlooked at other times, but God has His reasons, even if they aren’t plainly evident.

It is to the place where these people dwell that Lord promises to deliver the people of His inheritance.

*I have seen the oppression of My people
And the great miseries they have had to endure
But I will deliver every true heart under the church steeple
My promise to them is eternal and sure*

*Not forever will I remain silent
I will not wait too long to receive them unto Me
Someday the time will have been sufficiently spent
And the trumpet will sound out jubilantly*

*I have a plan and it is being worked out
And at the right moment I will rise to receive My bride
There will be a loud, resounding shout
And My people will forever be by My side*

II. I Will Send You to Pharaoh (verses 9 & 10)

⁹ Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me,

This verse is stated in the opposite order of verse 7. That verse began by saying He had seen their oppression and then that He had heard their cry. This verse begins with hearing their cry first. The reason goes back to the previous chapter where it said –

“Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage.” Exodus 2:23

At that time, a definite article preceded the word God – “the” God, implying that they had decided to call on the true God. Their oppression had gone on since Moses left 40 years earlier, but only when they called out to the true God would He respond. The same is true with Israel today.

They have been under punishment since Christ left, but only when they call out to the true God will He hear and respond. This was all exactly pictured in our Joseph sermons.

^{9 (con’t)} **and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.**

Because of their cry, He acknowledges their oppression. It is a repetition and yet a rewording of verse 7 in preparation for His response and remedy which is to be found in the next verse. Israel is oppressed, the Egyptians have been the oppressors, and the people have cried out to the God. Now *the* God, the Lord, will respond.

¹⁰ Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh

In Genesis 12, the Lord called Abraham with these words –

“Get out of your country,
From your family
And from your father’s house,
To a land that I will show you.
² I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you
And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.
³ I will bless those who bless you,

And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Genesis 12:1-3

In what is not a dissimilar occurrence, the Lord now calls Moses. He has been in Midian for 40 years. He has a family, flocks, and a life which has been at best routine and uneventful. But like Abraham, he is now called to put that aside and to place his faith and trust in the Lord’s direction.

For Moses, that direction is to go to Pharaoh, to the house that he was raised in, and to a family that would still have the remembrance of him and what he had done and which caused him to leave in the first place.

He had departed 40 years earlier after killing an Egyptian in an attempt to save one of his brothers. But he was rejected by the people whom he had hoped would recognize him as their deliverer.

¹⁰ (con’t) **that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”**

This is the second time the Lord has identified Himself directly with Israel. They are called “My people.” As Moses is an Israelite, then he is identified with them too. The Lord isn’t going outside of His people to find a deliverer, but to one from within His people.

Others have received similar calls throughout Scripture. Amos, like Moses, was one who tended the flocks. His call came to prophesy to Israel and he responded to the call. When he was told by the king to stop prophesying, he basically said, “You must be kidding.” His answer to him was –

“Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah:

“I *was* no prophet,

Nor *was* I a son of a prophet,

But I *was* a sheepbreeder

And a tender of sycamore fruit.

¹⁵ Then the Lord took me as I followed the flock,

And the Lord said to me,

‘Go, prophesy to My people Israel.’” Amos 7:14, 15

After that, he went on to pronounce words of judgment on the king. Many years later, a group of men were fetched off of fishing boats and asked to speak out to the people, becoming fishers of men. The call is made and the one called is expected to respond.

However, there is, at times a note of rebellion before the call is actually accepted. Moses will fit this category. Probably the most famous such rebellion is that of Jonah, but both he and Moses eventually came through. They were men of Israel, called to minister to Israel.

Likewise, God didn't call an angel to deliver humanity, He called a Human to deliver them. Hebrews 1 explains this in detail. In order to redeem us, God chose to send His Son into the world, uniting with humanity. In Him, there was no hint of rebellion or reticence. Rather, the Bible says He was called and He responded –

“Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—
In the volume of the book it is written of Me—
To do Your will, O God.’” Hebrews 10:7

And He will send Him again, Jesus – both Human and of Israel, to deliver Israel in the future. It is amazing to think on these things and to ponder them.

*I am calling you to do My will o man
Your commission is there, in My word
Go and tell all the people you can
That God's love is found in Jesus the Lord*

*Go forth! Tell the message while there is time
I am with you and will be your guide
There is a hope in Christ, wonderfully sublime
There is joy everlasting there by His side*

*Don't wait! Don't put it off another day
Now is the time of God's favor, today is the day of salvation
Let the world know that Jesus is the way
He is the hope for every person in every nation*

III. You Shall Serve God on This Mountain (verses 11 & 12)

¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who *am* I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

Again, there is a definite article in front of God. It says *v’yomer Mosheh el ha’elohim* – “And said Moses to ‘the’ God.” It is as if Moses, remembering the conversation as he wrote the account, was also remembering the utter folly of his words. The Lord, who is *the* God, has called and he has questioned.

He’s standing in front of a burning bush that isn’t consumed. There is a voice, but no form. He’s identified Himself as the One who was there for Abraham, for Isaac, and for Jacob. He is the initiator and monitor of the covenant for the covenant people, and he has made a choice concerning them which involves Moses. And yet Moses questions the choice.

But more than questioning the choice, he repeats the words just as he received them. The Lord said, “I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” Moses responds, “Who *am* I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

If you take this to its logical conclusion, every time we question the word of “the” God, we are in the same position as Moses. We can spend all day talking about how silly Moses was, but the point is that we then are far more silly when we do the same.

The words are carefully selected and recorded to ask us to consider them in the light of which they are intended. The words of Buddha, Krishna, and Muhammed are recorded but they have no power because they are not from **the** God. But the words of the Bible are, and they are to be accepted and acted upon.

Moses questioned after he knew the truth concerning Who was talking to him. We can question until we know the truth, but afterwards, we simply need to obey. He is **the** God and we are man. What He speaks is to be obeyed without question. A perfect example of this is found in 1 Timothy 2:12. The word of **the** God says, “And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.” However, all over the world, the response is, “Who am I that I am not permitted to teach or have authority over a man.” The Anglican church just took this stand one week ago, departing from the word of “the” God.

And so in open rebellion to the word of “the” God, women preach and teach with men present, completely ignoring the instruction which is as weighty as the words which issued to Moses’ ears from the flames of the burning bush.

¹² So He said, “I will certainly be with you.

The Hebrew says, “Since I will be with you.” The answer is in response to what Moses meant, not particularly the statement that was made. He implied that he wasn’t capable of the challenge set before Him, but the Lord’s answer says, “You are *because* I am with you.”

It is the same idea that we see in the words of Paul. He had an infirmity which he felt was a limiting factor in his life and in his ministry which he tells us about in 2 Corinthians 12–

“Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ⁹ And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’” 2 Corinthians 12:8, 9

Moses looked at the challenge from his human perspective, knowing that he was incapable of rising to it, but the Lord, not he, was the decisive factor which would ensure the outcome.

¹² (con’t) And this *shall be* a sign to you that I have sent you:

The words here are *v’zeh lekha ha’ot* – “and this to you the sign.” The words “shall be” are inserted by the translators. They also add a colon at the end of the thought to show that the sign is to be announced. However, some argue that the sign is the burning bush. In essence, the sign has been given, it is not what is coming.

That is incorrect. The sign is forthcoming. The words “shall be” and the colon at the end of the thought are correct. It is the standard working of God to give a sign which is future as a testimony of the truth revealed in the present. The sign is an appeal to faith, not to sight. As Albert Barnes says about this –

“The word means a declaration or promise of God, which rests absolutely on His word, and demands faith. The promise that God would have the people serve Him in that place was an assurance, if fully believed, that all intervening obstacles would be removed by His power.” Barnes

This same giving of a future sign is seen several times later in the Bible. One was given to Eli, the High Priest of Israel in 1 Samuel 1, another was given to King Hezekiah in 2 Kings 19. One of the most famous of such signs was given by the Lord to the house of David in Isaiah 7 which says –

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” Isaiah 7:14

Like these other signs given to God’s people, the Lord has a sign for Moses if he is willing to accept what the sign implies...

^{12 (fin)} When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”

The sign is given. It is stated as an accomplished fact. “When you *have brought* out the people” implies a deed which is past, even though it is still future. When it is performed, the sign will be confirmed. But once again there is a definite article in front of “God.” You shall serve “the” God on this mountain.

Not only is the sign given, but it is given in anticipation of serving “the God,” not “a god.” The Lord who has called is the Lord who will be served. The call ensures His presence; His presence ensures the outcome; the outcome is anticipated in the sign; and the sign gives credit to **the** God in the service of Him.

Such a sign always appeals to faith. In that faith it then provides every assurance necessary of the outcome. The end implies the means. If Moses looked forward and said, “Yes, I believe that this sign is true,” then he would know that nothing could thwart its outcome.

Understanding this in our own day and age, we can ask ourselves a simple question, “Do we have a sign which is comparable to the one Moses was given here?” Anyone? Is there something that we have been provided which follows the exact same pattern of what we have seen today? Anyone?

The answer is, “Yes.” Moses was given the word of the Lord, from the Lord. That’s all He was given. But it came from a bush which wasn’t consumed, so he had something extra that we didn’t have didn’t he? No. He had nothing extra. The bush wasn’t the sign, the bush was confirmation of the Giver *of* the sign.

We have the Bush. Moses saw a bush which wasn't consumed. That is beyond the norm. The bush spoke to him, something also beyond the norm. The voice identified Himself and gave instruction for Moses to follow, and it gave a token of the truthfulness of what was spoken.

What we have is no less miraculous. We have the Bible which is the testament to the same Lord who spoke from the Bush. It is the voice and the word of the Lord. It has been through the fire of time and yet it has never been consumed. Christ went through the fire of our judgment and He wasn't consumed. And finally, we have a group of people, Israel, who have been preserved and not consumed by times ravaging fire.

And He has given us direction to follow, just as Moses was given. And with the direction we have been given a sign. If we truly believe the giving of that sign, then the outcome must be assured for us, just as it was for Moses. Either that, or we're just wasting our time. Who would put faith in a sign that has no meaning?

Our sign is the hope of the resurrection. Our sign is the promise of eternal life. Our sign is to serve God on His holy mountain. The sign has been given and it must surely come to pass. The last page of the Bible says so –

“And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.” Revelation 22:3

The reason why we are here is because of faith in the sign. However, one cannot receive what the sign implies without faith. There is nothing else we can do to be granted eternal life because the sign is based solely on faith. And so I would ask you to consider that. People want what the sign implies without the responsibilities expected by the Giver of the sign.

The Bible says there is a heaven and that only some will be headed there. The reason for this is that there is only one path which leads to it, and that is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. God asks us to have faith in what His word says – all of His word. And so God asks us to have faith in the work of His Son which is detailed in that word.

And so please give me just another moment to explain to you about what He did and how you too can receive it and be granted eternal life in His glorious paradise...

Closing Verse: *“O Zion,
You who bring good tidings,
Get up into the high mountain;*

*O Jerusalem,
You who bring good tidings,
Lift up your voice with strength,
Lift it up, be not afraid;
Say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" Isaiah 40:9*

Next Week: Exodus 3:13-15 (I AM THAT I AM) (8th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

You Shall Serve God on This Mountain

And the Lord said:

"I have surely seen the oppression
Of My people who are in Egypt
And have heard their cry of affliction

Because of their taskmasters they have woes
For I know and am aware of their sorrows

So I have come down, them to deliver
Out of the Egyptian's hand
And to bring them from there in this matter
To a good and large land

To a land flowing with milk and honey
To the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites too
And the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites
And also the Jebusites, a land which your fathers knew

Now therefore, behold, the cry in affliction
Of the children of Israel has come to Me
And I have also seen the oppression
With which the Egyptians oppress them constantly

Come now, therefore, and I will send you
To Pharaoh that you may bring
My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt
I am calling you to do this thing

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go
To Pharaoh, and that I should bring
The children of Israel out of Egypt as You have instructed so?
How can I possibly do this thing?"

So He said, "I will certainly be with you
And this shall be a sign to you that you I have sent
When you have brought the people out of Egypt too
You shall serve God on this mountain, so be confident
Moses was given a sign, a token of guarantee
That the word would surely come about
Thus he could conduct his affairs confidently
For him there would be no reason for doubt

And the same holds true for each of us
We can be wholly sure and confident as we go
When we call out to the Lord Jesus
Our future hope is guaranteed, in this we can know

Is there a great and mighty mountain that stands in our way?
It is less than nothing when on our side is God
He can make the trials melt away
And gives us a smooth path on which to tread
So, let's put all our confidence in the Lord
Because we have eternal assurances from Him in His word

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 3:13-15 (I AM THAT I AM)

Introduction: Exodus is loved for several marvelous stories. There is the story of the baby in the ark floating on the Nile who was tenderly received by Pharaoh's daughter. We have the burning bush that speaks to Moses. There are the great plagues which fall on Pharaoh and Egypt.

The parting of the Red Sea is so significant that we get the name Exodus from that account. And then there is the marvelous display of God's splendor as He speaks out the words of the Ten Commandments to the people of Israel as they stand at the base of Mount Sinai.

No sooner do they behold this sight than they famously turn from Him and make a golden calf to worship. These are but of few of the highlights which comprise this precious book. But of all of the great stories, probably the most famous single line in the book of Exodus is found in today's verses as Moses' continues his discourse with God from the bush.

It is so well remembered by God's people that it is probably in the top five of all memorized words found in Scripture. Just five simple words in the English and a mere three in Hebrew. And yet they are so significant in their meaning, that we will never fully understand all that they imply.

For all eternity, the true meaning of the words *ehyeh asher ehyeh* will be ceaselessly revealed to us. Other than the naming of Israel by the Jabbok River in Genesis 32, I have not felt such a profound sense of unworthiness in attempting to explain the importance of the words we will look at today.

Text Verse: *"For I proclaim the name of the Lord:
Ascribe greatness to our God.*

*⁴He is the Rock, His work is perfect;
For all His ways are justice,
A God of truth and without injustice;
Righteous and upright is He."* Deuteronomy 32:3, 4

To proclaim the name of the Lord is to proclaim what is beyond human comprehension. Like trying to understand the very moment of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, we cannot

fully grasp the immensity of what the name Yehovah implies. All we can do is place words around the name to help form an image of who He is.

He is the Rock. All He does is perfect. His ways are just. He embodies truth in its fullest sense. He is righteous and in Him there is no unrighteousness. But in the end, they are only finite words failingly attempting to explain what is infinite – Yehovah, the Lord God.

Thankfully, God gave us more than mere words to help us understand Him. He gave us the Word, He gave us Jesus, the One in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily. When we see Jesus, we see the Father. Thank God for Jesus who reveals to us the infinite in a form we can grasp! It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. I AM THAT I AM

¹³ Then Moses said to God,

Again, as we have seen several times already, the term “God” here has a definite article. “Then Moses said to “the God.” Pen that in for your future studies as it helps solidify what is being relayed. Moses has comprehended that this is “the” God. To confirm this, just as in verse 11, it says that Moses said to “the” God.

^{13 (con't)} “Indeed, *when* I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What *is* His name?’ what shall I say to them?”

At first, this might seem like an inordinately unusual question to ask, especially because these are the covenant people. God has already identified Himself as the God of their fathers. It would seem that this would suffice. Wouldn't they know who He is?

But there is a difference between a description and a name. In Genesis, many descriptive titles have been used. There is the general title El or Elohim which would be the God of creation; He is the Lofty One. There is the title Shaddai, the Powerful One and the One who provides blessing and fruitfulness.

There is also Yehovah, the Existent One. These are descriptive titles that have been used more as designations so far. But are they actually His name? And so what is being asked

here is, “Which is the name that I use when I tell them that the promises to our fathers will now be confirmed?”

Because each title represents a particular manifestation of His abilities and attributes, He wanted to know which ability would describe the One who fulfills the covenant. If the name is tied into the covenant, then the accomplishment of the covenant is assured in the name.

To understand this, think of the pantheon of Greek gods. They had lots of gods – Apollo, Athena, Dionysius, Hermes, Poseidon, Zeus and so on. If one were to go to sea, they would ask for Poseidon’s help. Moses comprehends that there is but one God. However, He has revealed Himself in various ways. Which of these is the one that is proper and fitting to rest in based on His covenant promise?

This is particularly important because, of these marvelous descriptions, some had been ascribed to idols. For example, the title *elohim* was a general name which went beyond the people of Israel. And even Israel itself had called out to pagan idols, calling them their *elohim*. To properly identify God was therefore most important.

Moses’ understanding of God has identified Him as the One, true, covenant God of Israel. And so, he is asking what name would be appropriate when calling out to Him? This is certainly the case, because the name he will be given in the next verse is a name which has already been used many times in the book of Genesis – Yehovah. However, in Exodus 6, the Lord will say this to Moses –

“And God spoke to Moses and said to him: ‘I *am* the Lord. ³ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but *by* My name Lord I was not known to them.’” Exodus 6:2, 3

The title of “Lord” or “Yehovah” was known to them and it was used often. But it was used as a descriptor, not as His name. From this point on, to His people it is His name. And it will be used over 6000 times in the Old Testament. The name is what is tied to His being and it is what allows the human apprehension of Him, limited as that may be.

¹⁴ And God said to Moses,

There is no definite article in front of the word God here. It is understood from the text that there is one God and that this one God is who is speaking to Moses. Again,

following the definite article when it is used and when it is not used in Scripture gives a much clearer picture of what is being relayed.

It's a shame that translations don't include it. Even though the definite article is used quite often in Genesis and Exodus, it is left out in large part from many other books. And yet, it is used many times in others.

For example, the books of 1 & 2 Chronicles use the definite article nearly 100 times, or a full quarter of the times it is used in the Old Testament. Why would that be? The reason is that they detail the history of the kings, both good and bad kings, along with their interactions with the surrounding nations with their *false gods*.

The word of God is being specific when necessary because from specificity comes understanding. In this case, no definite article is necessary because it is already understood that He is the only God. Here we are, looking at the very words of God as He attempts to reveal Himself to us and yet we may miss important details.

If so, then our understanding of Him will be less than what it should be. What a shame to come to worship Him and learn about Him and then quickly pass through His word without the most careful consideration of it.

The chances are that you will never go through any given passage of Scripture in detail more than once or twice in your life. With that as a probable truth, then to attempt to search out every detail with zeal will certainly be a source of rewards when you stand before the Lord on that great day of judgment.

And who is this Lord to whom we are accountable?...

14 (con't) **"I AM WHO I AM."**

ehyeh asher ehyeh – I AM WHO I AM. What God speaks to Moses in these words reveals the very nature of God. And yet, more is left unknown than we could ever know. Described in Revelation 4 are four living creatures which are at the very throne of God. They see Him continually and yet they never cease in glorifying Him. Here is the passage—

“Before the throne *there was* a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, *were* four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. ⁷ The first living creature *was* like a lion, the second living creature like a

calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature *was* like a flying eagle. ⁸ *The* four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!'" Revelation 4:6-8

These four creatures, full of eyes in front and back, never rest day and night as they proclaim words of astonishment – "Holy, holy, holy." He is the Lord God Almighty, the self-existent One who was and who is and who is to come."

From moment to moment and for all eternity, something new is revealed from Him to their eyes. In their utter astonishment at the ceaseless, endless glory which emanates from Him, they can do nothing but proclaim His surpassing greatness.

What do the words, I AM WHO I AM mean? Or, is that even the best translation of the words *ehyeh asher ehyeh*? The Pulpit Commentary says that in I AM **THAT** I AM "No better translation can be given of the Hebrew words." I agree.

When someone asks why we do something particular, how often do we say, "Oh, I am who I am." It leaves us with the impression that we are the way we are simply because of who we are. There is nothing to imply that we are self-existent. In fact, it can be inferred that we were created to be who we are. "Oh, I am who I am... because that's the way I was made."

But I AM THAT I AM, implies self-existence. There is being in an of Himself, no beginning, no end. Thus, it implies eternity, and immutability. There is what could be considered a more literal rendering though. A scholar named Geddes translates the words "I will be that I will be." If you have an NIV, they even footnote it this way.

However, despite being more literal, it is less idiomatic because it lacks the simplicity of the Hebrew. In other words, just because something is more literal, it doesn't always convey the idea in the way that is intended by the Hebrew itself.

I AM denotes existence in and of oneself, "I will be" doesn't necessarily convey that idea. In that case, it is as if Jehovah is ever-ready to be, but not necessarily that He is. The simplest conveyance of His nature isn't that He *will be*, but that He *is*.

Once its understood *who He is*, then *who He will be* follows naturally from that thought. If “He is that He is,” then from there we know who He will be – always – because He never changes. But in not changing, that takes us back to the proclamation of the four creatures before the throne.

If they are forever proclaiming His holiness and yet He is unchanging, then His holiness is beyond what the finite mind can grasp or understand. No matter how long we behold the Lord, there will always be more of who He is which can be revealed.

No matter how much we see of Him and no matter how much we learn of Him, even forever and forever, it will still be infinitely less than what we will be able to learn about Him. Thus I AM THAT I AM is a term given for our benefit, but not our ability to comprehend.

Another scholar, Boothroyd, translates these words as “I am because I am.” But the word *asher* which he translates as “because” is being used as a relative pronoun, not a subordinating conjunction. God isn’t who He is *because* of anything. He is the First Cause of all things; He Himself is without a cause.

He is a Necessary Being. If He was caused, then He could have simply *not been*. If He could have *not been*, then there was a point when He wasn’t. And if this were true, then He would still not exist because anything that once didn’t exist would only begin to exist through something which exists already.

But if He is God, then there would be nothing before Him to bring Him into existence and there would then be no God. If there were no God, then there would be no thing. But there Moses is, standing in front of the burning bush being told that the voice from the bush is That which is without a cause and thus He is the cause of all other things, including the bush, including the fire, and including Moses.

The Hebrew is translated in its best sense into the English words I AM THAT I AM. The Greek translation of the Old Testament translates this as Ego eimi o’ on – I am the existing Being. This explains the Hebrew more than it translates it, but it gives a good sense of the words.

As an exciting highlight to the passage, there is a pattern found here which is centered on this very verse. During a Bible study some years ago, we were going through this passage and my mother happened to be the one reading the verses that day as I explained them.

After talking about a verse, she started reading again and then said “Oh, I’ve read that already.” I said, “No that’s where you should be, but that tells you that there is probably a pattern which is hidden in the text.” Anytime you have a repetition, it is there to reveal something.

And so we went through the passage and out came a chiasm, centered right on the proclamation I AM WHO I AM. In itself, the pattern shows the covenant keeping nature of God towards His people as is revealed in the very name that He speaks.

Exodus 3:8 – 3:17 – I AM WHO I AM

The God Who Sees Promises Deliverance (8/22/2011) (Susan Garret and Charlie Garrett)

- a 3:8(a) a land flowing with milk and honey
- b 3:8(b) to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites.
- c 3:9(a) the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me
- d 3:9(b) I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.
- e 3:10 I will send you to Pharaoh
- f 3:12 this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you
- g 3:13(a) The God of your fathers has sent me to you,
- h 3:13(b) What is His name?
- i 3:13(c) What shall I say to them
- x 3:14 And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.”
- i 3:14(b) Thus you shall say to the children of Israel,
- h 3:14(c) I AM has sent me to you.
- g 3:15(a) The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.
- f 3:15(c) This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.
- e 3:16(a) Go and gather the elders of Israel
- d 3:16(b) I have surely visited you and seen what is done to you in Egypt
- c 3:17(a) I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt
- b 3:17(b) to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites
- a 3:17(c) a land flowing with milk and honey

So... as you’re reading the Bible, if you come across something which seems repetitive, make note of it and take the time to see if you can bring out a pattern. There are

literally thousands of these and other types of patterns in the Bible. Each helps us to understand the passage more clearly and to grasp what the intended meaning of that passage actually is.

¹⁴ (con't) **And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”**

It is I AM who has commissioned and directed Moses to the children of Israel. The name is the assurance and thus the assurance lies in the name. It is a sign and a token to the people that Moses is the selected one and that Yehovah is the Source of the selection. The name will also ensure the outcome.

The name Yehovah, or Yahweh, which we translate as LORD is derived from a form of *ehyeh* which is used in this verse. It means to fall out, to come to pass, to become, or to be. And so with these words, God has confirmed that He is to be known to His people by the name Yehovah specifically.

This name, Yehovah, carries that same meaning – Being, He Is, or He Will Cause To Be. According to Abraim, to a Hebrew audience the name Yehovah may have looked very much like “He Who Causes ‘That Which Is’ To Be.” As He is uncaused, then all things that exist were caused by Him.

He then is the First Cause of all things; the unmoved Mover; and the Giver of existence. It is this same Giver of existence who is described in multiple ways in the New Testament. Paul’s words of Colossians 1 show us that he understood Yehovah of the bush to be the Lord Jesus –

“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. ¹⁸ And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” Colossians 1:16-18

In that He is self-existent and that all things come from Him, then that means that all things are actually encompassed by Him. There is no place where we are, or could be, outside of His Being. David in the Old Testament understood this –

“Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
⁸ If I ascend into heaven, You *are* there;
If I make my bed in hell, behold, You *are there*.
⁹ If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
¹⁰ Even there Your hand shall lead me,
And Your right hand shall hold me.” Psalm 139:7-10

Paul in the New Testament used this same argument to convince those in Athens of this truth. While standing in the Areopagus, he cited one of their own poets, Aratus, to show that this is actually a universally understood concept; something that anyone can grasp—

“And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, ²⁷ so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸ for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’” Acts 17:26-28

The name I AM, or its form Yehovah, implies an absolute uniqueness. If He is the Giver of existence, then there is none other that gives existence and therefore none other like Him. Isaiah’s words show this to be true –

“I *am* the Lord, and *there is* no other;
There is no God besides Me.
I will gird you, though you have not known Me,
⁶ That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting
That *there is* none besides Me.
I *am* the Lord, and *there is* no other;
⁷ I form the light and create darkness,
I make peace and create calamity;
I, the Lord, do all these *things*.” Isaiah 45:5-7

The name also implies eternity. He is outside of time, having created it, and therefore though He interacts with it, it has no effect on Him, rather it is affected by Him. This is seen in Jesus’ word of John 8 to the leaders of Israel –

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad.”

⁵⁷ Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”

⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”

-John 8:56-58

This is also confirmed in the letter to the Hebrews. Despite the divine Jesus interacting with time, He is outside of time and thus unchanging in His being –

Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever. Hebrews 13:8

Again though, it is appropriate to connect Yehovah of the Old Testament to Jesus of the New. As Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever, so it is with Yehovah. Malachi 3:6 tells us with the words, “For I *am* the Lord, I do not change.”

There can be no escaping what the Bible proclaims. If Yehovah is the self-existent, eternal, and unchanging God, and yet Jesus is self-existent, eternal, and unchanging, then He must be God incarnate. The obvious nature of the words of the Bible can only mean this.

Though many attempt to diminish the implications of what the Bible teaches, they only do it to their own detriment. John made this perfectly clear when He wrote the opening words to his gospel account –

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” John 1:1-5

The existence of Christ is independent of creation, it is without conditions, and it is an existence from which everything else is derived and on which all else is dependent. The enormity of the words spoken concerning Jesus are equally as vast, awesome, and terrifying at those spoken to Moses from the bush at Sinai.

And yet, there is more to the name. The name I AM THAT I AM explains who Jehovah is in His ability to speak prophecy and then to fulfill prophecy. If He is the Creator of all that exists, and if He is outside of that created existence, then He can see all of that existence simultaneously – past, present, and future.

Throughout the Bible, God speaks of the future and then fulfills that which He spoke. In Genesis 15, He said this to Abraham –

“Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.” Genesis 15:13, 14

When the promise was made, it was sure to be fulfilled. Nothing could thwart it and nothing could change it. That time has now come to pass for Moses and He will fulfill what He has spoken. Israel will be brought out. And to this same group of people, another promise was made about 2600 years ago. Through Ezekiel, He said these words–

“Thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³ Then you shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. ¹⁴ I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken *it* and performed *it*,’ says the Lord.” Ezekiel 37:12-14

Sure enough, in our own lifetime, this promise which was made to Israel during their first exile, long before they had been dispersed the second time has now come to pass. He can speak the future because to Him the future isn’t the future. It’s merely a part of what is laid out before Him.

And so that brings out yet another aspect of what I AM THAT I AM implies. As the words of the Lord through Ezekiel note, “I, the Lord, have spoken *it* and performed *it*.” Because His words are guaranteed to come about, they can then be relied on.

In other words, He is faithful and true to each and every word that He has spoken and every promise that He has made. It can be no other way. Not only does He speak, but that which He speaks is a covenant in and of itself. His word cannot fail to occur. It is an inviolable word; a guarantee; and an unbreakable commitment.

Isaiah says that His faithfulness is like the belt on His waist, and John calls Him Faithful and True. All of this is tied up in the name Yehovah. These things are because they cannot be any other way. And still one more aspect of the name comes forth.

Because He is and because He is “He Who Causes ‘That Which Is’ To Be,” then He is the source of all blessing and all that blesses. He is an inexhaustible, ceaseless, endless fountain of joy. We try to imagine what heaven will be like, but no matter how much we imagine, it will always fall short of what we can imagine.

When we behold the Lord, we will behold the very Source of all that has been or ever will be, including heaven. To see the face of the Lord then is to see the fullness of *any* expectation that we have had, have now, or ever will have. From Him will flow joys and delights that will never end. Thus David rightly said –

“One *thing* I have desired of the Lord,
That will I seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord
All the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the Lord,
And to inquire in His temple.” Psalm 27:4

What more could one truly seek or desire than to behold the beauty of the Lord; the One from which all beauty is derived; the One from which all wisdom is attained; the One from which all joy streams forth; and the One who has eternity in His grasp and offers it to those whom He favors?

¹⁵ Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel:

Again, there is no definite article in front of God. It is understood that this is the one God and the only God and so there is no need to identify Him as “the” God. And so *elohim* said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel.” The words are intended for the covenant people as a covenant sign.

The words which He speaks are words of covenant surety.

¹⁵ (con’t) ‘The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.

The term, “The Lord God” is *Yehovah elohe*. The word *ehyeh* or “I AM” spoken in the preceding verse is modified here into *Yehovah*. This is done by substituting the third person for the first person, but the meaning remains unchanged. Connected to this is

the extended thought that He is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

The line is defined through them. The line of Abraham may include the son Ishmael, but it isn't of the line of Ishmael. The line of Isaac may include the son Esau, but it is not of the line of Esau. They may be included in their father if they belong to the Lord God of their father, but the line is not through them.

¹⁵(con't) **This *is* My name forever, and this *is* My memorial to all generations.'**

The name is *Yehovah elohe*, the Lord God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. It is given for all generations. But this might bring us to ask why this name isn't given in the New Testament. The reason is that the Greek translation of the Old Testament renders Yehovah as *kurios*. This is then translated as Lord. In the Old Testament, it is generally spelled with all capital letters, signifying Yehovah.

In the New Testament, the Greek word *kurios* continues to be used when speaking of Jesus as Lord. But the thought of the One who Is, or the Existent One also continues in several ways in the New Testament. Jesus is called the Word of God, implying that He is the Existent One.

Also in Revelation, the term "Him who is and who was and who is to come" is used when speaking of Jesus on several occasions. And so the title continues in Him in this way and thus it is "His memorial to all generations." In Hebrew, the term is *l'dor dor* or "to generations generations."

Adam Clarke's thoughts on this verse are worthy of being quoted –

"While human generations continue he shall be called the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; but when time shall be no more, he shall be Jehovah Elohim. Hence the first expression refers to his eternal existence, the latter to the discovery he should make of himself as long as time should last."

*I am the One who created all things
And by Me all things are held together
My works are that of which the angel sings
Stretching out the heavens, they go on forever*

*I am the Lord who called Abraham so long ago
I am the One who renamed Jacob Israel
I spoke from the burning bush to Moses, you know
And of Me David in the Psalms does tell*

*I am the Word of God, who was and is and is to come
And I offer the water of life; be pleased to partake of some*

II. I AM Implies I Will

Concerning behavior as a way of identifying things, Abrahim says –

“In Hebrew Scriptures ... entities are reckoned solely after their behavior and not after their appearance. An entity is a behavior, not that which executes the behavior.”

To understand this, just think of how we use our own language. If we see a picture of a pig, we would say, “That’s a pig.” The appearance of the animal is how we reckon the thing. However, if we see someone gorging himself on food, the common expression we would use is, “That’s a pig.”

And so we see the pig in this isn’t the actual appearance, but rather the behavior. This is how things are named and identified in the Hebrew mind. It is a dynamic language of action in order to identify. Here’s a question, “If you have a horse, a cow, and a swallow, which two of them are the most alike?”

In our language and way of thinking, we would say that the horse and the cow are certainly more alike. We do this because the appearance defines the thing. However, the Hebrew word for horse and the Hebrew word for swallow are the same. It is the word *sus*.

The reason goes back to the behavior of the two. The verb *sus* denotes being swift or to flash by. A cow is an inactive fellow who chews on grass, plods along in the field, and then stops to chew on his cud. Rather dull and mundane is the cow.

But a horse, like a swallow, flits about. It darts to the left and it darts to the right. They both act with an unbridled freedom and an attitude that marks them as anything but mundane. In fact, Job describes the horse in this way –

“Have you given the horse strength?
Have you clothed his neck with thunder?
²⁰ Can you frighten him like a locust?
His majestic snorting strikes terror.
²¹ He paws in the valley, and rejoices in *his* strength;
He gallops into the clash of arms.
²² He mocks at fear, and is not frightened;
Nor does he turn back from the sword.
²³ The quiver rattles against him,
The glittering spear and javelin.
²⁴ He devours the distance with fierceness and rage;
Nor does he come to a halt because the trumpet *has* sounded.
²⁵ At *the blast of* the trumpet he says, ‘Aha!’
He smells the battle from afar,
The thunder of captains and shouting. Job 39:19-25

If the word *sus* implies swiftness, then we know that the horse and the swallow will be swift. The word *kelev* means dog, but the word is used to describe the behavior of people who act like dogs in the Bible – treacherous people, male cult prostitutes, and so on.

So what does this have to do with the great I AM? In understanding the name, we can more fully understand the behavior from which the name is assigned. In Deuteronomy, Moses reminded the people of Israel about what they saw on Mount Sinai. There he said this –

“And the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; *you only heard a voice.*” Deuteronomy 4:12

Just like He spoke to Moses out of the fire in the bush which wasn’t consumed, He also spoke to the people of Israel out of the fire on the mountain. He went on to explain to them that because they saw no form, it tells them that Yehovah is not like anything in creation and therefore no created thing could represent Him.

The name Yehovah then defines His character. It is not an appearance, but a behavior. If behavior is what defines, then we can better perceive who Yehovah is. His name is I AM THAT I AM, and so it implies that He will.

I don't know how much this helps you yet, but just think on it. Reflect on the name, reflect on the things Yehovah has spoken, and reflect on the Person He revealed Himself as – Jesus. And then reflect on those things He has spoken directly to you.

If *He is* then anything He says *must be* – even if it hasn't happened yet. Jeremiah told the people of Israel that their captivity would last 70 years. The fact that the Lord revealed this to them was an absolute guarantee that the exile would end after 70 years, even if it hadn't happened yet.

Daniel understood this completely, and so he didn't pray to the Lord that it was time to return the people to the land after 57 years. Rather, he petitioned the Lord when the 70 years were completed. EW Bullinger, reading the Bible almost 80 years before the reestablishment of Israel, knew that they would be reestablished as a nation after 2520 years and it came to pass just as he surmised.

The point of this is that if I AM has spoken, *He will*. If Jesus is I AM, and *He is*, then *He will*. And so your commission today when we get done, is to take time to read the last page of the Bible. It won't take five minutes of your time.

And when you're reading it, don't look at it as a "future maybe" but as an absolute certainty. The voice from the burning bush, the voice from the burning mountaintop at Sinai, and the voice of the Lord who called out "It is finished" from the cross of Calvary are one and the same voice.

It is His voice that spoke out the words of the Bible and so those words reflect not appearance, but behavior. They are faithful, they are true, and they are inviolable. Nothing can thwart them, nothing can change them, and if they pertain to you because of your faith in Jesus Christ, then they are an absolute guarantee.

Have faith in this, look beyond the pains, the trials, the heartaches, and the times of depression. Lift your eyes to the hills from whence cometh your help – even to the heavenly Mount Zion to which we are headed.

Finally today I'd like you to consider your position with the Lord. Are you one hundred percent sure that the Lord of Creation, the self-existent, unchanging, and eternally glorious Lord will receive You according to the promises He has made to His children?

You can be sure by a simple act of faith in Jesus Christ. If you have never made such a commitment, please let me tell you what you need to know so that you have the blessed assurance of eternal life in His promised paradise...

Closing Verse: *The name of the Lord is a strong tower;
The righteous run to it and are safe. Proverbs 18:10*

Next Week: Exodus 3:16-22 (Expected Resistance; Assured Deliverance) (9th Exodus sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

I AM

Then Moses said to God
“Indeed, when I come to the children
Of Israel after to Egypt I trod
And say to them then

‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you
And they say to me in this way
‘What is His name? How do we know its true?
What shall I to them say?

And God said to Moses, in this way
“I AM WHO I AM, this I tell
And He said, “Thus you shall say
To the children of Israel

I AM has sent me to you
Be certain that these words then are true

Moreover God to Moses did tell
Thus you shall say to the children of Israel

The Lord God of your fathers is who
The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac
And the God of Jacob, has sent me to you

This is My name forever for acclamations
And this is My memorial to all generations

The name of the Lord is the surest guarantee
That what is proclaimed will certainly come about
As we read the Bible, we can the future see
All things He proclaims, and in them have no doubt
And so through trials or troubles let us not be downhearted
Rather, let us lift our eyes to God's holy hill
The raging ocean will surely be parted
And the path through it will be peaceful and still

We have this hope because of the Lord Jesus
Who has done all things marvelously for us

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 3:16-22

(EXPECTED RESISTANCE; ASSURED DELIVERANCE)

Introduction: Early on the morning of 6 June 1944 as the troops prepared to cross the English Channel for the D-Day invasion, there were probably two main thoughts on the minds of most of the people. 1) This isn't going to be easy, and 2) we will be victorious. The Allied invasion force was comprised of 3 million men, 13,000 aircraft, 1,200 warships, 2,700 merchant ships, and 2,500 landing craft. Nobody in their right mind would commit such a sizeable force to certain suicide, nor would they commit such a force without a reasonable expectation of victory.

The crushing weight of an overwhelming force of men and material began to arrive in Normandy at fifteen minutes after midnight when paratroopers jumped in behind enemy lines. Then, just before dawn the Allied ships began to bomb the French coast.

At daybreak 135,000 Allied troops came forward like a tidal surge onto Normandy's shore, filling five landing sites. During the next five days, the forces moved forward in all sectors despite the fierce resistance of the enemy. Finally, on June 11th, the five landing groups met up and Operation Overlord proceeded as planned.

Text Verse: *Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him.*

-Ecclesiastes 8:12

Moses has already been told that the Israelites will be delivered. That promise will be reiterated today, but he is also told that there will be expected resistance before the job is complete. Pharaoh will be determined to stand against the God he either doesn't believe in, or who he believes he can defeat.

But Moses is told that not only will the Lord prevail, the Hebrews will actually plunder the Egyptians on the way out of town. The greatest military power on the planet will be defeated by the wonders which the Lord will display in their presence.

This same God, the eternal and ever-watchful God who monitors the affairs of men, is in the business of deliverance. But even more, He tells in advance what will happen, when it will happen, and what the outcome will be. If He did this for Israel, and He did it for us when He gave His Son, then He will continue to be faithful right through to the end.

We have an absolute assurance of the good things to come because of the fulfilled promises of the past. Let's trust this and even cling to it during those times when the enemy seems so strong and capable. He's not. God is on our side. It is a certain truth to be found in His superior word. So let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Visiting I have Visited You (verses 16 & 17)

¹⁶ Go and gather the elders of Israel together,

Moses had asked the name of God who spoke from the bush and he received his awesome answer. His name is Yehovah. It is this name that he has been told to speak to the children of Israel as a memorial to all generations.

Now Moses is given his first true set of instructions. What was said before was merely in response to his question. In verses 9 and 10, he was given his call and the intent of that call when the Lord said these words to him –

“Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”

However, this verse is his first true instruction based on the preceding conversation. And if you think on them, you will see that His words immediately place Moses as the leader of Israel. Not only is he commissioned for a specific task, but he is to be considered as their leader in that task.

This is because he is asked to go and gather the elders of Israel together. The elders isn't speaking of the oldest people, but rather the leaders of the individual tribes. There certainly was and there has obviously continued to be a set hierarchy within the tribes. Moses is asked to gather those leaders together.

Based on the instructions which follow, it is granted to Moses to be the leader of those elders. Jacob was the true first leader of the 12 tribes and that leadership implicitly fell to Joseph because of his rule over Egypt, but there is no record of a continued leader.

Rather, the term “the elders” shows an informal coalition of the heads of the tribes. That will now change and an order and structure will come about which will continue on with Joshua and then into the time of the judges of Israel.

16 (con’t) and say to them, ‘The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared to me,

The same name and title he was just told in the preceding verse is repeated in this one. But rather than the way this is translated, some other translations make more sense. Instead of “The Lord God of your fathers.” It should be “The Lord, God of your fathers.” Or more specifically, “Yehovah, God of your fathers.”

The word “God” instead of being tied to Yehovah, should be tied to the fathers. The reason for this is that in verse 14, He identified Himself as Yehovah. Therefore, it is a proper noun. The words translated as “I AM” and “Yehovah” are equivalent.

Therefore, the name itself is sufficient to fill all of the necessary requirements Moses had looked for. It was Yehovah who fulfilled past needs, and it is Yehovah who will continue to meet future ones as well. This is important because with the coming of Christ, we don’t say “Jesus God, of our salvation.” Instead we say, “Jesus, God of our salvation.” *Jesus* is the name, *God of* is what He does.

The name Yehovah here identifies who God is, and “God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob” specifies the existing relationship. What might seem trivial or hair splitting is actually an important distinction.

16 (con’t) saying, “I have surely visited you and *seen* what is done to you in Egypt;

In Genesis 50, these final words of the life of Joseph were recorded and which closed out the book –

“Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.” ²⁶ So Joseph died, *being* one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.” Genesis 50:25, 26

It has been approximately 144 years since those words were spoken by Joseph which means that it is now about the year 2514AM. To get a mental picture for us to grab onto, 144 years ago would have been 1870.

In that year, among other things, construction began on the Brooklyn Bridge, the first motion picture was seen by an audience, the last states of the Union which had seceded in the Civil War were readmitted to the union, and the Florida Territorial Government was formed.

What seems amazingly distant to us is but a breath to God. And so in exact fulfillment of those words, Yehovah repeats them now in the ears of Moses. Joseph said “visiting will visit you.” True to that promise, His words to Moses are *paqod paqadti etkhem* – “visiting I have visited you.”

The many years of trial and hardship were not overlooked or ignored. Instead, they were awaiting their fulfillment. Yehovah promises and Yehovah fulfills. Nothing spoken in promise will ever be ignored or delayed. What a relief that we serve such a faithful and attentive God.

Joseph’s words had probably become a known and repeated phrase by the Israelites and so hearing them spoken by Moses to them would bring the extra assurance of a fulfilled prophecy. Thus they would be words they could rely on and trust in.

And we have an identical New Testament promise that we repeat frequently as we await its fulfillment as well. The words of Jesus ring often in our ears and in our hearts, especially when times get a little tough. But because they were spoken by the same great God, we have the absolute surety that they will be fulfilled –

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.” John 14:1, 2

Doesn’t hearing those words inspire you to persevere, even through the darkest times? And knowing that so much prophecy has been fulfilled, we can be even more confident in the absolute surety of what lies yet ahead.

¹⁷ and I have said I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt

Verse 17 repeats the words of the 8th verse of this chapter. Thus, they confirm those words, but they also confirm the words spoken by Joseph. And they also confirm two other specific promises as well. The first was to Jacob when he was just about to leave Canaan for the last time. There in Genesis 46 it said –

“So He said, ‘I *am* God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. ⁴ I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up *again*.’” Genesis 46:3, 4

And a full 215 years before that, a similar promise was made to Abraham in Genesis 15 –

“Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.” Genesis 15:13-16

There has been a continuous succession of words spoken by God to the covenant line to show them why He was doing certain things, how long those times would last, and to reassure them that even if individuals would die along the way, and even if afflictions were certain to come, God was still there to tend to each subsequent generation until the times reached their fullness.

¹⁷ (con’t) **to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites,**

With the exception of one word, this portion of the verse is an exact quote from Exodus 3:8. Instead of “the land” there it said “the place.” There is a reasonable explanation for this change. If you heard the previous sermon, you know that there is a chiasm which spans the entire section which goes from verse 8 to verse 17.

In this chiasm, the order of verses 8 and 17 are reversed to complete the chiasm. In verse 8, it first said “a land flowing with milk and honey,” and then it identified that it was the place of the people groups. In this verse, it identifies the people groups and then that it is a land of milk and honey.

The chiasm explains the change. It shows intentional purpose, order, logic, and harmony. It also allows us to probe into the mind of God and see what is important to Him as His word unfolds. What an absolute treasure this word is. What a gift and what a joy!

It is to the land of these six people groups that God will lead the Israelites after their time in Egypt is finally realized. And it is to a wondrous land as the description of His words to Moses continues...

¹⁷ (con't) **to a land flowing with milk and honey.”**

This is now the 2nd of 20 times that the expression “a land flowing with milk and honey” will be used in the Bible. It is to this glorious land which is still beloved by the people of the world today, which is fought over and prophesied over, that the Israelites will be taken.

The expression involves both physical and spiritual connotations. The physical implication is that it will be abundant in livestock and grain. The spiritual implication is that it will be abundant in the word of God and in the instruction of that word. It will be the land of the people of God and the land of the word of God.

*Praise the Lord from whom comes all good things
He provides His people with food and also with His word
It is to Him that my soul joyously sings
For He is the great, gracious, and glorious Lord*

*Praise the Lord for the food that we eat
Praise Him for stomachs filled with delight
The table is filled as we come take our seat
We are strong in the day and sleep contentedly at night*

*Praise the Lord for His wondrous word
Praise Him for the history and the stories it tells
When we read it, we can peer into the mind of the Lord
And for Him and His glory, the heart surely swells*

II. Expected Resistance; Assured Deliverance (verses 18 & 19)

¹⁸ **Then they will heed your voice;**

Verse 18 is chock full of information. The chiasm which spanned the previous verses is ended and so there is no repetition in this verse. Instead, it takes on a new direction in

the narrative. First, the Lord notes that the elders of Israel will, in fact, heed Moses' words.

Although Moses will be wary of taking on this responsibility and will need signs to confirm his commission, the implication here is that the name Yehovah along with the words that He has visited His people, should be sufficient to convince them of Moses' words and thus to heed what he says.

18 (con't) and you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt;

This is either a prophecy or it is a command. If it is a prophecy, it means that Moses will surely come with the elders to the king of Egypt. However, if it is a command, it means that Moses, must surely come before the king of Egypt with the elders of Israel.

There is no indication in chapter 5 that the elders did come before the king with Moses, but that could mean that either they accepted Moses' authority and granted him authority to represent them, or that they did go with Moses and are simply not noted as being present. Either way, there is nothing lacking if it was a prophecy, and there was no disobedience if it is a command.

18 (con't) and you shall say to him, 'The Lord God of the Hebrews has met with us;

The understanding one gets from the Bible is that different lands, different people groups, and different governments often believed that they were guided by a particular god. Some had many gods, but even these normally fell under the authority of a particular god for that land, people, or government.

As the Hebrews were a distinct people group, there would be nothing unusual with them claiming obedience to Yehovah, who is a particular named God. The king of Egypt would have had a main god whose will he would seek and whom he believed he would receive guidance from.

This is seen throughout the Bible and it is even noted that the true God would speak to those outside of the Hebrew people in various ways. Among others, He spoke to Pharaoh through Moses, He spoke to Balaam the prophet from Mesopotamia in dreams, visions, and by a donkey; He spoke to Cyrus, king of Persia through His word; and He spoke to the King of Nineveh through the prophet Jonah.

The Bible even implies that God spoke to a later Pharaoh about a matter which involved Josiah, king of Israel –

“After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by the Euphrates; and Josiah went out against him. ²¹ But he sent messengers to him, saying, ‘What have I to do with you, king of Judah? *I have not come* against you this day, but against the house with which I have war; for God commanded me to make haste. Refrain *from meddling with* God, who *is* with me, lest He destroy you.’” 2 Chronicles 35:20,21

In fact, Josiah didn’t heed the word and he ended by dying from wounds suffered in that battle. Because of the beliefs of the people, there is no need to assume that Pharaoh didn’t believe them. The only real question is, “Would he accept the word of Yehovah or would he reject it by figuring he and his gods were stronger?”

In this verse, it is now the 8th of 14 times that the term “Hebrew” will be used in Exodus, more than any other book of the Bible. In fact, the term is only used 34 times in the Old Testament and so the peculiar designation is used to specifically make a distinction between the Egyptians and the people of God.

Their plight is shown to be a parallel to the people of God in the end times where a similar distinction will be seen and where a similar display of God’s power on behalf of His people will be realized.

18 (con’t) and now, please, let us go three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.’

Why is this request specifically given? Some scholars suggest that it is because Sinai would have been a three-day journey on the most direct route. In verse 12, God told Moses that the sign to him of the truth of His word was that they would worship Him on that same mountain and so they say it was a three-day journey.

However, in this same verse, we are told that the king of Egypt would deny the request and that he would have to see the hand of God before they would be let go. Therefore, the sign wasn’t that they would go to Sinai and worship at their first request from Pharaoh. Rather the sign was that they would worship at Sinai *after being freed*.

Instead, the three-day journey probably had a two-fold reason. The first was to be away from the open idolatry of Egypt, of which even the Israelites had participated. In the wilderness there would be purity of worship. The second reason is found later in Exodus—

“Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, ‘Go, sacrifice to your God in the land.’ (meaning the land of Egypt, not the wilderness)

²⁶ And Moses said, ‘It is not right to do so, for we would be sacrificing the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God. If we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, then will they not stone us? ²⁷ We will go three days’ journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God as He will command us.’” Exodus 8:25-27

These are the reasons for the requested-three day separation. The fact that God knew that Pharaoh would deny the request doesn’t then indicate any deceit in either God or Moses because the plan was to actually leave Egypt. Rather, it was an offering that involved Pharaoh’s free-will choice.

Just because God knows our choices, it doesn’t mean that we don’t have free-will in making them, nor does it mean that we will not suffer the consequences of them. Instead, what we choose stands as a testimony for our rewards or punishments by Him.

Pharaoh could have granted the request without any loss to his kingdom or any damage which will eventually result. But instead, he chose to harden his heart and put up a wall between him and God through disobedience to Yehovah, the God of the Hebrews.

¹⁹ But I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go,

“I am sure” found here and in the King James Version lacks the force of the statement. God isn’t just sure, as if it is a feeling in His bones. Rather, He knows with absolute certainty. The words *v’ani yadati* should rightfully be translated “and I know.”

But despite of this, was it wrong to make the request seeing as how He knew that the request would be denied? Well, let’s look at it logically and ask comparable questions – Is it wrong that Jesus died for John, or Jane, or Tom even though God knew that they would turn down that great and noble sacrifice?

Is it wrong that God says in His word that He does not permit people to commit adultery, even though He knew that the world would be full of adulterers? What about where his word says that women were not to be ordained as pastors, elders, and bishops even though He knew they would arrogantly defy His word?

No, none of the things requested, offered, or commanded by God are wrong. *He* establishes the parameters and *we* are expected to respond according to

those parameters. Full judgment will be executed on those who fail to do so. And every mouth will be stopped before it speaks in His presence. He is God; we are man. He is the Creator; we are the created. He is Potter; we are the clay.

¹⁹ (con't) **no, not even by a mighty hand.**

The words in Hebrew are *v'lo b'yad hazaqah* – “and no by hand mighty.” One probably wouldn't think such simple words would be confusing, but they can be. The record stands that eventually by a mighty hand Pharaoh did let them go. And so “and no” is possibly better rendered as Becke's Bible of 1549, translates it –

“I am sure that the kyng of Egypt wyl not let you go, Except wyth a mighty hand.”
Beck's Bible

Other translations agree with this as well. However, even after letting the people go, Pharaoh changed his mind, chased after Israel, and was destroyed in the waters of the Red Sea. And so, it could be literally intended that “no, not even by a mighty hand” is the final truth of the matter. Thus the waters covered over the very, very obstinate, and very hard-hearted man.

²⁰ **So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst;**

The word translated as “so I will stretch out” is *v'selakhti* which carries a double signification here. In one sense, it is given as a sign of helping and saving assurance towards Israel. At the same time, it carries the sense of fighting against Egypt.

In Exodus 23:28, the same word is used as a promise of leading the Israelites while attacking the inhabitants of Canaan by sending out hornets against them. In Exodus 33:2, the word is used again in the same way by sending out the Angel before them.

All three times in Exodus the Lord sends out protection while sending out destruction. In the case of Egypt it would be with, as He says, “all my wonders.” When we think of that which is terrifying to one side and yet wonderful to the other, we can get a glimpse of what lies ahead.

A volcano is certainly terrifying to those who are close enough to be engulfed in it. And yet from a safe distance, it is a wonder to behold. The same is true with any natural

disaster or miraculous event. What God does against His enemies can only be viewed as terrible, but the same action will inevitably be viewed as marvelous in the eyes of those He is working for.

²⁰ (con't) **and after that he will let you go.**

As a confirmation that what God intends will come about, Moses is given this absolute assurance. When the wonders have been stretched out upon Pharaoh by the hand of God, he will finally relent and release the Hebrew people. The word is spoken and it will come about.

*The hand of the Lord is mighty to save
And the people of the Lord are in His hand
Thus in confidence of a blessed assurance let us behave
For His promised end will come and it will be grand*

*The enemies of God will be scattered in defeat
And yet His people will be rescued, each and every one
And at His great heavenly table, the redeemed shall eat
For the people of the Lord, it shall be done*

*Death is swallowed up in victory, it is true
Because Jesus has defeated the grave
He has done this for His people, for me and for you
Truly the hand of the Lord is mighty to save*

III. Assured Deliverance and a Blessing (verses 21 & 22)

²¹ **And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians;**

There are certainly several ways in which this could come about. The first is that the Egyptians, after suffering the hand of the Lord, would be favorable towards the Hebrews, lest they suffer even more. It would be like a slave who would gladly bless his master if the beatings would but cease.

The second is that those Egyptians, if any, who were told of the events of the Passover and how to avoid the certain death of their firstborn, would be abundantly grateful at

the sparing of their own children. This is more than probable, because at the exodus, it says that a mixed multitude went up from Egypt with them.

Assuming these were some of those who were told about how to avoid the deaths of the Passover, then we could also assume that there were others who were equally grateful but chose to remain in their homes in Egypt.

A third reason, though not mentioned specifically, but which is realized later, was the need for what is requested to make the implements of the tabernacle – the ark, the lampstand, the table of showbread, the altar of incense, and all of the other furniture of the tabernacle, along with the tabernacle itself.

If their God asked for such things and it was this God who had stretched out His hand for both protection and for destruction, then who wouldn't be favorably disposed to giving what was needed to erect the implements necessary for His worship?

A fourth reason could simply be human pity. The people were beaten to dust for as long as anyone could remember and they had been plundered of their livelihood and their lives. To send them off without a blessing would only be adding insult to the injury which brought the Lord's judgment upon them in the first place.

There is no need to assume that this verse isn't just probable, but rather it is likely. And in it, there would have been nothing duplicitous or deceitful. Instead, the favor is to be perfectly understood from the context of the times.

²¹ (con't) **and it shall be, when you go, that you shall not go empty-handed.**

This is something that was explicitly promised 430 years earlier to Abraham when he was told, "And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions" (Genesis 15:14). God who knows the future had promised Abraham and now the promise is reiterated to Moses.

²² **But every woman shall ask of her neighbor, namely, of her who dwells near her house,**

One of the most unfortunate translations in the history of the universe is that of the King James Version and it is for this verse. They, blindly following along from the Geneva Bible as they often did, translated this as "borrow" instead of "ask."

Borrowing implies returning, and it is perfectly understood from the situation that returning was not a consideration. And if it were, there would have been no need for the Lord to have given the Hebrews favor in their sight. We will lend to people we don't even like as long as we know they will return the thing.

The plundering of the Egyptians has brought a lot of criticism on the Bible over the years. People have used terms like "fraud," "theft," "deception," and the like to describe what occurred here. Surely comparisons to this and to modern Jews have been made, implying that it is a trait that permeates their society.

But what can one expect when a word and a context which surely means "to ask" is mistranslated as "borrow?" Rather, every woman was instructed to *ask* of her neighbor for the articles they would need and to which they had a 215-year right.

But, in these same words, the New King James Version also departs from what is correct. They say "But every woman shall ask of her neighbor, namely, of her who dwells near her house." Nobody else translates these words this way; it is incorrect.

Instead, it should read, "But every woman shall ask of her neighbor and the woman who lives in her house." Two categories are intended, not one who is being mentioned twice.

²² (con't) **articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing;**

"Articles" can mean a whole host of things from weapons to utensils, and from cups to plates. Articles of silver and gold are specifically requested, not to enrich the Israelites, but for what the Israelites will do with them in the wilderness.

They are being prepared for an organized mode of worship which will continue on until the coming of Christ. And all of what they construct will picture Him... every detail of it. God is plundering the Egyptians in order to form worship for His people.

In Christ, God took from humanity in order to build His greater and eternal Temple. He did it in that Christ came from the stream of humanity to be the true Ark of that temple. And He has done it from His people who have become living stones in His temple.

There is nothing untoward or inappropriate in this verse. Instead, there is purpose and design as God prepares that which is holy from sources which are not so. But all things are from God and so all things can be purified by God. Even a miserable wreck like Charlie Garrett.

And in its ultimate sense, this request is actually a picture of Christ, coming from the unholy stream of humanity and yet perfectly pure in His being, purer than the finest gold which has gone through the refiner's fire.

^{22 (con't)} **and you shall put *them* on your sons and on your daughters.**

It troubles me when I come to words like this and there is no immediate reason for why they're included. The verse has been very specific. After asking for the articles, it says they are to put them on their *sons and daughters*. Why was this even included? Comments on these words are short in coming, but I have a few suggestions.

Assuming that it is jewelry, one could guess that they wanted the youngest Hebrews adorned with the wealth of Egypt as a sign of opulence. If the children could be so adorned, then one would consider the wealth of the parents even greater.

A second reason would be to show that the youngest and weakest of the Hebrews was adorned with what the strongest of the enemy dare not attempt to steal. Who would adorn a mere child in this way unless there was the surety that the child was well protected?

Thirdly, it is to show that as Israel came to Egypt from Canaan during a time of deprivation, Israel would be returning to Canaan from Egypt with great wealth. Even wealth that overflowed to the youngest who could walk out of the land.

And lastly, it again pictures Christ who came from those sons and daughters. That which was of the greatest value of all came through them as they bore His lineage in their redeemed bodies.

^{22 (fin)} **So you shall plunder the Egyptians."**

For 215 years Israel dwelt in Egypt. They came, and then during their stay Egypt blossomed and flourished under the authority of Joseph. Israel also grew mighty and prosperous. But eventually, they were robbed into poverty and crushed into submission.

What was there to show for Joseph's leadership and wisdom which literally saved the kingdom? Nothing. The plundering of the Egyptians was, in fact, a just reward for Israel's time and labor. The same word is used in 1 Samuel 30:22 to indicate stolen property that was recovered by its rightful owner.

This plundering of Egypt is then a just and proper transfer to Israel. When it actually occurs at the exodus, it will be as a picture of the final plundering of the nations of the world after the tribulation. It is exactly prophesied at the end of the book of Zechariah –

“Judah also will fight at Jerusalem.
And the wealth of all the surrounding nations
Shall be gathered together:
Gold, silver, and apparel in great abundance.” Zechariah 14:14

In this, there is a truth which often escapes us because of the times we are afflicted and the many times we are on the losing end of the stick. But we can be certain that the Lord’s people will always find gain in the end when striving against the powers of the world. The plundering of the Egyptians is nothing short of people receiving their just due. As the Pulpit Commentary says –

“Egypt, ‘glad at their departing,’ was to build them a bridge of gold to expedite their flight, and to despoil herself in order to enrich her quondam slaves, of whom she was, under the circumstances, delighted to be rid.”

But there is one more picture to consider before we close. The plundering of the Egyptians pictures Christ’s plundering of the devil. He gained control over humanity and to him, all humans belonged. However, Christ came to correct that.

Not only did He defeat the devil, just as Yehovah defeated Pharaoh, but He also plundered the devil of his most precious possessions – the souls of mankind. Thus the victory of Christ is prefigured in these words to Moses there at the bush on Sinai.

If you have found yourself in a situation which you think is unending and hopeless, don’t forget that the end of the book is written. The final word is “Amen.” And so we have the surety that God’s word is truth and that it will come to pass.

God has built us our own bridge, finer than the purest gold, in order to expedite our own flight from this world of chaos and disorder, and to receive us on the welcome shores of a heavenly home. It is there and awaiting our reception.

If you want the faithful assurance that heaven is your own final destination, let me explain to you what is needed for you to take hold of it. Give me just another moment to tell you about God’s love for you in His Son, Christ Jesus...

Closing Verse: *Establish Your word to Your servant,
Who is devoted to fearing You. Psalm 119:38*

Next Week: Exodus 4:1-9 (Three Signs to His People) (10th Exodus sermon)

By the way – that Allied invasion force which crossed the English channel... they won the war. Yes, there was expected resistance and it was most costly, but in the end, Europe was delivered. There was a strong and powerful force ready to take the victory. In your battle, you have a far, far more powerful hand stretched out for your deliverance. Don't be concerned; the outcome is assured.

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Expected Resistance; Assured Deliverance

Go and gather the elders of Israel
Together, and say to them
The Lord God of your fathers, known as well
As the God of Abraham

Of Isaac, and of Jacob too
Appeared to me, and his words so dripped
"I have surely visited you
And seen what is done to you in Egypt

And I have said I will bring you up
Out of the affliction of Egypt, thus it is true
To the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites
And the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites too

To a land flowing with milk and honey
To a place where the shekel will be your money

Then they will heed your voice
And you shall come, you and the elders of Israel

To the king of Egypt as one voice
And to him this you shall tell

The Lord God of the Hebrews has met with us
And now, please, let us go on a path to trod
Three days' journey into the wilderness
That we may sacrifice to the Lord our God

But I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go
No, not even by a mighty hand, thus it is so

So I will stretch out My hand
And strike Egypt with all My wonders
Which I will do in the midst of its land
And he will let you go, after my mighty thunders

And I will give this people favor
In the Egyptians' sight
And it shall be, when you go for sure
That you shall not go empty-handed, alright

But every woman shall ask of her neighbor
Namely, of her who dwells near her house
Articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing
Be they a lovely shawl or a nice bright blouse

And you shall put them on your sons
And on your daughters also
So you shall plunder the Egyptians
When out of Egypt you go

There may be many years of lack in your life
Times of turmoil or anguish or strife

But in the end the child of the Lord
Will be brought out to abundance galore
We have this promise in His holy word
That there is eternal blessing; joy forevermore

Let us trust through the years of trial
And stand firmly grounded each of us
For inside heaven's gate is an ever-lasting smile
As we behold the beauty of our Lord Jesus

Thanking You, O God, receive our praise!
As we look forward to Your presence for eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 4:1-9

(THREE SIGNS TO HIS PEOPLE)

Introduction: In our society, we need to not be foolish about taking people at face value, especially with matters of great importance. Although it's nice to want believe people are honest, we eventually learn that it often isn't the case, even with "friends." If we're in the military, how can we be sure an order is valid? Well, there are ways of ensuring it is. Many of them are written in prescribed manuals or are policies within the chain of command. Precautions are taken to make sure that traitors or impersonators don't step in and do harm to the unit.

And likewise there are penalties for not making sure of the authority of an order before following through with it. For example, the My Lai incident in Vietnam showed us that.

If we get a call on the phone about an overdue bill or unpaid taxes, before committing our credit card number to the person, we should check with the source of who is allegedly making the claim. The IRS doesn't make telephone calls about unpaid taxes. Instead they show up at your door with the proper credentials or contact you through the mail on official letterhead.

If someone came to your door and said he was with the IRS and that you owed them money, you'd be smart to ask for those credentials before continuing the conversation. If this is so for matters such as this, then how much more should we look for proofs in the most important matter of all, that of issues dealing with God.

And yet, the majority of people simply trust without any substantiation at all for their faith. If someone came to me today and said he talked to a burning bush and a voice from the bush told him he was the self-existent God and that he wanted me to follow this guy, I'd tell him he needed a bit more proof.

Joseph Smith who founded the Mormons claims that the Book of Mormon was translated from golden plates that he obtained from the angel Moroni. Eventually he says he gave them back to him. Is this something we should believe at face value? If so then the words of the Book of Mormon would be the testimony left behind.

But if that testimony contained faults, then it couldn't be what Smith claimed. Anyone who is simply willing to check the witness of the supposed sign of the golden plates will quickly realize that the Book of Mormon isn't just a false book containing errors, but that it is specifically argued against by the Apostle Paul.

And yet people blindly follow along with Mormonism and thus they condemn themselves to an eternity far different than the one offered by Christ. The same is true with many cults and a variety of other false religions, and even denominations in Christianity which have now departed from the faith.

Text Verse: *“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” Galatians 1:6-9*

Moses was given three signs to show to the people of Israel in order to confirm to them that his words were true. Those signs are recorded in the Bible and it now witnesses to us of what those signs intended. We can accept that it is true or we can reject it as a fairy tale.

If those signs are true, then they will be in accord with all of the rest of the word of God, they will contain the power of God, and they will point us to Jesus Christ. Is this the case? Do they do these things? If so, then we can believe them just as if we saw them with our own eyes.

This is the power of the word of God and the gospel message for all who believe. It is the power of God unto salvation. And it is power which is found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Rod of God (verses 1-5)

¹Then Moses answered and said,

Twice in chapter 3 Moses questioned God concerning His selection of him to accomplish the task set before him. First, in self-doubt, he asked in verse 11 –

“But Moses said to God, ‘Who *am* I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?’”

Then after assuring him that He would be with him and confirm His spoken word to him, Moses next asked for a name that he could give to the people to prove he was selected for this purpose. We saw that in verse 13 –

“Then Moses said to God, ‘Indeed, *when* I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What *is* His name?’ what shall I say to them?’”

After that, the Lord spent 9 verses explaining His name and what would transpire as the task was accomplished. All of the detail necessary was given to provide a broad panorama of the coming exodus of the people from Israel. However, after this detail, Moses’ first response is one which lacks faith in what was presented.

^{1 (con’t)} **“But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, ‘The Lord has not appeared to you.’”**

Rather than a question, Moses’ words are a statement of fact. Instead of “But suppose they will not believe me” is certainly “Behold, they will not believe me.” The words were not a question but are an emphatic and preemptory statement.

In this then is a contradiction by Moses of the assurance he was given in chapter 3 where the Lord said they would heed his voice. There are several reasons why Moses would feel this way. The first is that he had already been shunned by the people once 40 years earlier. Despite the years, the rejection would have still stung.

A second reason is that the last time the Bible records the Lord appearing to anyone directly was when Jacob was just about to depart Canaan for the last time. This was 215 years earlier. Why would the Israelites assume that the Lord appeared to Moses who didn’t even live among them?

And third, if the Lord appeared to him and told him that he would lead Israel out in a miraculous manner and by great wonders, then wouldn’t he have proof that such great wonders were possible? Who would want to believe a person’s claims when facing certain punishment from the people whom they served?

Despite the Lord’s previous assurance, his lack of faith isn’t unnatural. The same word of the Lord which came from the bush is recorded in the pages of the Bible. Many of His words apply directly to us – 100% sure and reliable. And yet we lack the same faith almost daily as things pop up and block the path we’re on.

Moses was now expected to convince the people that his words were true. They had already rejected him once and now he was claiming both their leadership and requesting their implicit trust. If we lose heart and faith over small matters of our daily spiritual life, how much more Moses over the great challenge ahead!

He felt sure that if there was only a name, and a promise from that name, that they would not believe him even though the name was proclaimed from a bush which was burning right in front of his eyes. He saw it, they didn't. He was sure it wasn't sufficient to present to them this story. And apparently the Lord agreed...

²So the Lord said to him, “What *is* that in your hand?”

This doesn't mean the Lord didn't somehow know what he was holding; it was obvious. Instead, it is a response to, and a preparation for, answering Moses' lack of faith in the outcome of what he has been told to do. This is the same thing that is seen other times elsewhere in the Bible.

In Genesis 32, while wrestling with Jacob by the Jabbok river, Jacob said to the Lord, “I will not let You go unless You bless me!” (vs. 26) Instead of simply blessing him, the Bible records –

“So He said to him, ‘What *is* your name?’
He said, ‘Jacob.’” Genesis 32:27

The Lord already knew his name. The question was actually the beginning of the response. And the same is true here. By asking Moses what is in his hand, he is really beginning his response.

² (con't) He said, “A rod.”

In reply, Moses answers with the Hebrew word *matteh*. It's a word used just over 250 times in the Bible and means a type of rod, shaft, or staff. But it also means “tribe” such as in the “tribe of Levi.” In other words, the staff is emblematic of the tribe.

If Levi has a staff, it is his symbol of authority. The tribe which branches out from Levi would be represented by the staff of Levi. In essence, it is comparable to a coat of arms. This rod will reflect the power of the one to whom the staff belongs.

As Moses has now been selected as God's representative for delivering the Israelites, his staff will be representative of the power of God. Because of this, the rod will actually be called "the rod of God" in verse 20 of this chapter.

³ And He said, "Cast it on the ground."

Moses had been shepherding flocks until this point – a picture of the church age during the time of Israel's rejection of Christ. After the rapture of the church which was pictured in the first verses of chapter 3, the Lord will take on a new role in redemptive history.

The attention is once again on Israel and the name of the selected leader, Moses – "He who draws out," is given to show us that Jesus will be the one who draws out His people in the end times. His role will be more than a shepherd and so the symbolism is given here – "Cast it on the ground."

In ending the period of shepherding his flock, the rod will take on a new connotation. This is true for both Moses and for Jesus.

^{3 (con't)} So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent;

The shepherd's staff becomes a serpent. In Hebrew, the word is *nakhash*. It is a general word for a snake or serpent rather than a specific type. This is the seventh time the word is used in the Bible, but five of those times were in Genesis 3 when speaking of the serpent who deceived the woman.

This rod literally turns into a snake for Moses. There are probably three specific reasons for this particular sign to have been given. The first is that God knew that the Egyptians, through magic, could do the same thing with their rods, making it appear that they had turned into snakes.

In order to discredit their tricks as false, the rod of Aaron, which will carry the same ability as Moses' rod, will swallow the snakes of the Egyptians. In their attempt to discredit Moses, Moses will turn and discredit them.

The second reason is because the cobra was the royal symbol of Pharaoh. It is what adorned his headdress and thus reflected his supposedly divine power. The conversion of the shepherd's rod to a snake, was then a sign. As Albert Barnes notes, "at once a pledge and representation of victory over the king and gods of Egypt!"

The third reason is because of who this Pharaoh pictures and from whom his power is derived. He pictures the antichrist and his power comes from the serpent who deceived the woman and who has continued to deceive the world throughout the ages. The devil is shown to be ultimately under the authority of the Lord.

And so this is not only a pledge and a representation of victory over the king and gods of Egypt, but it pictures the greater pledge of Jesus' victory over the devil and his antichrist.

³ (con't) **and Moses fled from it.**

The verse says literally *v'yanas mosheh mippanav*, "and fled Moses from *its face*." Being a shepherd, he would have known a poisonous snake from a harmless one. This was a poisonous snake, one harmful in the extreme. But equally as concerning to Moses is the fact that his rod had actually changed.

Rather than remembering that the Lord had told him to do this, his instinctive reactions took over. This then is an object lesson for Moses to learn to trust the Lord, regardless of what else occurred around him, no matter how remarkable.

The giving up of his shepherding duties for the trial ahead would continuously expose him to dangers. By learning now that these dangers couldn't hurt him, he would know that there was no reason to flee before them.

This is also a good verse to show us that Moses is the true author of the account. Anyone else would have certainly skipped this portion of the verse entirely. It is a nice confirmation that Moses is the human author.

⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Reach out your hand and take *it* by the tail"

This is set in contrast to what it just said. Moses fled from its face, and he is told to take it by the tail. Anyone who deals with snakes knows that the best place to grab them is behind the head. If you grab a snake by the tail, there is a good chance of it turning around and biting you.

This instruction is one of faith-building. It is, in short, a picture of the Bible. The Lord said to Moses; the Lord says to us. There are things in the Bible we are asked to do that often seem contrary to what would normally be expected and yet when we do them, we find that things turn out just fine.

Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5 to give thanks in everything. No matter what our situation or level of hardship, we are asked to be thankful for it. This certainly seems contrary to the norm, but it is an exercise in faith-building. This is what Moses is asked to do here – grab the snake by the tail and trust that it will be ok.

Interestingly, the word for “tail” is the word *zanav*. It is used 11 times in the Bible. In Isaiah 9:15, the prophet in Israel who teaches lies is said to be the tail, or *zanav*. As the devil is the father of lies (John 8:44), this makes a picture of Christ’s power over the devil.

⁴ (con’t) **(and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand),**

By faith in the Lord’s word, Moses reached out and caught the snake which once again became a rod in his hand. This rod of God, which is the symbol of the power of God, is a picture of Christ. He first was the power of God from eternity past.

However, he abased Himself and came as a Man, he was cast to the ground and then crucified, becoming a representation of the snake just as He said in John 3. There He made a reference to the bronze snake which Moses carried in the wilderness saying that just as that snake was lifted up, so He too would be lifted up. In that passage, it uses the same word for “snake” as it does here.

But through the power of the resurrection, He once again became the power of God for all eternity. First he fled from the temptations of the devil just as we are told to flee from the face of sin. Then He defeated the devil and returned to His position of power.

⁵ **“that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.”**

This is what is known as an imperfect, or unfinished, sentence. The sign was given and without saying it completely, Moses is told “that they may believe.” Our thoughts have to insert the finishing words which would be, “Do what I have just shown you before the elders of Israel... that they may believe.”

This sign is given then, not for Moses to believe, but for the elders to believe that the Yehovah appeared to Moses, that he had been appointed as their leader, and that he would deliver them out of the bondage of Egypt. And finally, that Yehovah is, in fact, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

*How can we be sure that Your word is true?
What sign will You give us so that we can know?
Why should we believe in and trust You?
We look for a sign, a miracle, or a heavenly show*

*I have given You a sign, the devil I defeated
All who come to Me are freed from the power of sin
There on the cross all men I entreated
Heaven's gates I opened wide for any to come in*

*The work that I have done is recorded for you
So that you can believe that I am the holy One
I am the Lord, always faithful and true
For so long you missed that I am God's only begotten Son*

II. The Leprous Hand (verses 6-8)

⁶ Furthermore the Lord said to him, "Now put your hand in your bosom."

Although most people will instinctively get what is being commanded here, the NIV does a good job of putting in words that anyone can grasp. Though not a literal translation, it conveys the idea that's presented. They say – "Then the LORD said, "Put your hand inside your cloak."

In essence, he is to take his hand and hide it under his garment next to his breast.

^{6 (con't)} And he put his hand in his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, like snow.

In following the word of the Lord, his hand became leprous, like snow. The type of disease described here always started with a blemish and progressively grew. The instant change from healthy to leprous would be contrary to any such known experience, and the fact that it was only on the hand which had been hidden would make it all the more remarkable.

Further, it was absolutely incurable. Thus only the hand of God could be involved in what had occurred. In Numbers 12, Aaron and Miriam will speak against Moses and the result of God's judgment will be most notable. There it says –

“So the anger of the Lord was aroused against them, and He departed. ¹⁰ And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam *became* leprous, as *white as snow*.” Numbers 12:9. ¹⁰

The rod showed the vocation and implied the power of the individual. However, the hand holds the rod and wields the power. The leprosy then implies a type of judgment as much as anything else. And so we continue...

⁷ And He said, “Put your hand in your bosom again.”

Moses was probably more than pleased to respond to this command.

^{7 (con’t)} So he put his hand in his bosom again, and drew it out of his bosom, and behold, it was restored like his *other* flesh.

If the change from healthy to leprous was amazing, the sudden cure back to healthy would be astonishing. Whereas the changing of the rod was a sign of divine power which credited Moses with authority, the changing of the hand was both a warning and a lesson for obedience to the appointed leader.

As we saw, Aaron and Miriam failed to heed that and Miriam received judgment. The granting of this sign to Moses was intended to show the dangers of resisting the Lord’s command, but also it was a sign of assured deliverance for those who obey it.

This second sign then also once again pictures Christ. The hand is a sign of power, particularly the right hand. Jesus from eternity past has been the one to wield the power of God. However, for a term, He came to dwell among us and took on our nature.

If the leprosy was a picture of sin and sin’s resulting judgment, then we can more clearly see His work. In the book of 2 Corinthians, Paul writes these words –

“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:20, 21

Just as Moses’ leprous hand was a sign and a warning to the Israelites, even a plea through him, that they be reconciled to God, so was the work of Christ. He took on our

human nature and died on a cross, becoming sin for us that we, through Him, might be reconciled to God.

After His work, He ascended to heaven, once again restored to His rightful position of wielding the power of God. It is a position for all eternity to come. In Christ, man is cleansed when he is obedient to His call. However, his sin and judgment remains when he fails to heed it. This is all pictured in the sign given to Moses.

⁸“Then it will be, if they do not believe you, nor heed the message of the first sign, that they may believe the message of the latter sign.

The word “message” here is actually “voice.” And so this verse more appropriately would say –

“It will happen, if they will neither believe you nor listen to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign.” World English Translation

Throughout the pages of the Bible it is noted that we can learn from God and we can learn from creation. And so these things are said to have their own voice. This is seen for example in the memorable words of David found in the 19th Psalm –

“The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork.
² Day unto day utters speech,
And night unto night reveals knowledge.
³ *There is* no speech nor language
Where their voice is not heard.” Psalm 19:1-3

The day, the night, the heavens above us, the beasts of the field, and even the stones themselves all have a voice which cries out. This is what the Lord means in these words to Moses. The signs, not Moses, will first proclaim their voice to the people.

The rod itself is actually shown to have a voice of its own elsewhere in Scripture. In Micah 6, the same word for rod, *matteh*, is said to speak to the people –

The Lord’s voice cries to the city—
Wisdom shall see Your name:
“Hear the **rod!**
Who has appointed it? Micah 6:9

As these signs have pictured the work of the Lord, they are a voice calling out for us to understand, believe, and accept His work – all which is pictured by this encounter between the Lord and Moses. He has been called to be the leader of the people. As the Lord’s messenger, he has been endowed with the power necessary to accomplish his calling. It is a perfect description of Christ.

*The just will live by their faith, it is true
It must be believed that the signs are from the Lord
The Person, the work, the Life given for you
It is all recorded in God’s precious word*

*The cross is our payment for sin
Because on the cross Christ became sin for us
And thus over the devil the victory He did win
Such is the marvel of the work of Jesus*

*How can it be that such love can be found?
Love to amaze, dazzle, and astound*

III. Water and Blood (verse 9)

⁹And it shall be, if they do not believe even these two signs,

There is no record that they either accepted or rejected the first two signs. All it will say when Moses meets with them is the following from the end of chapter 4 –

“Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. ³⁰ And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses. Then he did the signs in the sight of the people. ³¹ So the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.”

-Exodus 4:29-31

As the Lord is all-knowing and so would know whether the first two signs would be believed or not, *then there must be a reason* He says this now and why He will say His coming words of the rest of the verse.

There is nothing which is uncertain in God, only pure knowledge and specific reasoning. Such is the case with His word. It is given in a detailed way to show us more than just an old story of how Israel left Egypt, but a continuing story of how the future will also unfold.

⁹ (con't) **or listen to your voice,**

The first two signs that were given had their own voice. They were fully capable of speaking the intent of the Lord to the people. However, Moses himself could add to that. One person can look up in the sky and see blue and hear God speaking to them of *beauty*.

Another person can look up in the sky and see blue and hear God speaking to them of *nice weather*. Another may hear that its *a good day to paint the house*. All of these are the same voice from God's creation speaking to individuals in various ways.

However, there are other people who understand the *reason* for the blue. On a nice, clear, and cloudless day, the sky is blue because the molecules in the air take the blue light from the sun and scatter it more than they scatter the sun's red light.

Yes, the dust that we so dislike is what gives us our blue, blue skies during the day. At sunset, the red and orange is seen because the blue light has been scattered out, away from the line of sight. Like the blue of the sky, the people may hear the Lord's signs from Moses, but they may not understand them.

But Moses could then add his own voice to the signs, explaining them and relaying to them his own experience before the bush in order to convince the people of God's plan. However, they may also reject the first two signs and the voice of Moses as well. In this contingency, a third sign is to be given...

⁹ (con't) **that you shall take water from the river and pour *it* on the dry *land*.**

The river spoken of is the Nile. It is with all certainty, and even to this day, the source of Egypt's continued life. Should God stop up the waters, only death would be left throughout the land. The Nile then was a sort of deity to the Egyptians, the giver of life.

The dry ground or *yabbashah* in Hebrew is obvious. It is land which is without moisture. The word is used 14 times in the Bible and the first two are in the Genesis creation account where the dry ground is brought forth from the waters.

The dry ground is that which is in contradistinction to the waters then. Without the water, there is no life. This is seen clearly in Isaiah 44 when speaking of the reinvigoration of the Israelite people –

“Yet hear now, O Jacob My servant,
And Israel whom I have chosen.

² Thus says the Lord who made you
And formed you from the womb, *who* will help you:

‘Fear not, O Jacob My servant;
And you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.

³ For I will pour water on him who is thirsty,
And floods on the **dry ground**;
I will pour My Spirit on your descendants,
And My blessing on your offspring;” Isaiah 44:1-3

What should happen when water is poured on dry ground is obvious. What will happen is to be unexpected –

^{9 (fin)} **The water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry land.”**

What should give life instead will instead give judgment. The land cannot thrive on blood. Instead the land will remain dead. It is a picture of the Lord and His word once again. In Him is the water of life. Isaiah, John, and Revelation equate the water with life and with the Lord. However, in the Lord there is also judgment for all people.

The judgment will be found *in Him for us*, or *in us from Him*, but either way, there must be judgment for all who have sinned, and all have, in fact, sinned. For the third time, a sign is given which points to the Person and Work of Christ; His life and His cross. To the Israelites, the first sign, the rod, was given for those already disposed to right religion and seeking out the work of God. The second sign, the leprous hand, would act upon the fears of those not yet convinced, but who became amenable to calling on God for safety’s sake.

The third sign, that of the water and the blood, was a sign to the rest who looked to the Nile as a god but then realized that Yehovah, the God of Moses, was greater than this supposed giver of Egyptian life.

Again, the rod showed that a mere stick of wood could become a great power to destroy. The leprous hand, and the hand made whole, showed the ability to both punish

and the ability to save. And the water and the blood showed that the world cannot count on all things continuing on without correction. Peace and prosperity without God can only end in judgment, suffering, and bloodshed – a picture of the tribulation period.

Finally, in these three signs are seen the three offices of Christ. The staff is emblematic of His prophetic office. He would come to proclaim the word of God and to destroy the serpent. The leprosy is emblematic of His priestly office. He would come to cleanse His people of sin.

And the third is a picture of His kingly office. He will judge the unrepentant world and their false gods through righteousness. Thus we see in the three signs Christ, our Prophet, Priest, and King.

According to EW Bullinger, "...the number *three* points us to what is real, essential, perfect, substantial, complete, and Divine." Surely this description perfectly matches the giving of these three signs. In them, we see the perfect, full, and Divine picture of the work of Christ for His people.

Because of this, Moses himself makes a splendid picture of one working for the Lord. He has been entrusted with the word of God, just as Jesus is the word of God. He has been granted the power of God, thus reflecting Christ who is the power of God. And he is a God-sent prophet, just as Christ is the ultimate embodiment of the Spirit of prophecy. He is our Lord; He is Jesus.

Once again, in just a mere nine verses, we've seen literally dozens of pictures of either the Person of Christ or the work that He accomplished. Sure enough as He told the people of Israel, all Scripture testifies of Him. It is all about Him and it is all intended to wake us up to our need for Him.

God knew before giving these three signs as to whether the people would believe the first two signs or not. And yet, he gave the third sign anyway, not because the first two may not have been believed, but because He wanted us to see the work of His Son confirmed and established through the three of them.

Obviously, if God gave such minute detail to these verses in order for us to see Jesus, then He really expects us to pay heed to them and to the message they convey. And so, as I do each week, I'd ask for another moment or two to tell you the simple path to salvation through the work of Jesus...

Closing Verse: *“The voice of the Lord is over the waters;
The God of glory thunders;
The Lord is over many waters.
⁴The voice of the Lord is powerful;
The voice of the Lord is full of majesty.” Psalm 29:3, 4*

If the voice of what is created is filled with wisdom and knowledge, how much more the voice of the Lord who did the creating. Surely His voice is full of majesty!

Next Week: Exodus 4:10-17 (Filling Life’s Gaps) (11th Exodus sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Voice of the Signs

Then Moses answered and said
“But suppose they will not believe me
Or listen to my voice instead

Suppose they say
‘The Lord has not appeared to you.’”
And to this word no attention they pay
What then shall I do?

So the Lord said to him, “What is that in your hand?”
He said, “A rod I use when walking on the land”

And He said, “Cast it on the ground”
So on the ground it he cast
And it became a serpent, so not hanging around
Moses fled from it really fast

Then the Lord said to Moses, He did submit
“Reach out your hand and take it by the tail”
And he reached out his hand and caught it
And it became a rod in his hand, no longer did it flail

That they may believe that the Lord
God of their fathers is who
The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac
And the God of Jacob has appeared to you

Furthermore to him said the Lord
“Now in your bosom put your hand
And he put his hand in his bosom at that word
In order to understand

And when he took it out, behold, what a show
His hand was leprous; white like snow

And He said, “Put again in your bosom your hand
So he put his hand in his bosom again
And drew it out of his bosom, and behold! we understand
It was restored like his other flesh, like that of normal men

Then it will be, by this design
If they do not believe you
Nor heed the message of the first sign
That they may believe the message of the latter sign that you do

And it shall be, if they do not believe the sign from its Giver
Even these two signs, or listen to your voice
That you shall take water from the river
And pour it on the dry land; another sign, another choice

The water which you take from the river
Will become blood on the dry land
So they know that of life I am the giver
And that I am He who judges, this too they will understand

Three signs given for Israel to see and believe
And the signs testify to the work of the Lord Jesus
Let us refrain from lies intended to deceive
And hold fast to the word which God has given to us

Thank You, yes thank You, O great and awesome God
For the marvelous treasure, the superior word

It is a radiant light for the path on which we trod
And it leads us to the loving arms of Jesus our Lord

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 4:10-17

(FILLING LIFE'S GAPS)

Introduction: When the Lord sent out the disciples through the land of Israel, how did He send them? Anyone? In twos. Who did the Lord send to get the donkey for Him to ride on Palm Sunday? Two disciples. How many did He send to prepare for the Passover meal in the upper room? Two.

When the church at Antioch commissioned their missionaries, they did it at the Lord's command. What was that command? "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2). Two were selected for the work. After Paul and Barnabas split, Paul took a person named Silas with him and Barnabas took John Mark with him.

These and a host of other examples from the Bible give us a sure indication that two is certainly better than one when setting out on a task, journey, or ministry. God knew in advance that Moses would feel unqualified to fill the role he has been called to. And from the end of our passage today, we will see that God already knew Aaron would join Moses.

But instead of saying that at the outset, He took Moses through a methodical series of steps to allow himself to realize his own limitations and to understand where his strengths and weaknesses lay. Through this process, Moses is readied for the great challenges ahead.

Text Verse: *"Two are better than one,
Because they have a good reward for their labor.*

¹⁰ For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.

But woe to him who is alone when he falls,

For he has no one to help him up." Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10

Are you contemplating any major changes in your own life, or do you feel called to something in a great way? If so, from a biblical perspective, it would be wise to find someone to share in the challenge ahead and to work with you as you endeavor to meet the calling.

First, make sure you're compatible as people, especially that both are Christians who are willing to stand up for biblical principles that you are in agreement on. Then make sure that your goal is jointly agreed upon. After that, decide who will assume what role.

As you're going through this process, be sure to include the Lord in the matter. Bring it to Him and petition His blessing upon what you have set out to do. In this, you will have the highest probability of success. Setting the Lord first and seeking His will in any endeavor is what is recommended directly in His superior word. So let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. I Will Be (verses 10-12)

¹⁰ Then Moses said to the Lord, "O my Lord,

In beginning our look into this passage today, we see here words translated that aren't always clear to the reader of the Bible. If one reads the preface to their Bible, it will normally explain these things, but the preface is almost universally left unread. And so to ensure each of you is aware of the nuances of this first verse, I want to explain them to you.

If you look at the verse, you'll see it says "Moses said to the LORD" and the word "LORD" is all caps. That indicates the divine name, Yehovah or as some say Yahweh. In his response however, the word is "Lord" with only the first letter capitalized.

That is the word *adonai*. It is a way of speaking to Yehovah without saying His name. It is an honorific title which means "My Lord" when speaking of Yehovah specifically. As you read the Bible, you may also see the word "lord" with only lowercase letters. That would be the Hebrew word *adon* which means something like "master" or even "sir."

To see all three in one passage, you can go to Judges 6. In that, you will see where Gideon at first thinks he's talking to a man and so he says *adoni*, "my lord," human (small lord). But in a few verses, after finding out he is speaking to Yehovah, he calls Him *adonai* meaning my Lord, deity (Capital L, small ord).

Why is it important to know this? Because you want to know who is speaking to who... don't you? This phrase which Moses speaks to the Lord is *bi adonai*. It is filled with force. The same word, *bi*, is used at two critical times in Genesis and several other important times during the Old Testament.

His statement is somewhat disparaging, and yet somewhat supplicatory. In one way he is petitioning for release and at the same time he is showing disapproval of his selection to accomplish the task set before him as we see in the continuation of verse 10...

¹⁰ (con't) **I am not eloquent,**

In this, Moses presents his fourth difficulty concerning the Lord's selection of him. His words are *lo ish devarim anokhi* – “no man of words am I.” Whatever words he intends to speak don't come to his tongue readily. Because of this, he lacks fluency as a speaker. However, in the New Testament, Stephen – while speaking to the rulers of Israel, says that “Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.” One might question how one can be “mighty in words and deeds” and yet be no man of words. Is this a contradiction? No.

Understanding Moses as a man dissolves the difficulty. He is the human author of the first five books of the Bible. It is a masterpiece of literature like none other ever penned. It shows the highest knowledge and intellect attainable.

His words have been studied continuously for over 3500 years and yet new insights are derived from them almost daily. Along with this, and included in his writings, are the accounts of his life and actions.

They show a man who was driven in his convictions, tireless in his duties, and abounding in his zeal for his people and his God. No statement less than “mighty in words and deeds” is fitting for the man Moses. And yet, despite this, his elocution was lacking in eloquence.

As a squiggle for your brain, the only other person in the Bible explicitly noted as being mighty in deed and word is Jesus. That is found in Luke 24:19.

Moses didn't understand how he could be used with such a vital defect, but it is no different than that of the apostles. In Acts 4, they are termed uneducated and untrained men, and yet they caused the Sanhedrin to marvel, noting that they had been with Jesus.

Because of the lack of eloquence by Moses and because of the lack of training in the apostles, it is God who thus receives the glory. Those he selects are instruments perfectly chosen for this reason.

¹⁰ (con't) **neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant;**

Moses' words here are literally "neither yesterday, nor the day before, nor since You have spoken to Your servant." He is using an idiom to cover all time which has passed. His speaking has never been eloquent, and it hasn't improved even in the Lord's presence. He may even be curious as to why not.

His hand was leprous and his hand was healed, and yet his tongue has remained unhealed – "Oh my Lord, wherefore hast thou not healed my broken tongue?" He has misunderstood the purpose of his defect and has regarded it from a human, rather than a divine, perspective.

Rather than being a *limiting* factor for the task, it is a *grace* which will be realized in his continued dependency on the Lord, not on himself, for the completion of his calling.

¹⁰ (con't) **but I *am* slow of speech and slow of tongue."**

Ellicott notes that, "According to a Jewish tradition, he was unable to pronounce the labials, b, f, m, p, v." In other words, it is believed he had somefing of a lisfp. Whether it is that, or whether it was a st st st stutter, or whether it was simply an inability to stand and make an eeeffective ooooration because words came to him slooowly, it caused him to be "slow of mouth and slow of tongue."

This defect, or perceived defect, is not limited to Moses though. This man of God who would explain God's standards to the people, and who would set the tone for the entire dispensation of the law, is actually found to have the same limitation as the Apostle Paul.

It is Paul who would explain God's standards to the Gentile peoples, and whose letters set the tone for the entire Gentile-led church age. And yet, he confirms that he lacked in the same manner as his forefather Moses –

"For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed— ⁹ lest I seem to terrify you by letters. ¹⁰ 'For *his* letters,' they say, '*are* weighty and powerful, but *his* bodily presence *is* weak, and *his* speech contemptible.' ¹¹ Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such *we will* also *be* in deed when we are present." 2 Corinthians 10:8-11

It is seen in the selection of both of these men that the power to speak well is not regarded as a necessary attribute for greatness. In fact, it can be deduced that both

were chosen especially to avoid this perception so that the substance behind the words are to be considered above the delivery of them.

¹¹ So the Lord said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth?”

“So the Lord said to him...” It has to be remembered that the voice is issuing from a burning bush which isn’t consumed. There is no discernable mouth by which the words are coming to the ears of Moses. That has to be a consideration in what is occurring.

Words come from somewhere and yet any physical source for the voice in his ears cannot be seen. And further, the voice says, *mi sam peh la’adam* – “Who made the mouth of Adam? In that Adam was the first man, and all subsequent men are from Adam, there is the revealed truth that the mouth of all men were made by the Lord when He created the first man, Adam.

As the Lord is the existent Being, then He is aware of the state of every mouth and has made his selection based on His foreknowledge. In essence, He is saying, “Wake up Moses. I know exactly what I am doing.” The words are words of reproof.

^{11 (con’t)} Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? *Have not I, the Lord?*

In this, four descriptions of man are given – the mute, the deaf, the seeing, and the blind. All four words are used for the first time in the Old Testament in this verse. Though similar descriptions have been seen in Genesis, such as that of Isaac’s eyes being dim, these particular words have never been used.

Throughout the 1650 or so years before the Flood of Noah, and for the 850 or so since then, it wasn’t until the manifestation of the Lord, the Existent One, in the bush that these conditions are noted as His work. This verse then is a part of what is known as progressive revelation.

Although it may have been understood that the Lord made the mute, not until this moment has that been explicitly revealed to be the case. It is a note of His sovereignty over all of the afflictions of man, both created and inherited, and that these come about for His purposes.

Every sense we possess and the perfection or imperfection associated with them are according to His will and good pleasure. It is also further implied that the remedy to the

imperfections are according to His will as well – whether supernaturally, or whether we are selected to be born in a time when the cure is attainable through human effort. It is God who controls the entire process.

¹² Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.”

The commission is repeated, “Now therefore, go. You have no need to worry, nothing to be embarrassed about, and no limitations that you have will overcome you.” Instead, the Lord promises *v’anokhi ehyeh im pikha* – “and I will be with your mouth.”

In this is a portion of the divine proclamation *ehyeh asher ehyeh* – I AM THAT I AM. I am is speaking to Moses and He confirms that He will be with his mouth. If I Am is, then I Am “will.” It is a complete and absolute assurance that cannot fail – in His presence He will teach.

This sentiment is perfectly represented in the Lord’s words to the apostles in Matthew 10:18-20 –

“You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹ But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; ²⁰ for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.”

The word for “teach” in Hebrew is *yarah*, which properly means to flow as water, such as raining or pouring. Transitively, it means to throw or to shoot, such as an arrow. And figuratively it means to point out, as if one is pointing their finger.

One learns by experience and observance. In this, Moses has the assurance that I Am will be with him and that I Am will provide all that is necessary to accomplish the task set before him. There is only absolute assurance in what has been spoken will, in fact, come to pass. He will be directed like water or like an arrow.

This assurance is seen again in a young man of Israel who was destined to face many hardships as a prophet of God. His commission is seen at the beginning of the book which bears his name –

Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying:

⁵ “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you;

Before you were born I sanctified you;
I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”

⁶Then said I:

“Ah, Lord God!

Behold, I cannot speak, for I *am* a youth.”

⁷But the Lord said to me:

“Do not say, ‘I *am* a youth,’

For you shall go to all to whom I send you,
And whatever I command you, you shall speak.

⁸Do not be afraid of their faces,

For I *am* with you to deliver you,” says the Lord. Jeremiah 1:4-8

It seemed that the lesson to Moses is a lesson which needs to be repeated time and again. It is, therefore, a lesson that all of us need to remember as well. We each have a commission and the Lord will both be with us in it, and fulfill it through us.

*The Lord created man in His image and He did it well
And He still directs our state, even since we fell*

*He makes some men with eyes clear and bright
And He makes others' eyes dim, even as the darkest night*

*He makes one man the gentle breeze to easily hear
And others He makes so that even loud bells aren't clear*

*But in all states He can use us for His glory
Those who are lame can open their mouth and speak
And even the slow of speech can tell the gospel story
He can open deaf ears and strengthen hands so weak*

II. Aaron the Levite (verses 13, 14)

¹³ **But he said, “O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever *else* You may send.”**

The exact meaning of these words is difficult to determine. Ellicott sees them as “A curt, impatient, and scarcely reverent speech. Moses means that he will undertake the task if God insists; but that God would do far better to send another.”

Ellicott sees Moses as equivocating. In other words – “I will do it if necessary, but it isn’t necessary because...” Another thought, which may be realized in Moses’ words, is exceptional. He says, *selah na beyad tislah* – “send, I pray, by the hand you will send.” Because of the future tense, it could actually be an inference to the Messiah.

“Oh Lord, I am not the Messiah. Send the Messiah.” This very well may be the case, but Moses didn’t realize that the Messiah would save more than the covenant people, Israel. And in order to do so, he himself would be used to picture this greater work of Christ.

Whatever Moses was actually thinking, the words have set an inappropriate tone because of the assurances which have already been given. He has been selected, the Name has been revealed, the signs have been given, and the assurances have been granted. Because of what has become an overly diffident attitude, the response of the Lord is more than understandable...

¹⁴ So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses,

This Hebrew expression can go from strong displeasure to being extremely angry. Whatever level of emotion, there would have been an accompanying change in the voice. We know this because it is Moses who penned the account for us to read.

For him to tell us that the anger of the Lord was kindled means that he could perceive that this was the case. We can look in surprise at the man who would speak to the Lord of Creation in the way that he has spoken, but we must surely also look in surprise that he honestly and openly recorded every detail of it.

The Spirit of God was upon him as he wrote, directing his words, but they are still his words as well. He faithfully recorded his own faults for us to see and learn from.

¹⁴ (con’t) and He said: “Is not Aaron the Levite your brother?”

This the very first time Aaron is mentioned in the Bible. In all, he will be named 112 times in Exodus, more than in any other book. He is introduced now, which is at a time of need while Moses is struggling from self-doubt.

The words here, “Is not Aaron the Levite your brother?” aren’t intended as a question, but as an affirmative thought. It is rhetorical and it is a preparation for more information to come. But what is curious about this is the term “Levite.” If he is Moses’ brother, then

the fact that he is a Levite is obvious. It appears unnecessary and even forced to include the distinction.

However, this inclusion follows the words of Exodus 2:1 which was the last time that the tribe of Levi was mentioned. There it said, “And a man of the house of Levi went and took *as wife* a daughter of Levi.”

That was a preemptory statement to show that Levi would become the center of the biblical story. And sure enough, the entire story began to revolve around Moses, a son of Levi. What seemed unnecessary was a hint of the story to come. The same appears to be true with including the designation when introducing Aaron.

It very possibly may be a somewhat veiled confirmation of Moses’ request to send the Messiah. Although preemptory in nature, the inclusion of the term “Levite” seems to be a hint that Israel would be given a law before the coming of the Messiah. If there will be a law, then there must be stewards of that law.

At this point in time, the Levites had not yet been chosen as the stewards of the law, but in God’s mind they had. And if there was to be a law at the coming of the Messiah, then it showed that the law would be incapable of saving the people. Otherwise, there would be no need for the Messiah to come. This is explained in detail in Hebrews chapters 7-10.

In other words, the inclusion of the term “Levite” where it seems completely unnecessary is to show that God’s plan has been meticulously constructed and is progressively being revealed with accompanying hints along the way as to what would happen, through whom it would occur, and how it would come about.

It, like all of the many pictures of redemptive history, gives us delightful tastes of the wisdom of God as it is ultimately revealed in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. What is veiled in these pictures is perfectly realized in Him.

¹⁴ (con’t) **I know that he can speak well.**

The Hebrew literally reads *yadati ki dabber y’dabber hu* – “I know that in speaking will speak *he*.” The word “well” used by translators is inserted. And the “he” is emphatic. Again – “I know that in speaking will speak *he*.” It is an overall rebuke towards Moses.

“I know” – I am the Lord. I have all knowledge. What I know is known fully.

“That” – This particular point is what I know with certainty.

“In speaking will speak” – The words will come freely and they will come without reservation. They will pour out like water. There will be no withholding, but instead there will be proclaiming.

“He” – *He* will speak. The job you have been unwilling to accept, he will do with zeal.

Moses has just been upbraided for his unwillingness to fully accept his commission. And yet, he has been given grace by receiving not just a spokesman, but his own brother. As Matthew Henry says about this union –

“The tongue of Aaron, with the head and heart of Moses, would make one completely fit for this errand. God promises, I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth. Even Aaron, who could speak well, yet could not speak to purpose, unless God gave constant teaching and help; for without the constant aid of Divine grace, the best gifts will fail.”

If nothing else comes to your ears from today’s verses, the truth of free-will surely must. God, knowing in advance of the replies of Moses still allowed him to give the replies. And in His foreknowledge of Moses’ perceived limitations, he graciously accommodated them rather than forcing His will upon him.

And even more, through the exercise of his free-will, and through God’s fore-known accommodation of it, a team is organized that will accomplish all of God’s purposes exactly as they were intended to come about, even before creation itself. Benson comments on this union –

“Moses excelled in wisdom and conduct, Aaron in eloquence. Such is the wise order of Providence. As in the human body each member has its different use and function, and all ministering to the good of the whole; so in the mystical body of Christ, God has dispensed different gifts to different members, and very seldom, if ever, gives all accomplishments to one; but to preserve a mutual dependence and relation, he distributes some to one and some to others.” Joseph Benson

This is a necessary lesson to remember in our church life, our home life, and our business life as well. No one can carry out every task and God has given us one another in order to complement each other. Every person has something they can do without doing all of it.

So what is the role you're filling in the church? What is the role you fill in your family? And what is the role you fill at work? You should have one for each of them. If not, then you aren't working out your potential as you should.

¹⁴ (con't) **And look, he is also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart.**

Aaron is the elder of the two. Without these words from the Lord, the meeting between the two brothers may have been awkward or even strained. Should Moses defer to Aaron as the elder even though he has received the commission? Should he mention that he will hold the superior office?

Will there be resentment or animosity? Will there be disbelief? The Lord has preempted such worries by showing once again his foreknowledge of the events which lie ahead. When the two meet, Aaron will be "glad in his heart."

To the Hebrew, the term *b'libbow*, or "in his heart," means more than emotional assent, but it is an assent of the mind as well. The heart is synonymous with the seat of understanding. Aaron won't just be pleased to see Moses, but he will make the *mental assertion* that Moses' selection as the principle in the task ahead is correct.

*It is your choice, one I have given you
My word is written and its intent is clear
What path will you follow, what will you choose to do?
Will you turn away, or obediently will you hear?*

*All things are possible for one who has sound faith
But for he who lacks it, other's can join and help too
And together you can do what My word saith
Just work together and trust that My word is true*

*I will be with you until the very end
And all that I purpose will come about as planned
In times of need My grace I will extend
And to you I shall reach out My comforting, guiding hand*

III. The Dynamic Duo (verses 15-17)

¹⁵ Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth.

Moses is in the mediatory position between the Lord and man. When an oracle is received, it will be through him. From there the words will be his, but the choice of wording will be that of Aaron. The will of God, expressed in a concrete manner through His mediator, will be articulated with eloquence through His appointed orator.

I don't want to stretch the meaning or interpretation of this verse too far, but the process which is laid out is strikingly similar to that of the Trinity. The will of God the Father is expressed in a concrete manner through His Mediator Jesus. And this Mediator's duties will be articulated with eloquence through His orator, the Holy Spirit.

This process, exactly as noted, is laid out *exactly* in verses of the New Testament. In the case of Moses and Aaron now though, a man of ideas coupled with a man of eloquence, who are performing the will of God, will produce a most formidable team to contend with, and against which none shall prevail.

^{15 (con't)} And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do.

Again, the word *ehyeh*, or "will be" is used. I Am *will be*. What greater guarantee is to be found in heaven or on earth? None. The surety of the words spoken now will carry Moses through another 40 years of life. With but a few prominently noted failings, Moses will trust I Am implicitly until his time of rest finally comes.

The Lord has given the guarantee that He will be with the mouth of Moses and with the mouth of Aaron for instruction in the imparting of His will for the good of the people of Israel. As Henry noted, "Without the constant aids of divine grace, the best gifts will fail." In the case of Moses and Aaron, the Lord's grace will be provided throughout the task set before them.

¹⁶ So he shall be your spokesman to the people.

The order here for Aaron will continue on during all the time of the Law, which is about 1500 years. Aaron will become Israel's first high priest and one his sons will follow him until the time of the destruction of the temple in AD70. The high priest would be the one to mediate between God and the people in priestly matters.

At the outset of his duties, the difference is that he would mediate between Moses and the people. It is a time of preparation for the priestly duties to come after the exodus from Egypt. However, as Moses is considered Israel's lawgiver, the role will actually continue on as is directed here until the ending of the law at the coming of Christ.

¹⁶ (con't) **And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God.**

In what is a somewhat unusual rendering of words, the verb is repeated here for emphasis. It says, "And shall be he shall be to you a mouth." It is a way of saying with all certainty that Aaron will be the one to speak for Moses. And in turn, the Lord tells him that he would be to Aaron as God.

This doesn't mean Moses would be as God in actuality, but in divine inspiration. Because his words will be from the direct influence of the Lord, to Aaron they will carry that same weight and authority. This precept is actually comparable to the Bible itself.

Because the Bible is of divine origin, it carries the weight and authority of words issuing directly from the burning bush. This is the reason why it is the most important task of any man to properly handle, and rightly divide, the word of God. And it is the reason why James says this in his epistle –

"My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment." James 3:1

The authors of the constitution of the State of Tennessee understood this precept and entered the following into Article 9, that of "Disqualifications," to the Tennessee Constitution –

"Whereas ministers of the Gospel are by their profession, dedicated to God and the care of souls, and ought not to be diverted from the great duties of their functions; therefore, no minister of the Gospel, or priest of any denomination whatever, shall be eligible to a seat in either House of the Legislature." Constitution of the State of Tennessee, Article 9, Disqualifications, Section 1.

In order to keep from having their attention distracted from their awesome duties before the Lord, they were prohibited from holding public office in the Legislature. The sacredness of Scripture is implied in these verses, spoken to Moses by the Lord. That which is of divine origin is to be spoken to the people on behalf of the Lord with eloquent care.

¹⁷ (fin) **And you shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs.”**

This section ends curiously, doesn't it? The importance of the rod is highlighted in its being mentioned once again. The rod itself is being tied into the signs to come. Only one sign was given earlier concerning the rod, that of the rod being turned into a snake. However, the rod is to be used for much more than that one sign.

And more, they are not just any signs as the King James Version implies. They translate this verse by saying, "...wherewith thou shalt do signs." But there is a definite article in front of "signs." It says *ha'otot*, "the signs." They are definite and they are multiple. The signs which issue from the rod are highlighted at the end of this most important passage as a reminder that it is the work of the Lord which will accomplish all that occurs. In verse 20, this rod will be called "the rod of God." It is to be a continual reminder that the Lord is always there at Moses' right hand in power and for punishment.

In fact, in Numbers 20, Moses will forget this and he will use the rod in a manner contrary to the word of the Lord. As a result, he will be barred from entering into the Promised Land. Instead, he will die and be buried in the land of Moab.

The rod of God is a picture of Christ's power to rule and to effect His purposes among His people, for His people, and over His enemies. This rod and the associated miracles will now be used by Moses in this fashion and they will picture the greater work of the Lord in the end times.

This was prophesied by David in the 110th Psalm, where he uses the same word, *matteh*, or "rod" to show what is coming, maybe someday rather soon –

“The Lord said to my Lord,
‘Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’
²The Lord shall send the **rod** of Your strength out of Zion.
Rule in the midst of Your enemies!” Psalm 110:1, 2

For Moses, the shepherd's rod has become the rod of God. And so it is with Christ our Shepherd and our God. It is to this all-powerful, all-knowing, and infinitely gracious Lord that our allegiance is due. With Him on our side, nothing in heaven or earth can separate us from God's love.

But without Him, nothing else can reconcile us to God and make us objects of His love. We must come to God through Christ. Jesus said that He alone is the way, the truth, and the life. If you have never committed to God through the shed blood of Christ's cross, please give me a moment to explain to you how you can...

Closing Verse: *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
⁶In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths." Proverbs 3:5, 6*

Next Week: Exodus 4:18-23 (Israel is My Son, My Firstborn) (12th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Filling Life's Gaps

Then Moses said to the Lord
"O my Lord, I am not eloquent
Neither before nor since the word
You have spoken to Your servant

But I am slow of speech and slow of tongue
No one ever enjoyed a song that I have sung

So the Lord said to him a piece of His mind
"Who has made man's mouth? Tell Me in a word!
Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind?
Have not I? Who else but I the Lord?

Now therefore, go, OK?
And I, with your mouth shall be
And will teach you what to say
It will be fine Moses, as you shall see

But he said, "O my Lord, please my word attend
Send by the hand of whomever else You may send

So the anger of the Lord was kindled
Against Moses, and He said:
“Is not Aaron the Levite your brother?
I know that he can speak well for you instead

And look, he is also coming out you to meet
When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart
The reunion will be sweet

Now you shall speak to him, so shall you do
And put the words in his mouth, as I instruct you
And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth too
And I will teach you what you shall do

So he shall be your spokesman to the people
And he himself shall be as a mouth for you
And you shall be to him as God
Everything will work out as it is supposed to

And you shall take this rod in your hand
With which you shall do the signs
By them all will come to understand
Of my purposes and my designs

Moses lacked faith in the plan given to him by the Lord
But the Lord knew this would be the case
And so the account is written in the word
To give us courage in the trials that we will face

We can know that we don't have to carry the load alone
Instead God has given us others to pick up the slack
We can send them an email, or call them on the phone
And know that with their help we will be on track

We are not left as orphans, and the Lord is there with us
And we have faithful family and friends to help out as well
Together we can redirect each other to the Lord Jesus
And of His sure promises, one another we can tell

Thank You for this great assurance in which we stroll
Thank You Lord, we know You have it all under control

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 4:18-23

(ISRAEL IS MY SON, MY FIRSTBORN)

Introduction: How many of you have heard some Bible teacher or preacher use the term “Slaying the giants in your life”? It’s catchy isn’t. Sure makes you feel good to know that just like David prevailing over Goliath, you too can prevail over your own giants. Hooray! Type in that phrase on You Tube and you’ll have a list of sermons that goes on and on.

It’s used as a motivational tool to tell you that you too can defeat any obstacle in your life, no matter how big, just like little David did. But there is a problem with looking at the Bible that way. This same young boy who defeated Goliath spent much of his life running away from other, often less formidable foes.

He ran from Saul, he ran from his son Absalom, and he even ran from God’s word and into the arms of another man’s wife. Elijah, the great prophet of Israel, defeated the 400 prophets of Baal and then.... ran from a woman named Jezebel.

The secret to strength isn’t found in catchy phrases or clichés that people throw out in church on Sunday morning. The secret to strength which will defeat any foe is found in trusting the Lord. And this trust in the Lord doesn’t mean that our business will be a success.

It doesn’t mean that our home won’t be foreclosed on. Nor does it mean that the cancer which affects our body has no right to be there. That is a really crummy way of interpreting the Lord’s presence in our lives. What it means is that no matter what does happen to us, the promises of the Lord are greater than the afflictions we face.

Text Verse: *The Lord is on my side;
I will not fear.*

What can man do to me?

⁷ *The Lord is for me among those who help me;*

Therefore I shall see my desire on those who hate me.

⁸ *It is better to trust in the Lord*

Than to put confidence in man. Psalm 118:6-8

Moses was weak concerning confidence in himself. But eventually, the Lord got him straightened out and he is now ready to depart from Midian and head back to Egypt. He

knows that the Lord is on his side and that He will be with him through whatever they face.

He also knows that as a token to him, he has the promise that he will return again to the mountain of God with the people that are delivered from Egypt. In this, he can place his confidence. And the same is true with us. Slaying the giants isn't about homes, finances, sicknesses, or bad marriages.

Slaying the giants is a transcendent thought. It says that no matter what I do face, God's word says that I am secure in Him *despite* those things. Jesus assured us that in this life we would have trouble, but He also promises to deliver us from this life to a new and better one someday.

It is the word which tells us these things and it is the word in which we can place our trust. Moses has his trust in the word of the Lord as he heads out and we should have our trust in the word as well. It was spoken by the Lord and so it is really the Lord that we are trusting when we trust the word. So let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Permission to Leave (verse 18)

¹⁸ So Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law,

Moses took the flock to the west of Horeb where he saw the burning bush and had his encounter there with the Lord God. In verse 3:1, the flock was mentioned twice and yet it has not been mentioned again since then, nor will it be mentioned again. The focus went quickly from them to Israel and Moses' task of freeing them from the bondage of Egypt.

After the lengthy discussion with the Lord who spoke from the bush, the narrative abruptly ends and takes on a new direction. There was no recorded ending to the conversation as so often happens in the Bible. For example, when God departed from Abraham after their conversation in Genesis 17, it said –

“Then He finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.”

-Genesis 17:22

Nothing like that is recorded here. Rather, we begin these verses with the need to insert our own thoughts about what may have happened. Did the bush just stop burning? Did the Lord excuse Moses and tell him everything would be ok? All we can do is speculate because all it says is “So Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law.”

But there is more than just a return here. The name Jethro isn't spelled the same as it was in Exodus 3:1 or even as it will be spelled later in this same verse. Rather, instead of *yitro*, it is spelled *yeter*.

The name *yeter* is spelled just the same as the word meaning “rest” or “remnant,” as well as the word meaning “more” or “better.” As we saw in Exodus 3:1-6, the rapture of the church was perfectly pictured. The rapture implies then that the church is gone and that anyone left will be on only one of two sides.

They will either be a remnant of people who are willing to forsake all for the hope of eternal life, or they will be of the innumerable people who will trade eternity for their temporary existence. The spelling of the name, *yeter*, is showing us this. Abarim says this about the notion of a remnant as found in the Bible –

“It seems that the most fundamental idea of the Biblical remnant is that a remnant is not simply an anonymous sample of the larger collective it's a remnant of, but rather a designated selection that kept the collective together in the first place. ... And it certainly indicates in what grave danger the world is, and how possible the events foreseen by rapture theology — which we here at Abarim Publications generally refute — might come to pass.” Abarim Publications

It's worth note that Abarim wrote this, even though they refute the idea of a rapture. In other words, their words perfectly explain the picture of the rapture, and then a world divided by a remnant, and yet they don't believe in the rapture. They are completely unbiased in their analysis then, which fully supports what they refute, so they aren't making stuff up to fit their opinion about the rapture.

The different spelling of the name of Jethro to Jether is given to show us that the only thing that will save the complete annihilation of Egypt *is* the Hebrew people and the mixed multitude who stick with them. In picture, only the faithful Jews and Gentiles of the end times, who are willing to call out to Christ, will save humanity from complete annihilation.

I believe that one simple name, spelled differently, shows us all of this. The name Jether, representing the remnant, or the “better part” which is saved through trials of whatever type, means “Excellence.” It is an excellent picture of those who are favored by the Lord who saves. Each name, Reuel, Jethro, and Jether, have been given to show us a relationship of people to Christ.

^{18 (con't)} **and said to him, “Please let me go and return to my brethren who *are* in Egypt, and see whether they are still alive.”**

Having been adopted into the family of Reuel by marriage to Zipporah, and having stayed for forty years in the land, Moses asks permission to depart from the clan. His reason is “to return to my brethren who are in Egypt.”

The word translated as “brethren” can mean literal brothers, extended family, and also countrymen. He is asking to return to Egypt (meaning the land of double-distress) in order to return to his people. Though he doesn’t tell Jether this, it is a return in order to deliver them.

Notice how Moses says nothing about the account from the bush. An entire chapter and a half are recorded concerning the talk between the Lord and Moses, and yet it is never mentioned when he returns to ask leave of Jether.

This is normally attributed by scholars to Moses’ humility and not wanting to be a braggadocio about the great task on which he was being sent. However, Adam Clarke adds in an interesting concept which fits well with the next verse and also with what will occur during the tribulation period of the future. His words say –

“...if once imparted to the family of his father-in-law, the news might have reached Egypt before he could get thither, and a general alarm among the Egyptians would in all probability have been the consequence; as fame would not fail to represent Moses as coming to stir up sedition and rebellion, and the whole nation would have been armed against them. It was therefore essentially necessary that the business should be kept secret.” Adam Clarke

Clarke’s thinking is mostly correct. The plagues that are coming in Egypt will come upon an unsuspecting nation, and the plagues that are coming in the tribulation period will come upon an unsuspecting world. One must wonder how this could be possible when the Bible is written and it tells exactly what will occur.

But the Bible also tells us in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 that –

“The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.¹¹ And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,¹² that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

The plagues will be by the hand of God, but neither Pharaoh of the past, nor the anti-Christ of the future will accept that. Utter ruin will come upon those who have utterly rejected the Lord.

¹⁸ (con't) **And Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.”**

His response to Moses is *lek le’shalom* which is exactly translated as “Go in peace.” The approval is given and Moses has been granted his leave to return to Egypt, the land of double-distress. But now, at the end of the same verse that we have been looking at, the name changes to Jethro from Jether.

Though Jethro carries much the same meaning as Jether, the two names have been used to give us a clue concerning the end times. There will be a remnant and there will be a time when the remnant is ready to be delivered. Just as God knew the perfect time for Moses to return to Egypt, He will know the perfect time to accomplish His deliverance of the tribulation saints.

*Someday Christ will resolve to return
Once again to His people Israel
To be with them, His heart does yearn
As the words of Scripture to us do tell*

*And when they call on Him in Spirit and in truth
He will be there to give them aid and strength
They will be like a man of vigor in his youth
When He returns to them in due length*

*May it be soon oh wayward Israel
That you call out to God to remove your heavy chains
He will return to you as when the tide on the shore does swell
When you cry out to Jesus, “Yes, our God reigns!”*

II. The Rod of God (verses 19 & 20)

¹⁹ **Now the Lord said to Moses in Midian,**

Again, Yehovah is introduced into the narrative. He spoke to Moses at Horeb and gave him directions concerning the duties which lay ahead of him, but now he speaks once again to Moses in Midian the “Place of Judgment.”

Each word is given to show pictures of Christ. If it weren't so, it would have said in the previous verse that Moses returned to Jethro his father-in-law *in Midian*. But it waited until *now* to mention Midian.

The order of the introduction of the names and places is perfectly selected to show an intricate set of steps is being followed. There is the church age which happened after Israel rejected Christ. Then the people of Israel cry out to “the God” and He in turn remembers His covenant with them.

After that, there is the rapture of the church. Then God purposes to deliver His people, and after that He sends forth the directive to deliver them. Step by step the order of this account of the past is given to show us the order of what will again come about.

¹⁹ (con't) **“Go, return to Egypt; for all the men who sought your life are dead.”**

These words take us right back to Exodus 2:23 which said, “Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage.”

The narrative of the burning bush followed immediately after those words. But, it doesn't necessarily follow that the actual account of the bush followed after the words of Exodus 2:23. They could have happened before, simultaneously with, or afterwards. So when the king of Egypt died in chapter 2, it may be what the Lord is referring to here in chapter 4.

From this verse, it appears that the king of Egypt died after the account of the bush, but the order is given in Scripture to show a logical sequence of events which will come about in the greater picture of redemptive history, not necessarily a chronological account.

That's why it's important to look for phrases like, "after that time" or "on the next day." Those tell us that things are chronological. If they're missing, then it's possible they're not. In the New Testament, especially in the gospels, this is important so that we can tell what Jesus did and when.

God is looking for people to research His word. In return, He gives us all the assurance we need to feel that everything is under control. When people email you or call you about a question concerning a verse, it's because they have a need.

Sometimes it's a need to be reassured about God's goodness. Sometimes, people want to know if what they heard from the pastor is wrong. And sometimes, a person might need to be reassured that what they are reading isn't a contradiction of something else in the Bible.

If someone thinks there is an error or a contradiction, then the Bible no longer has the same value in their eyes that it once did. To know the details is to be sound in one's faith. All the squishy words in a sermon about how much God loves you really means nothing if the Bible has errors. If there are, then how do we know that one of them isn't the verse about God's love for us?

²⁰ Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt.

In contrast to the horse and the mule which are associated with kingly rule and periods of war, the donkey is associated with both humility and peace. Here Moses is returning to deliver the people of Israel from the hand of Pharaoh, and yet he is coming to them after having placed his wife and sons on a donkey.

The contrast couldn't be more striking. He has abided by the words of Jethro to "Go in peace." Also, in the Hebrew it says "**the** donkey" rather than "a donkey." It is probable that it is worded this way to show that it is his personal donkey upon which he sets them. While they ride, he will lead them on foot.

Notice here too that it mentions both his wife and his "sons" in the plural. But so far only one son, Gershom, has been mentioned. It won't be for another 14 chapters that the name of the next son, Eliezer, is given.

The name Eliezer which means "God of help" is explained by Moses in chapter 18 when he says, "The God of my father *was* my help, and delivered me from the sword of

Pharaoh.” Unlike Gershom, despite him being alive, there is no record of his birth or name to this point.

It is things like this that show us that when a name is given, it is given for a reason and a picture of something else. There was no reason to mention either the birth or naming of Eliezer and so the Bible doesn't bother with it. Every word is selected to show us Christ or the plan of redemption. If something would interfere with that, it isn't mentioned.

This is why Jesus could say in John 5 to the leaders of Israel that the words of Scripture testify to Him. Because they do. Every word has been selected more carefully than the finest implements of the most precise watch or the most complex computer. The Bible is the most marvelous and precious treasure we could ever possess.

²⁰ (con't) **And Moses took the rod of God in his hand.**

The phrasing here is precise. It says he “took the rod of **the** God in his hand.” The Bible is specially pointing this out for emphasis. It is a set of words that would otherwise be completely unnecessary unless it is showing us something specific. When he gets to Egypt and does the miracles, he will use this rod. Therefore, it would be obvious he brought it along.

Saying this here is actually no different than saying that he took along his sandals, unless it is asking us to focus on the significance of the rod. The rod of “the” God is a picture of the power of the Lord. It will be the implement by which the wondrous works of God will be wrought.

But it isn't the mere rod which accomplishes the miracles. Rather it is the power of God of which the rod is emblematic. The definite article is intended to show us that this rod is set in contradistinction to the rods of the false gods of Egypt. This is the rod of “the” God.

Think of it! Moses is crossing the wilderness with a wife, and his children on his only donkey, and he is carrying a shepherd's rod in his hand. And yet, in this unlikely appearance is found the one person who will issue forth all the great miracles of God which have been discussed and analyzed for 3500 years.

And in this seemingly humble rod is found all of the power and authority to effect those great miracles. It is truly astonishing. As Keil says –

“Poor as his outward appearance is, yet he has in his hand the staff before which Pharaoh’s pride and all his power must bow.” Carl Friedrich Keil

*The rod of God filled with power and might
Imagine the terrors, and each awesome sight*

*The power of God is like a double-edged sword
It cuts to destroy in some, while others it does save
Great and terrible is the display of the Lord
And the judgment is rendered on how we behave*

*For those who are the redeemed, the wonders are great indeed
To see God’s hand in such an awesome display of power
But for those who reject Him, He will finally proceed
To come after them with terrors in the final judgment hour*

III. I will Harden His Heart (verses 21-23)

²¹ And the Lord said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand.

In chapter 3, Moses was given three signs to do for the elders of Israel. Those signs are not what the Lord is telling Moses about here. They were given for the purpose of validating his call before Israel, not to convince Pharaoh of anything. The wonders He speaks of here were mentioned later in chapter 3, in verse 20 –

“So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go.” Exodus 3:20

The word for “miracles” comes from the Hebrew word *mopheth* which speaks of something out of the ordinary course of nature. This corresponds to the Greek word *terata* which means portent. These portents would then be unusual phenomena, either natural or supernatural, which cry out for an explanation.

It is these which have been granted to Moses to accomplish, but the Lord says that they are wonders which He has “put in your hand.” The hand holds the rod and the rod is emblematic of the power of God. Therefore, it is the granting of authority, symbolized by the rod in his hand.

²¹ (con't) **But I will harden his heart,**

“I will harden.” What does that mean? It is one of the most controversial subjects to be found among scholars and its meaning will affect one’s overall theology concerning the work of Christ in a person’s life. Does God choose people for salvation apart from their will, or is free-will a consideration in one’s salvation?

The I is emphatic, “I will harden his heart.” But even that has to be considered against the effect of the wonders which are wrought. The hardening of Pharaoh’s heart is ascribed in a variety of ways during the next six chapters. Sometimes, it says “The Lord” hardened Pharaoh’s heart.

At other times it is ascribed to Pharaoh directly. And at other times it is ascribed to the action of the heart of Pharaoh itself. In this, the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart is ascribed to Pharaoh himself ten times, and it is ascribed to the work of God ten times.

Therefore, this is telling us something about human nature in relation to the work of God. They are synonymous in the sense that they are one in the same operation being viewed from a different perspective. To understand this, we can think of the effects of heat on two different substances – say wax and clay.

When heat is applied to wax, it softens. When it is applied to clay, it hardens. The source of the heat may be the sun, a metaphor for God. The heat itself would then be a metaphor for the miracles that are performed. And the wax and the clay would be metaphors for either a receptive heart or a non-receptive one.

As will be seen in the coming account of the plagues, it is Pharaoh’s self-determined will which has the priority throughout the wonders and therefore, the Lord’s hardening influence presupposes the non-receptive, self-willed state of Pharaoh.

This is no different than a person in a union refusing to take out the garbage at work because it’s not in his job description, and yet willingly taking it out at home. He is married, and so whether it is in his job description or not doesn’t matter. He’d do it for his sweetheart anyway.

But at work, the more pressure he receives from his boss, the more he hardens himself. In the end, and even though he is only harming himself towards his boss, he simply becomes more obdurate and more bullheaded.

The fact is, that the Lord doesn't come into humanity and zap a heart, making it hard. Rather, he allows us to follow our own perverse course and path, even if it harms us. Paul explains this exactly in Romans 1. First in verse 18, he shows how man willingly suppresses the truth –

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...”

Eventually because of a result of that, God gives them over to themselves fully as Paul notes in verse 28 –

“And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting...”

As man sins, God withdraws the light of revelation from the mind because this is how we have been constructed. In the same way, when we withhold any natural affection, such as compassion, eventually that affections completely dies away. If something doesn't soften the heart, it will by default harden it.

And this is exactly what we see in Pharaoh. The first miracles are lesser miracles, even things that Pharaoh's magicians can do. By the time the greater miracles come, Pharaoh is so willingly hardened against the Lord, that it is said that the Lord hardens him. The reason is because the Lord continues to throw more at him in his already self-hardened state.

This same Hebrew word, which is *khazaq*, is used in a positive sense many times. A memorable one is from Joshua 10:25 –

Then Joshua said to them, “Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; **be strong** and of good courage, for thus the Lord will do to all your enemies against whom you fight.”

Nobody would even think that the Joshua is telling the people, “be hardened.” Rather, he is saying, “be hardy” and he is telling them as an encouragement, not as an active action. The Lord isn't making them hardy. Rather, the Lord's words through Joshua are encouraging them to be hardy.

The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is a self-inflicted wound which was known would happen before it happened. As Clarke says, “God gave him up to judicial blindness, so

that he rushed on stubbornly to his own destruction.” And there is a reason why God chose to allow this...

²¹ (con’t) **so that he will not let the people go.**

The hardening of Pharaoh’s heart had a purpose, and that purpose was so that Pharaoh wouldn’t let the people go. And by not letting the people go, there would be more glory revealed. And in that revelation, there would be yet more hardening which would bring about more glorious action. This is stated explicitly in Exodus 7:3 –

“And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.”

As all of this pictures judgment on the unrepentant world and false gods of the end times, all we need to do is look around the world now to see how deserved it is. The world is a cesspool of enmity towards Christ and towards the love of God found in Christ.

It is ripe for judgment and as judgment comes, the world will see His marvels displayed, but they won’t repent. For each rejection, He will be seen all the more righteous in their final judgment and condemnation. This is exactly stated in Revelation 16:9 –

“And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.”

God will either receive glory actively from us in voluntarily worship, or He will receive it passively through the judgment of those who voluntarily refuse to worship Him. Either way, God will receive the glory He is justly due from His creatures.

²² **Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Israel is My son, My firstborn.**

This statement, which is being said to Pharaoh, would be perfectly and completely understood by him. The office of Pharaoh and the person who held that office was known as the “son of Ra,” or the “son of the sun.” To Pharaoh, the sun was a god and he believed he was the son of this god.

This alone would be enough to bring about an immediate hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, and the Lord knew it. Thus, even though it is Pharaoh’s choice, the Lord can say rightly, “I will harden his heart.”

The son-ship of Israel is something that permeates the Bible. It is used literally as well as pictorially. In Hosea 11:1, it says –

“When Israel *was* a child, I loved him,
And out of Egypt I called My son.” Hosea 11:1

This was literally fulfilled at the exodus and it is also cited by Matthew as a parallel and picture of Christ who was taken to Egypt after His birth to save Him from the wrath of Herod.

Too many scholars though say that the words “Israel *is* My son, My firstborn” means that Israel was *as dear to* the Lord as a son. But this isn’t what it says. It says that “Israel *is* my son.” It then designates Israel as His firstborn.

This is a divine son-ship which is spiritual in nature. However, it came about through a purchase. This is seen in Deuteronomy 32:6 where Moses tells the people that it is the Lord who bought them. It is a national purchase of a people to be His own special treasure, which is exactly what they are called in Deuteronomy 14.

But in these words is something else that is normally overlooked. By saying that Israel is the Lord’s firstborn, it presupposes that more sons will come. This is dealt with in immense detail in the New Testament. As a people Israel was admitted into the work of Christ in advance of His coming. As a people we are admitted into the work of Christ after the completion of His work.

Each, whether from Israel or from the nations, is still saved individually by faith, but all fall under the right of admittance because of the work of Christ. When faith is exercised, then one becomes a child of God through adoption.

²³ So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me.

A contrast to Israel’s son-ship will now be made. But before it is made, a reason is given that Pharaoh should let him go. It is that Israel may serve the Lord. The word for “serve” has several meanings. It can mean to worship and so some translations say it that way. But it also means to work.

This is how it is used to describe the labors of the Israelites under the Egyptians in Exodus 1. And so a contrast is being made. In essence the Lord is saying, “You will let him go from his service under you so that he can come and serve Me.”

But the service is a form of worship as we will see in the chapters ahead. And it is this which man was and is called to do. At the beginning, the Bible says that “the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.”

However, based on the context, those words “tend and keep” have a more accurate meaning, which is to “serve and worship.” This is the intent of Scripture. It is to show how God has developed a plan to free man from bondage and to return him to the state he once was in when he was placed in the Garden of Eden.

On the last page of the Bible, this is realized. There in Revelation 22, it is noted that man will both serve and worship the Lord God for all eternity. This verse here is a stepping stone along that path. The Lord has a plan to deliver Israel for this purpose, and is using it as a greater picture of man’s deliverance from the bondage of sin and the devil to once again serve and worship Him.

23 (con’t) But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.”””

The contrast is now made. “If you refuse, your penalty will be commensurate with the request I have made. A son for a son is the offer.” But this isn’t recorded as having been spoken to Pharaoh until Exodus 11:5. By then Pharaoh’s heart will be so hard, that he will refuse, even at the high cost which is stated.

Each plague was designed to build upon the next, further hardening Pharaoh’s heart in order to lead to this final, terrible plague. But when the Lord accomplishes something, He makes sure that it is complete. If we can then equate this to the end times, the judgment upon the world will be absolute.

But, and this is personally important to each of us, if we harden our own hearts, we are the ones who will suffer because of it. Some of us are saved, but we allow a root of bitterness to enter into our walk with Christ.

When this happens, we lose heart, we lose joy, and we lose fellowship. And in the end, we will lose eternal rewards when we come before Him for judgment.

But some of us aren’t saved. We haven’t yet called out to Christ for His healing hand in our lives. We hear the call and we say, “Maybe later.” Eventually, we just ignore the words completely. Our heart has become so calloused that the Spirit’s wooing no longer stirs us.

Before that happens, I would hope that you would soften your heart and allow Christ to come in to you and save you. Please let me tell you what you need to do in order for this to happen...

Closing Verse: *“Happy is the man who is always reverent,
But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.” Proverbs 28:14*

Next Week: Exodus 4:24-31 (A Husband of Blood and a Divine Visitation) (13th Exodus Sermon)

At the end of David’s life, he faced a time of terrible trial. The Bible tells us that even when covered, he couldn’t get warm; he was cold all the time. David didn’t get up and slay the giant of his affliction. Instead, he trusted in the greater provisions of the Lord, the eternal promises of which he would someday partake.

Let’s be sure to follow the examples of great men like Abraham, Moses, and David who kept their hearts soft and trusted the word of the Lord through affliction and through great difficulties which presented themselves before them.

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Israel is My Son, My Firstborn

So Moses went and returned to Jethro
His father-in-law, and to him said
“Please let me return, let me go
To my brethren who are in Egypt, among whom I was bred

And see whether they are alive still
And Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace, as you will.”
Now the Lord to Moses in Midian said
“Go, return to Egypt
For all the men who sought your life are dead
Then Moses took his wife and his sons
And set them on a donkey, as we understand

And he returned to Egypt the land
And Moses took the rod of God in his hand

And the Lord said to Moses
“When you go back to Egypt the land
See that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh
Which I have put in your hand

But I will harden his heart as you know
So that he will not let the people go
Then you shall say to Pharaoh
“Thus says the Lord
Israel is My son, My firstborn
This is my spoken word

So I say to you, let My son go
That he may serve Me, I do warn
But if you refuse to let him go even so
Indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn

The Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart it is true
But it was done by Him in a passive way
When Pharaoh refused the Lord’s word to do
His heart grew hard, and harder each day
Such is how sin affects our lives
It ruins the person that we should be
It affects our families, our children, our wives
And it also affects us each personally
And so don’t let your heart grow hard towards the Lord
But rather draw near to Him and He will draw near to you
Walk closely with Him and keep in His word
This is the thing that He wills for us to do

Such is the nature of our gracious God
That He will run to us when sin we do eschew
And we will be content and joyful on the road we trod
Because He is ever Faithful and True

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 4:24-31

(A BRIDEGROOM OF BLOOD AND A DIVINE VISITATION)

Introduction: In any relationship, there seems to be a dominant person and one who yields to the other. When I was young, my father was a realtor. He mentioned one time that there was always one person who was the ultimate decider of whether a house would be purchased or not by a couple. It was this one that the realtor would focus on. However, he said it wasn't always easy to tell which it actually was. Sometimes the true leader was quieter than the other, and one might incorrectly assume that the other person was the one to target. When Paul and Barnabas were commissioned for their missionary work, they went out spreading the word.

At one time, while in Lystra, Paul healed a man crippled from birth. When the crowds saw it, they said that the gods had come down to them. In Acts 14:12 it says, "And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker."

They thought that Barnabas was the lead god and that Paul was his chief speaker. In today's verses, we'll see Aaron speaking for Moses, but he is doing so to highlight Moses' ability to deliver the people of Israel from their bondage.

Together they will do great things in the sight of the people and eventually in the sight of Pharaoh, and Israel will be led out in a marvelous way. And like Paul and Barnabas, Moses and Aaron will have a time of disagreement as well, but in all they will make a marvelous duo as they lead and instruct the people of God.

Text Verse: *You led Your people like a flock
By the hand of Moses and Aaron. Psalm 77:20*

The flock of Israel will be led through some wondrous events in the chapters ahead. Together Moses and Aaron will be a fitting team for the task, and, at God's command, they will establish a religious system that has had an effect on the entire world.

After a brief look at three unusual verses of Exodus 4, these two great men will meet up and begin the work set before them. God has ordained each of us with certain gifts and certain abilities. Sometimes they work best when united directly with those of others. This is certainly true with Aaron and Moses.

If you find a person that you can accomplish great things for God with, then solidify that friendship and go forth in His strength. We have examples such as Moses and Aaron to

remind us that with God, all things are possible. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Husband of Blood (verses 24-26)

²⁴ And it came to pass on the way,

Moses has received his commission and his instructions. The last specific directions to him, and his compliance to them, began in verses 19 and 20 which said –

“Now the Lord said to Moses in Midian, ‘Go, return to Egypt; for all the men who sought your life are dead.’ ²⁰ Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the rod of God in his hand.”

After that, He was instructed about what to say to Pharaoh once he got there which comprised verses 21-23:

“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. ²² Then you shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Israel is My son, My firstborn. ²³ So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.’””

All of a sudden, this strange set of three verses is introduced. It seems to make little sense, but when taken in connection with those two previous sets of verses, it becomes clearer. The last thing it noted physically is that he “took the rod of God in his hand.” He bears the symbol of the authority and power of God.

Because of this, he must be a suitable representative of Him and of His standards if he is to bear the responsibilities associated with those duties as His representative. Then, in his instructions of what he was to say to Pharaoh, there was a penalty noted for disobedience – the death of the firstborn.

The implication is that for obedience to God, there is no consequence, but for disobedience, there is a resulting penalty – death. The account here is given to show

that this is the standard and that not only are the enemies of God's people subject to punishment, but so are God's people. Obedience is expected by all.

²⁴ (con't) **at the encampment,**

The Hebrew says *ba'malon*. It basically means "at the inn." The word *malon* is a resting place, an inn, etc. However, where they are located, it would simply mean a stopping point for the night. Whether they set up a tent, slept in a cave, or if there was a standard caravan stopping point with a well and a palm tree, it would be rather rustic.

²⁴ (con't) **that the Lord met him**

The Hebrew is specific, *v'yipgeshehu Yehovah*, "and met him Yehovah." What isn't specific is *how* Yehovah met him. Some see this as an anthropomorphic way of saying that Moses fell ill by unseen hand of the Lord, not an actual visitation. But the word *pagash* implies to meet or encounter someone.

The Lord has already visibly appeared to quite a few people in Genesis – Adam, Abraham, Lot, Jacob, etc. – and He will continue to do so at various points through the rest of the Old Testament, and so there is no reason to believe that this isn't a physical appearance of the incarnate Lord. He has appeared and he has specific intent in this appearance...

²⁴ (con't) **and sought to kill him.**

The Hebrew is again clear in saying *v'baqesh hamitow* – and sought to kill him. But it isn't clear in *who* is intended to be put to death. Is it Moses or one of his sons? Not all, but most scholars side with it being Moses. He has been the center of the narrative, he has the commission, and he will continue to be the story's focus.

But it doesn't make sense to assume that the Lord would kill the person who has been given the sign of assurance, the signs of the commission, and the implement of authority for carrying out the task. Further, it doesn't fit the very pattern of the two previous sets of verses that we just looked at a moment ago.

Obedience to Yehovah is expected or the *firstborn son* will die by the hand of Yehovah. Therefore, the logical conclusion is that his son, not Moses, is who is intended here. In Genesis 17, these words were spoken to Abraham –

“As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰This *is* My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; ¹¹and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. ¹²He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. ¹³He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.” Genesis 17:9-14

The child who is not circumcised was to be cut off from the people, not the father. Moses is returning to Egypt, and so the obedience, which fellowship with Israel entails, is required. How could a man lead the people without showing the same obedience to the law as they were expected to show.

As the New Testament tells us concerning this –

“...for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?” 1 Timothy 3:5

The child is uncircumcised and therefore the situation must be remedied or the child will die. At the same time, Moses will learn another lesson in obedience to the call of God upon his life.

²⁵ Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son

Hearing the plight of her child who was to be killed, it is Zipporah who takes the sharp stone, probably a knife of flint, and cut off her son’s foreskin. The word for “sharp stone” is *tsor* and it signifies a hard stone. As flint has been used for thousands of years for this and other purposes, it is certainly the most likely implement.

With this immensely sharp and effective tool, she performed the neglected rite of circumcision on her son. No reason is given why he was uncircumcised and there are a thousand speculations. That isn’t really what matters though. It matters less whose fault it was or what the family was thinking. Rather, he simply wasn’t circumcised according to the law of the Hebrews.

The most possible speculation which bears support from the few words we are given is that Zipporah was somehow involved in the neglect. This is because she is the one who now assumes the responsibility.

Perhaps she didn't want her son circumcised out of affection or because she didn't want him identified with Moses' people. But now the error of the decision is handled by her.

²⁵ (con't) **and cast it at Moses' feet,**

va'taga l'raglav – that's all it says. "And touched to feet." The name "Moses" has been inserted by the translators because they think he is the object of the action. But that is only an assumption. Also, the form of the verb should be taken as "touch" (qal) not "cast" (hiphil). It is a deliberate act of touching, not a careless act of tossing.

Whose feet are touched with the foreskin is not identified. There are three possible choices of those who are present. The Lord, Moses, or the child. Does it matter? Well, it matters to the Lord who gave us this word.

It also matters enough that no specific name has been given. In other words, it is asking us to consider what is going on without being told what is going on. The only One who has been explicitly mentioned and who will be implicitly mentioned again in the next verse is the Lord, not Moses.

In fact, in the first major section of this chapter, which went from verse 1 to verse 14, Moses was mentioned by name five times. In the next section, verse 18, he was mentioned twice, in the next, 19-23, he is mentioned four times, and in the last, which is 27-31, he is mentioned four times. But in this one section of three verses his name isn't mentioned at all. Curious yes... but a clue.

It appears that his name has been intentionally left out for us to focus on someone else, the Lord. If this is so, then it means that Zipporah has circumcised her son and then taken the foreskin and touched the feet of the Lord with it. It is a demonstration of fidelity to the ancient covenant and a request for mercy. As Matthew Henry says of her act –

"When God discovers to us what is amiss in our lives, we must give all diligence to amend it speedily." Matthew Henry

But why did she touch it to His feet? It seems like an irreverent act to do so, doesn't it? But in the Bible, the feet are somewhat of an exempt portion of the body concerning what is clean and what isn't. Having dirty feet doesn't necessarily mean defilement.

When someone came into a house to eat, they washed their feet, implying that the feet were unclean before washing them. They have trod upon the unclean world and yet they are not wholly unclean; the feet have been exempted. At the Last Supper, Jesus washed the feet of the disciples. In response to Peter's rash words about the matter, Jesus said –

“He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.” John 13:10

When Jesus rose from the dead according to the book of John, Mary went to hold Him there in the garden, but He told her to not cling to Him. However, when the women met Him on the road in Matthew, they were allowed to cling to His feet.

Even from the times prior to Moses, this concept of the exemption of the feet was known. When the Lord appeared to Abraham before destroying Sodom, Abraham, knowing it was the Lord, offered to wash His feet. This is found in Genesis 18 –

“Then the Lord appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. ² So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw *them*, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, ³ and said, ‘My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. ⁴ Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. ⁵ And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant.’” Genesis 18:1-5

These and other examples show us that what Zipporah did by touching the feet of the Lord with the foreskin of her son was not irreverent, but rather an understood petition for mercy from her.

In Revelation 1:15, Jesus feet are noted as being as fine brass, representing judgment. And even at the beginning of the Bible, in Genesis 3:15, it is the foot of the Lord which is indicated as crushing the head of the serpent.

In such examples and others, we can see that Zipporah's actions were not disrespectful, but rather they were in accord with custom concerning the feet. But why would she do this? The answer is found in the continuation of the verse...

²⁵ (con't) **and said, "Surely you *are* a husband of blood to me!"**

ki khatan dammim atah li. In the Hebrew, the word blood is plural, "Surely husband of bloods you *are* to me." The sign of circumcision was the sign and the seal of the covenant community. Abraham was justified by faith in Genesis 15, and then came the sign of that faith many years later in Genesis 17.

Zipporah was acknowledging this faith through the circumcision of her son. The bloody ritual showed faith in what the ritual signified. Until then he was not considered a true part of the covenant people because the sign was lacking. If that was because of her petitioning Moses for the sake of not hurting her son, then she was now showing that the petition had been removed.

It is an acknowledgment that faith in the Lord's word, *evidenced in the circumcision*, is more important than anything else. The circumcision only points to the faith which required it. Without the faith, the circumcision would have been pointless. This is testified to through her touching His feet in a petition for mercy.

²⁶ **So He let him go.**

The words are *v'yirep mimennu*. It means "and relaxed from him." It is implying that the action He was going to take has been "let go" or "cancelled;" He has ceased from His intent to carry out the execution of the sentence for covenant violation. The request for mercy has been made and now mercy has been granted.

²⁶ (con't) **Then she said, "You *are* a husband of blood!"—because of the circumcision.**

khatan dammim la'mulot – "husband of bloods because of circumcisions." The word for circumcision here is used only this once in the Bible and it is in the *plural form*. Zipporah is making a pronouncement because of what occurred. The circumcision was accepted and the Lord restrained from His act.

Because of this, she is stating that through circumcision, one is accepted by Him. But this can't mean that the act of removing the foreskin is what ties a person to Him. If this were the case, then anyone who is circumcised in the foreskin is saved by a mere deed.

There are many cultures, even in Egypt, who circumcised in the foreskin. And yet, they are not a part of the covenant community. Rather, it is faith in the Lord and His word that brings them into covenant relationship. The circumcision is merely a sign of this. That is why Paul, in the New Testament says this –

“For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.” Romans 2:28, 29

Paul speaks of “circumcision of the heart” regardless of the state of the flesh. And this concept of “circumcision of the heart” actually goes back to the Old Testament. Both Deuteronomy and Jeremiah show us that mere circumcision of the flesh is useless without also having the heart circumcised to the things of God.

Paul continues to explain the rite throughout his epistles, but a summary of his words is found in Galatians 5 –

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.” Galatians 5:6

Zipporah exercised faith and her deed reflected that faith. What this asks us to consider then is what this means in her life. Moses had been called to go to Egypt and free the Hebrews. It appears that she must have felt that his task somehow left her out of the covenant promises and so she determined to go along with him.

Why would we suppose this? There are a few reasons. First, in the next verse, Aaron will come to meet Moses at Horeb. Moses had to have turned around after this and gone back to Horeb. Secondly, Zipporah and the sons are not mentioned again until Exodus 18. When they are mentioned, it will say this –

“And Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people—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 with her two sons, of whom the name of one *was* Gershom (for he said, 'I have been a stranger in a foreign land') ⁴ and the name of the

other *was* Eliezer (for *he said*, 'The God of my father *was* my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh')."

It is apparent from this that Zipporah now understood that the redemption of Israel from Egypt meant that she was also included in the Lord's provision, regardless of whether she was actually there with Israel or not. The receiving of the Law at Sinai comes after her reunion with Moses, not before.

She will be there when the sign of promise which was given to Moses at the burning bush comes to pass. Together they will worship at the mountain of God. (NOTE: After more study, I am certain that Zipporah and the sons came to Sinai after the giving of the law. This is based on information from the Exodus 18:1-12 sermon). So the question is, "Why is this account, which has been termed "obscure, "unusual," and so on by so many scholars, even included?"

It seems like almost like an unnecessary insert between the call of Moses and the actual work which he has been called to. Even if it appears he was heading out in compliance to the call, it seems perplexing that this inserted detail is included. Couldn't the Lord just have said from the bush, "Moses, before you leave, your sons need to be circumcised?"

Wouldn't that have been a sufficient way of avoiding what is happening here? If so, and surely it is, then there must be a reason *why* the Lord allowed this to come to this point. There must be a reason *why* the specific details are given. And if there is, then the reason must both teach us a lesson and also picture something else later in history.

I believe these three verses are intended to show us that even though the church has been raptured out of the world, during the tribulation there is still hope for those who come to Christ. We saw at the beginning of Chapter 3 that the flock was taken to the west of Horeb, a picture of the rapture.

However, Zipporah and the children remained. As Zipporah is a picture of those in the church, and the children of Moses remained uncircumcised, then they picture those in the church who missed the rapture. They were never circumcised in their hearts. In other words, the child is a picture of those nominal Christians, or other people of the world, who never believed what they heard.

Those in this state are destined to death, just like all people on the earth during the tribulation. But there is mercy, even for those during this time if they call on Christ. It

was thought that Zipporah had to go along with Moses and join with Israel to participate in what lay ahead, but this account taught them that this wasn't so.

Rather, they needed faith in the Lord to be right with the Lord. They needed circumcision – not specifically circumcision of the flesh, but a right-standing with God. This is why the term “husband of **bloods** because of **circumcisions**” was used. The words “bloods” and “circumcisions” are plural because there is circumcision of the flesh and there is circumcision of the heart.

Christ is the Redeemer of Israel, and He is the Redeemer of those of the church as well, even those left at the rapture. Christ is the Lord, they just needed to get that straight.

*No matter where you are from or who you are
And regardless of anything you have done, no matter how wild
You can always make a new **start**, when you circumcise your **heart**
And you will be adopted as God's precious child*

*And a bridegroom of blood to you He will be
When you place your faith in the Lord
He will look upon your heart and there He will see
That You have believed in Him and in His superior word*

*Such is the nature of God's saving grace
And such is the wonder of His infinite mercy
Instead of His back, you will look upon His face
And in His eyes, for you... eternal love you will see*

II. A Meeting at the Mountain of “the” God (verses 27 & 28)

²⁷ And the Lord said to Aaron, “Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.”

Instead of Moses traveling to Egypt with his family, and instead of him traveling alone to Egypt, the Lord now provides the proper format for those on a great mission to follow by initiating the effort. He directs Aaron to go to Moses.

As we noted a few sermons ago, when the Lord commissions someone for a task, the norm is that He will have two go together. Rather than Moses going alone to Egypt and

finding Aaron, Aaron is directed to the wilderness to meet Moses. From there, the two will set out on the great mission of deliverance.

Moses has been freed from the burden of having a wife and children to deal with and has been given the additional freedom of a partner to help him through the difficult times ahead.

27 (con't) So he went and met him on the mountain of God,

In obedience to the word of the Lord, Aaron went into the wilderness. Whether they had met up before and Aaron knew the location or not isn't stated. All we have to go on is that it is Aaron who goes to Moses and it is to the mountain of "the" God.

Again as when this mountain was mentioned before, there is a definite article in front of it. It is *har ha'elohim*, "the mountain of 'the' God." There is particular attention being drawn to the significance of this mountain which is lost in the translation.

27 (con't) and kissed him.

Finally the verse ends with these words. Kisses are so rarely mentioned in the Bible that I always try to highlight them. Out of the jillions of kisses in human history, only about 37 are noted in the Old Testament and about 15 in the New.

In the book of Exodus, there will only be two. There is this one here between Moses and Aaron before the exodus, and there will be one between Moses and Jethro after the exodus. They are both between men, they are both signs of a bond of affection between family members, and they are both at times of reunions in greeting.

One is to a Hebrew, the other to a Gentile. There are contrasts between them, but there is also the confirmation of the bond in Christ regardless of national origin or location. There is harmony between peoples who belong to the Lord. It is a picture of the saved of the tribulation period – both Jew and Gentile.

To this point, Aaron has only been mentioned once and all we know of Aaron is that he speaks well. The Lord has selected him as Moses' mouthpiece before Pharaoh. Now he has been selected to journey to Moses and begin his great task, one he as yet knows nothing about. But that is about to change...

28 So Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which He had commanded him.

What is obvious is that Aaron knew that Moses had been selected for a purpose. He was directed to go to Moses on the mountain of *the* God and meet with him. Now that he is here, Moses merely had to tell him of the words of the Lord and of the signs he was commanded to do.

It doesn't say that Moses showed him the signs, but that he told him of them. There would be no need to record that he did the signs for Aaron in order to prove his words. It was Aaron who was first directed by the Lord to go to Moses. Because he was, he wouldn't need to be swayed by the signs.

This doesn't mean Moses didn't do the signs for him. "Hey, watch this...!" But it is unnecessary for the Bible to show that Aaron needed convincing, because he didn't. The same, however, is not true with the leaders of Israel as will be seen in the verses ahead...

*On the mountain of God, His people gather there
And rejoice in the reunion with those long departed
A kiss of joy for the cheek and arms raised in the air
A "Hallelujah" for a shout as the reunion is started*

*And in His presence, brothers will forever rejoice
Knowing that God brought them to His sacred mountain
Through believing His word, and making the choice
To drink from the waters of His overflowing fountain*

*Yes, what great things our God has done for us!
It is a gift to any and all who will but receive Jesus*

III. So the People Believed (verses 29-31)

²⁹ Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel.

Nothing more is recorded of the time of Moses' reunion, departing, travel, or arrival with Aaron. There are no recorded goodbye meals at the tent of Jethro, nor are there any stops along the journey recorded as in the previous verses.

Every word which is given has been carefully selected for a purpose. Nothing superfluous is added; nothing needed is lacking. Redemptive history has an amazingly detailed and precise record for humanity to read and consider.

Without any other words of record, we find Moses and Aaron in Egypt and together they have gone to gather Israel's elders. The implication is that there is a basic structure within the Israelite nation that already existed prior to the arrival of Moses.

The bond of brotherhood between this people has remained united in a unique and unbroken way for over 3500 years. And even when living within the confines of larger societies, they have remained distinct from them and they have had their own internal organizational structures.

The leaders of this set of organizations have been called for a very special meeting; a destiny changing meeting; a meeting with their new leader, and a reunion of fellowship with the Lord who established and called them as a people.

³⁰ And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses.

As the spokesperson for Moses, Aaron is the one who gave the presentation of the words to the sons of Israel. He would already have been known among the people and so rather than seeing a defect in Moses due to his slow speech, they would see the strength in Moses because of his known brother's support of him.

This account doesn't mean that Moses didn't speak, but that Aaron did. They may have asked Moses for words, but the words of the commission are what is presented by Aaron. The fact that Moses may have then answered questions is actually in accord with the directions Paul gives for the church in the New Testament –

“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.” 1 Corinthians 14:29

What matters is what is said, Aaron passed on the words of confirmation concerning Moses' election by God to be the leader of the sons of Israel.

³⁰ (con't) Then he did the signs in the sight of the people.

This seems to imply that Aaron not only spoke on Moses' behalf, but that he also performed the signs. Others disagree and insert Moses here as the Bible's unnamed sign-giver. Either is possible because later in Exodus, Aaron will perform signs in front of Pharaoh as well as Moses performing them.

I would think it is Moses who performed them though. What matters is not what is unstated, but what is stated. The words were spoken, the signs were given, and a result occurred...

³¹ So the people believed;

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Aaron spoke the word of God, the word was backed up by the power of God as testified to in the signs, each of which points to Christ, and the people believed the word they had been given. Again, as I have noted in the past, we have no less of a testimony than the people of Israel did.

We have the word and the sign. They are combined into one condensed whole now which is known as the Bible. It is both a word to the people, and it is a sign to the people. The unquenchable power of God is displayed in its pages and it is displayed in the lives of the people it has changed.

This same process is seen even here as the words of verse 31 and the 4th chapter of Exodus finish...

^{31 (con't)} and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.

Those gathered heard the good news, the word of the Lord. The miracles confirmed that good news to the people, and the people believed. The many years of affliction had not been overlooked by the Lord. Rather, the time of the Lord's divine visitation showed that He had never forgotten them.

They now realized that they had never left His mind. He was ever-attentive to their burdened state. The word for "visited" here is *paqad*. It is a word which has no comparable single word in English, and so it must rather be described.

One scholar, a guy named Speiser, says that, "There is probably no other Hebrew verb that has caused translators as much trouble as *paqad*." In the way it is used here, it "almost always has the sense, now largely obsolete, of 'making a visitation' and points to an action that produces a great change in the position of a subordinate either for good or for ill." HAW

It indicates "overseeing or looking into a matter and then attending to it." In other words, the Lord divinely looked into the affairs of Israel and attended to the misery they

faced which had gone on for so long. In His visiting, he would grant them freedom from their captivity once again.

And what a comforting thought for us to end on. The people of Israel suffered under the weight of bondage, and much of that was due to a self-inflicted wound of having turned from the Lord and toward idols and false gods.

And yet, because they bore His name, He never left them and He never forsook them. He was ready to attend to them as soon as they called out to Him. When they did, the deliverer showed up at their doorsteps with the good news that they would be attended to.

If this is true for them, and it certainly is, then it is true for us too. God allows us to make our own bad mistakes and even to suffer the consequences of them. But for those who are His, He will never forsake them. Instead He simply waits for their heart to return to Him.

And for those who are faithful to Him and still suffer, there is always a reason for the trials. He is molding us and shaping us for His reasons. We are not left unattended to, even in our times of trial. He is always there with His ear listening to the sound of our heartfelt cries.

If you have never experienced the perfect peace and contentment which comes from a relationship with God through His Son Jesus, I hope you will allow me a moment to share this wonderful good news with you now...

Closing Verse: *He sent Moses His servant,
And Aaron whom He had chosen.
²⁷ They performed His signs among them,
And wonders in the land of Ham. Psalm 105:26, 27*

Next Week: Exodus 5:1-9 (Thus Says the Lord God of Israel) (14th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

A Bridegroom of Blood and a Divine Visitation

And it came to pass on the way
At the encampment where they did stay
That the Lord met him that day
And sought him to slay

Then Zipporah took a sharp stone
And cut off the foreskin of her son with alacrity
And cast it at Moses' feet as if to atone
And said, "Surely you are a husband of blood to me!"

So He let him go, having made the decision
Then she said, "You are a husband of blood!"
Because of the circumcision

And the Lord said to Aaron in a divine nod
"Go into the wilderness, Moses to meet
So he went and met him on the mountain of God
And kissed him in a reunion so sweet

So Moses told Aaron all the words
Everything, so that he would understand
Of the Lord who had sent him
And all the signs which He did command

Then Moses and Aaron went to tell
And gathered together all
The elders of the children of Israel
Together the assembly they did call

And Aaron told all the words
Which the Lord to Moses had spoken
Then he did the signs
In the sight of the people; they were given this token

So the people believed
And surely their hearts were relieve

And when they heard that the Lord
Had visited the children of Israel
And that He had looked on their affliction
Then they bowed their heads and worshiped for a spell

God never forgets His covenant nor His people
Though they may suffer, they are always on His mind
Whether in a dark prison or under a church steeple
Let us praise Him for His tender mercies so kind

For His promises are greater than any trial
His love is endless and His attentive care never ends
After the troubles and woes come the times we smile
As He gathers together His children, His friends

What an honor to be known as God's friend
And it came because of the Gift of love, our Lord Jesus
We shall hail the Lamb for years without end
For He has done such marvelous things for us

Yes praise You O God for the promises of Your precious word
We exalt You and praise You through Jesus our Lord

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 5:1-9 (THUS SAYS THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL)

Introduction: Religion. The world is full of religion. It is full of types of religion, and it is full of people who follow religion. The source of a religion and the premise of each religion can tell us if the religion is true or not.

Understanding and comprehending the world around us, the morals we possess, and the nature of the scientific disciplines can all point us to the truth or false nature of religion as well. If we consider the source of, for example, Scientology, we can know the religion is false. A man made it up out of his own head with the explicit intent of making money, as he himself said.

If we consider the premise of Hinduism, we can know that it is false. Hinduism is polytheistic, it teaches that there are many gods. But through mere logical thinking, we can know that this is not possible. The same is true with Islam. It teaches that God is a monad, a single entity.

However, if this were true, there would be no creation because He *would* never go beyond himself; he *could* never go beyond himself. Love would be impossible for a monad god. We can know all of these things and so much more by simply thinking about them. But thinking is hard work and it isn't popular, even among great thinkers.

Sometimes great thinkers think greatly about what they want to think about, not about what needs to be considered. When this happens, the great thinking was a waste of thinking because it greatly missed what needed to be thought. Atheists usually follow this avenue of contemplation.

When we have presuppositions about the world around us, or about the nature of God, we will inevitably use them as a mark that we should work towards, even if the mark is wrong. However, if we get it right, if we have the right information, then we can properly direct our thoughts towards the truth concerning the nature of God.

When we do this, we can then exercise faith in that God and in what He has presented to His creatures. If you want to know more along those lines, you can go back and watch my Genesis 1:1 sermon. But be certain of this – there is one God who is the God presented in the Bible.

There are particular and special ways in which He has revealed Himself to us, and those ways are recorded in the pages of Scripture. If this is so, then it means that the Bible is God's word. It is complete, it is missing nothing, and nothing superfluous is added in. Every word and every verse is given for us to accept, believe, and obey in the context in which it is presented.

To call into question the word of the Lord when it is proven true is to call into question the integrity of God who gave it. Today, we will see a person begin down that path. He will call into question the word of the Lord. At this point, it may be acceptable. He doesn't know the Lord and there is really no reason to accept something without proof.

The problem with this numbskull is that even after he has been given full and sure evidences of the true nature of the God of Israel, he will continue to fight against Him – to his own detriment and destruction. That's a pretty horrifying thought, but he's not alone. People do it all the time.

Text Verse: *The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, But the words of the pure are pleasant. Proverbs 15:26*

The words of Yehovah are pure and pleasant because they are the words of the Creator. If we pit our thoughts against His word, then we are actually making ourselves an abomination to Him. We are putting our puny fist in His face and saying, "I can do better."

Imagine the arrogance! And yet, are any of us in that position here today? What part of the Bible do you dismiss? The writings of Paul that tell us about the structure and nature of the church and the roles assigned to men and women? What about issue of divorce? Are we willing to ignore God and pursue that avenue because we're unhappy?

What about abortion or homosexuality? What precept do we dismiss from His word because it doesn't fit our personal mores? Do we know better than He knows? I think not. Today Pharaoh will begin his walk down a path of no return because today he will begin to ignore the word of the Lord.

His disobedience is given as a lesson to us concerning how we should act. Let's pay attention to what happens so that we can avoid the pitfalls of destruction. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Let My People Go (verses 1 & 2)

¹Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh,

We begin chapter 5 with words of obedience to the command of the Lord. Together Moses and Aaron traveled to Egypt, met with the elders of the people, and convinced them that the Lord had visited them. In this is the implicit understanding that they had been appointed over the people to represent them before Pharaoh.

They have now come to that point and so together Moses and Aaron present themselves to Pharaoh in order to make their petition to him. According to Psalm 78, this royal court of Pharaoh is in an area known as Zoan, which is now known as Tanis.

¹ (con't) "Thus says the Lord God of Israel:

This is the very first time that the term "the Lord God of Israel" is used in the Bible. In all, it will only be used 2 more times in the books of Moses. It literally reads *Yehovah elohe Yisrael*. The name Yehovah is a personal pronoun; it is His name. And so it more appropriately reads, "Thus says Yehovah, God of Israel."

Pharaoh would have understood it to be his proper name, just as his own gods had proper names like Ra, Ammon, etc. In Genesis 33, He was called the God of Israel, meaning Israel the person. In Exodus 3, he identified himself as "the Lord God of your fathers," which He then explained as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

But now He is identified with the people of Israel. His name is on them and they are His people. This name has been given by God's divine direction as a means of placing honor upon the mistreated Hebrews under Pharaoh's rule. Despite their humiliation, the Lord has exalted them through His name.

It is a pattern which has continued now for 3500 years. The people of Israel bear His name even though they have rejected Him and even though they have been humiliated and crushed. They bear the name and thus they bear His attentive eye and caring affection.

¹ (con't) 'Let My people go,

Yehovah's words are given, "Let my people go." They are His people, not Pharaoh's people. All independent nations were identified with their own god or gods. This is a

continuous theme which runs throughout the Old Testament. The people of Israel have been identified with Yehovah and they are His people.

¹ (con't) **that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.”**

When a people is identified with a particular god or gods, it was understood that they would present sacrifices and offerings to them. This is still the case in the world of false gods today. Buddhists offer all kinds of stuff to statues of Buddha – incense, bowls of rice, money, and so on.

Marian worshippers pray to Mary, offer her incense and loyalty, and bow in front of statues of her. Muslims offer prayers five times a day, they offer a month of fasting each year, they offer their children as tools of destruction by tying bombs to them and sending them off to kill their enemies in the name of their wicked “god.”

The list of false gods, unholy sacrifices, and inappropriate worship is long, but it is a continued pattern which has existed since the fall of man. In such worship, there is also the celebration of festivals. For the Hebrews in the presence of the true God, they are known as *khagag*, which we translate as “feast.”

The word *kahgag* is based on a word which indicates “to move in a circle” or specifically “to march in a sacred procession.” From there you have the implication of being giddy; to celebrate, dance, and feast. It is to be a time of worship, celebration, and sacrifice.

It is based on the same root as the name of the prophet Haggai and it is also connected to the Arabic word for *hajj*, which is what the Muslims perform when they make a trek to Mecca to worship their false god. If you look at photos of their hajj, you will see them going in a circle as they move towards the idol of their false god, a black stone called the *al-Hajar al-Aswad*; the Black Stone.

This is the general idea of the *khagag*, or feast – moving in a circle in a sacred procession; thus celebrating, dancing, and feasting. Because this was such a commonly understood form of service to a god, Pharaoh knew exactly what was intended.

Moses and Aaron said that they desired to hold such a feast to the Lord and that it is the Lord who has directed them to do so. In this feast, they have requested that it be held “in the wilderness.” The reason for this isn’t plainly evident here, but it will be explained in Exodus 8, which says –

“It is not right to do so, for we would be sacrificing the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God. If we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, then will they not stone us? ²⁷ We will go three days’ journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God as He will command us.”

-Exodus 8:26, 27

Pharaoh, although not having all the information yet, still knew that the God of Israel would have His own expectations for worship, and if He desired it to be in the wilderness, that should be enough of an explanation all by itself. Because the request is so obvious and reasonable, his coming denial shows that he had no fear at all of the God of Israel.

In a previous sermon, we looked at the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart and whether it was a self-hardening, or one which came externally from the Lord. In this verse, we begin to see the evidence of the conclusion we made. It was certainly initiated by the Lord, but Pharaoh had a choice to obey the Lord or not.

Instead of starting with a hard lesson and a terrifying proof that He was capable of destroying Pharaoh, the Lord began with an uncomplicated appeal – “that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.” Because of the simplicity of the request, Pharaoh easily fooled himself into believing that He could stand up to Yehovah.

And so the hardening was passively began by Yehovah, but it is an active decision of Pharaoh. Because he will actively disregard a mild demand of Yehovah, his heart will harden a bit. In the stubborn way of man, this hardening will continue even until Egypt is all but destroyed.

Too often, we as humans would rather face destruction than admit that we were wrong at the beginning. A classic example of this is found in cults all the time. The book of Mormon, for example, has been proven false in several ways.

Through DNA, archaeology, and the like, claims in the book of Mormon have been shown inaccurate, but adherents would rather go down with the ship rather than admit they were wrong about where they had placed their faith. The same is true with adherents of any cult or religion which denies the obvious truth.

Even in secular life, people will deny the obvious if they first accepted a lie. Evolution has no basis in fact, and yet it is adhered to as if it were absolute truth. Global warming

has been proven not only false, but even falsely presented; it is an outright lie. And yet people will hide from the obvious truth and still hold to this nonsense.

The human condition is one that allows pride to take over and replace the truth with any lie if it will simply mean that we can save face in the process. What a sad condition that we would rather proudly walk into hell than crawl with humility to the foot of the cross.

² And Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?”

There are a few understandable reasons for Pharaoh to ask this question in his seemingly arrogant manner. First, Pharaoh has obviously never heard of Yehovah, and even the Israelites probably didn't remember the name until it was re-introduced to them after Moses met Him at the burning bush.

If Pharaoh had never heard the name, then he could honestly believe that it was a made up name, just like the made up names of all the other gods of all the other nations. Secondly, if the Hebrews had been subjected to brutal treatment for many, many years, even before he had ascended the throne, then he would feel confident that Yehovah was an ineffective deity.

Thirdly, because the Lord had allowed the suffering to go on for so long, he may have incorrectly assumed that Yehovah didn't even really care about the people. What kind of God was Yehovah that He allowed the people to live in toil and bondage? It is the exact same thing we see in the world today.

The enemies of Israel have looked at them in their exile and suffering and thought, “How can the God of the Hebrews be the true God? If His name is on them, then He must not really be a great God.” But as the Bible says –

“For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts,
Nor *are* your ways My ways,’ says the Lord.
⁹ For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55;8, 9

The Lord's plans include suffering, trials, hardships, and loss. They also include eons of those things, countless generations of them, because His plans are greater than any

single point in history. They are also greater than providing ease for a brief moment. Instead, His plan encompasses all of time and all circumstances within time.

Pharaoh has failed to see that, and from right here at the beginning, it will prove to be his inevitable downfall. When we as humans try to insert all of God's righteousness, wisdom, love, care, and knowledge into our brief existence, we form an idol which is anything but God.

What we need to do when faced with tough times is to exclaim what Eli, the High Priest of Israel proclaimed when he was informed of really bad news to come concerning his own household. At that time he said, "It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him." 1 Samuel 3:18

If you go through the Bible, almost every one of the great names of faith recorded there went through suffering. Some of them went through immense suffering. But in the end, they are considered faithful because of how they responded to it – "It is the Lord; Let Him do what seems good to Him." Anything less is tantamount to calling into question His over-arching goodness.

Pharaoh's lack of knowledge concerning Jehovah now will be used in the coming story to demonstrate the absolute supremacy of the true God of Israel as He destroys the false gods of Egypt, one by one. From this first meeting until the waters of the Red Sea cover over him for the last time, all of it contains intentional design in order to display the surpassing greatness of Yehovah.

^{2 (con't)} **I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go."**

Jewish tradition of today is that the name Yehovah is ineffable. They say it was and is never to be pronounced. But this verse, among many others, shows that to be false. If Pharaoh says, "Who is Yehovah" then Moses must have used the name Yehovah in order for Pharaoh to ask the question.

And so he exclaims "I do not know Yehovah." Although it is astonishing to consider that there was no knowledge of the true God by the leader of the greatest nation on earth, it is no less astonishing than the fact that there is no knowledge of the same true God by our own leader today. Or, by colleges, universities, governments, and religions all around the world today.

And it is certainly no less astonishing than the fact that there is no true knowledge of this same God in seminaries and churches which actually bear His name. There are countless souls who claim the title of “Christian” and yet know nothing of the Person of Christ.

Like Pharaoh who refused to acknowledge the true God, nor would He let Israel go worship Him, they too refuse to acknowledge Him as well. They dismiss His written word, they disobey their consciences, and they honor Him with their lips while their hearts are far from Him. The rebellious spirit of Pharaoh is alive and well in the world today.

Who is the Lord that you worship?

What is the source of your faith?

Is it in the words of a man, is this your hope

Or is it in the Bible and the words, “Thus the Lord saith

I mean, really... on what is your faith based?

Where, O where I ask can you learn about the Lord?

In someone’s crazy agenda, is this where it’s placed?

Or do you look for Jesus in God’s holy word?

Take out a line, any line from that precious word

And say, these remarks here don’t count

*Then **you** have decided in place of the Lord*

*The counsel of God, and **you** have poisoned the precious fount*

II. A Sacrifice to the Lord (verses 3-5)

³So they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us.

In this answer, Moses and Aaron are granting Pharaoh’s view of the matter. In essence they are saying, “Ok, so you don’t know Yehovah, and you may not even feel that He has authority over you, but He does have authority over us.” Thus, the answer to Pharaoh here is given as an appeal to pity.

“The God of the Hebrews has met with us. We are a group of people who are identified as separate and peculiar from the Egyptians. We have suffered in bondage, we have

been your slaves, and now we have been confronted by our God. In our meeting, He has made a demand of us.”

The words are intended to appeal to the already hardening heart of Pharaoh. They form a petition that will now show the severity of the consequences *against them* if their request isn't granted.

³ (con't) Please, let us go three days' journey into the desert and sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.”

In this statement, it has to be noted that the consequences for denial aren't directed toward Pharaoh, but towards Israel. It is another passive way of the Lord hardening Pharaoh's heart. No threat is directed towards him and therefore he feels there are no consequences that will affect him.

He must be thinking, “If Yehovah had a demand and could enforce it, He would make it against me, not against His own people. He must be scared of me.” But, at the same time, any supposed god is given offerings by his people in an attempt to appease him. If this weren't so, then there would be no need to offer sacrifices.

Pharaoh should have no reason to doubt that the Hebrews believed they would suffer if they didn't sacrifice to the Lord. But if it didn't affect him, then why should he care? The saying, “That's your problem, not mine” holds true in this exchange.

His concern isn't if the people he has already treated brutally would die by pestilence or the sword. His concern is that they continue to be used for the building of his empire. If many die, there were still many more to take their place. To him, there is no gain and only loss by responding favorably to their request.

⁴ Then the king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people from their work?”

Ten times in this chapter, the term “Pharaoh” is used. However, only in this verse is the term “the king of Egypt” given. Time and again “Pharaoh” has been set in contrast to Yehovah or Yehovah's people. But in this verse, he is set in contrast to Moses and Aaron who are supposedly inciting the people against his rule.

Thus he is termed “the king of Egypt.” In essence, he is charging them with insurrection and rebellion. It is the common charge which is levied against those who rightly or wrongly look for a change in the general order of a given society.

The prophets of Israel were often accused of this when they spoke the word of the Lord, in order to get the people to return to their faith and worship of the Lord. And more often than not, they were accused of rebellion and sedition.

Jeremiah’s life continuously fell into this category. As soon as he opened his mouth, he found himself accused, challenged, imprisoned, or threatened with death. A classic example of this is found in Jeremiah 26 and is well worth the read.

And unfortunately, the same is found to be true more and more within our own society today. When preachers stand up for the truth of God and the contents of His word, they are rallied against, even by their own family members, their own government, and even members of their own church sometimes.

And sometimes the people *in the church* are the ones who stand up against the faithless pastors who have departed from the word of the Lord. No matter which direction, inevitably the person of God will be accused of sedition against those who feel threatened by their words; words which exalt God, even at a personal cost.

⁴ (con’t) **Get *back* to your labor.”**

The words are *leku lesiblotekem* – “get you to your burdens.” It is the same word, *siblah*, used twice so far in Exodus to describe the unusually heavy labor of the people in bondage and under a heavy load of work. It will be used again in the next verse and only two more times in Exodus.

In what is certainly directed to Moses and Aaron personally, and not to the people generally, he tells them to get to the demeaning work which he has assigned to the people.

⁵ **And Pharaoh said, “Look, the people of the land *are* many now, and you make them rest from their labor!”**

The words of Pharaoh here, “Look the people of the land are many” implies that the injury to his kingdom was immense. If a portion of the people stopped working, others

would fill the gap, but if an entire population of many people suddenly stopped working, the effect would be disastrous.

This is what he is implying, and yet it is completely contrary to the idea of what it means to rest. In this verse is the first use of the word *shabbat* or “sabbath” when applied to people in the Bible. The only other time that the word has been used was when God rested from His creative efforts and when it said that the cycles of the seasons wouldn’t cease as long as the earth remained.

Now it is being applied to the people of God in a *negative way*, as if they were to have no such rest. But it is this very rest, which will be given to them as a sign of being the covenant people, which is what has brought them prosperity, abundance, and culture. The very thing that Pharaoh accuses Moses and Aaron as causing harm to his kingdom is the thing that, if given to them, would cause his kingdom to prosper beyond his wildest imaginations. But the stubbornness of the human heart cannot see beyond its own pride.

Who will proclaim the word to the people?

Who will be faithful to the call?

Is there any faithful soul remaining under the church steeple?

Over the whole land there has been cast a deadly pall

God desires from His flock worship and sacrifice

He desires that they honor Him with a pure heart

Praise from the lips to Him is deemed pleasant and nice

Let us vow to turn to Him in a fresh start

Be bold and make the solemn proclamation

And be sure to give God what is His just due

And even more, let us worship with jubilation

Because of His attentive care for me and you

III. An Unreasonable Command (verses 6-9)

⁶So the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their officers, saying,

In looking at the exodus account, we find that after Pharaoh there are three levels of superintendence over the people as they worked. The first were mentioned in chapter 1 and were known as *sare missim*, or “chiefs of tributes.” The next are mentioned here and are known as *nogeshim*, or taskmasters.

The word means to drive like an animal, a workman, a debtor, or an army. The implication is to tax, harass, and tyrannize someone. The people were constantly afflicted and never given rest from it. These, like the other ones, would be the ones who extracted service or money from the people for the benefit of Pharaoh and the economy.

And there is also another group known as *shoterim*, or “officers” which are explained in the coming verses as being Hebrews. These Hebrews would be scribes that attended to the counting of the production of the work, the number of hours people worked, and the like.

It is to these last two groups of people that Pharaoh makes his demand concerning the common people who labored under them...

⁷ “You shall no longer give the people straw to make brick as before.

All along the Nile, there was planting and harvesting going on. When the crops were harvested, what would make sense is that the stalks from the harvests were to be bundled up and floated down the river to wherever bricks were made.

In doing this, there wouldn’t be any waste and it would increase the efficiency of the construction projects in the kingdom. Once the straw was received, it would be cut up into smaller pieces and used as a binding material for the brick. This is the same idea as using rebar in concrete to keep it from cracking.

Without the straw, the bricks wouldn’t hold together well, but would instead crumble. The thing about others gathering the straw made for efficiency in the brick-making process, and it also meant that the Hebrews didn’t have to do it.

Pharaoh’s thought on this was that if they had to get their own straw, they wouldn’t have time to worry about other things. Instead, their time would be consumed with work and not the thoughts of God, rest, or the like. And so his order is given...

⁷ (con’t) Let them go and gather straw for themselves.

The problem with this command is that it would literally consume all of the people's time. Because they weren't at the fields, they would have no way of getting the straw of the harvests. This wouldn't just increase their work time, but probably double it. And even then they would find it hard to meet their needs.

In a dry and arid land, apart from living directly on the Nile, there would be little available straw. And the areas that had the straw would be fields of harvest that were managed by others. It would be a giant dilemma for the people.

⁸ And you shall lay on them the quota of bricks which they made before. You shall not reduce it.

This would have been the most crushing news of all to the people. To make brick was tiresome work. To be told that they also had to provide the straw for the brick would make life most wretched, only adding to their misery.

But to tell them that they had to do both and still maintain the same number of bricks as before would be no less than torture itself. Straw couldn't be gathered at night in any meaningful way and so the straw would have to be collected at day, and the brick-making would have to continue on until any or all hours of the night.

There would be no time for rest, no time for family, and no time – certainly no time, for worrying about taking time off to sacrifice to the God who had suddenly appeared in their lives in hopes of making them better. Instead of things getting better, they had only taken a much more troublesome direction.

^{8 (con't)} For they are idle; therefore they cry out, saying, 'Let us go *and* sacrifice to our God.'

Pharaoh equates the people's desire to worship their God with being indolent. But once again, when dealing with the worship of the true God, the opposite is true. Throughout Scripture, in both testaments of the Bible, and both implicitly and explicitly, the people of God who are obedient to God are always called on to be model citizens and the most productive and faithful of workers.

In the books of Ecclesiastes and Proverbs, Solomon writes extensively about the importance of laboring and not being idle. The premier example of a virtuous woman in the Bible is noted in Proverbs 31 as being the epitome of diligence in labor.

Throughout the entire description, she is noted for hard work, late hours, and continuous care of her time in a productive manner. And this woman of virtue was probably a description by Solomon of his ancestor Ruth who is shown throughout the book which bears her name to be exactly such a woman of virtue.

In the New Testament, Paul sets the example for others in that he continuously labored with his hands, making tents, in order to keep from being a burden on those he ministered to. And in Ephesians 4, he gives us this advice –

“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.” Ephesians 4:28

These examples, and many others, show us that Pharaoh’s edict here is a vindictive move against the Hebrews, not an attempt to save his kingdom from some type of monetary loss. The record of Exodus 1 is that the Hebrews were the ones who built the supply cities of Pithom and Rameses.

These cities weren’t built through indolence or idleness, but rather through the untiring efforts of an already oppressed and yet diligent group of people.

⁹ Let more work be laid on the men, that they may labor in it, and let them not regard false words.”

These concluding words of the day reject the words of the Lord in two ways. First, they reject His request to let the people go by forcing the people to work harder. The exact opposite of what was requested is what occurs.

The second way in which they reject the words of the Lord is that they claim they are a lie. Yes, Moses and Aaron presented the words to Pharaoh, but they presented the words of the Lord as intended. He is directly challenging the Lord because Moses and Aaron have been commissioned by Him for the work in which they are engaged.

The phrase Pharaoh uses for “false words” here is *b’divre shaqer*. Amazingly, this is the first time that the word *shaqer*, or “false” is used in the Bible and yet it is being ascribed to the One in whom there is no deceit at all. The absolute irony of this is beyond astonishing.

The next time this word *sheqer* will be used is going to be in Exodus 20, when the Lord gives the Ten Commandments. There in the ninth of them, it will say –

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” Exodus 20:16

Pharaoh described the words of Moses and Aaron as false words, but these words were given to them by the Lord. Many of us have made that same error in the past, but eventually we realized that the words of the Lord are true. We called out to Him and He saved us. And yet, from time to time we still question the truth of His words.

We dismiss parts of the Bible because we don't like what they have to say. It shows that a bit of the spirit of Pharaoh still resides in us; a rebellious streak that needs to be quieted. Let's strive with all of our ability to quiet the lie, hold fast to the truth, and accept this precious, superior word at face value.

If the Creator demands that we only testify to the truth, it is because He is truth. He is incapable of any type of unrighteousness and our false witness will only put up a wall between us and Him. And just one transgression is all that is needed to eternally separate us from Him.

The Lord is infinitely perfect and our one sin infinitely separates us from that perfection. The connection is lost and we cannot mend it because we're heading in the wrong direction in time. The past is unavailable to us except as a sad memory of what could have been.

But into this stream of time came the Lord of creation. He did this to mend the rift between us and His heavenly Father. By calling out to Him for pardon, we can be reconciled once again. So as we close today, please give me another moment to explain this to you.

Closing Verse: *Forever, O Lord,
Your word is settled in heaven. Psalm 119:89*

Next Week: Exodus 5:10-23 (Gathering Stubble to Make Brick) (15th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Thus Says the Lord God of Israel

Afterward Moses and Aaron went in
And there they told Pharaoh
“Thus says the Lord God of Israel
“Let My people go

That they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness
This is the Lord’s request which to you we address

And Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord
That I should obey His voice
To let Israel go? I do not know the Lord
Nor will I let Israel go; this is my spoken choice

So they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us
Please, let us go three days’ journey into the desert
For this we are desirous

And sacrifice to the Lord our God, according to His word
Lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword

Then the king of Egypt said to them
“Moses and Aaron, why do you take
The people from their work?
Get back to your labor; no more trouble shall you make

And Pharaoh said, “Look
The people of the land are many now
And you make them rest from their labor
I will fix this disobedience somehow

So the same day Pharaoh commanded
The taskmasters of the people and their officers, saying
“You shall no longer give the people straw
To make brick as before; this command I am relaying

Let them go and gather straw for themselves
And you shall on them lay

The quota of bricks which they made before
You shall not reduce it in any way

For they are idle; therefore they cry out
Saying, 'Let us go
And sacrifice to our God
But my answer to them is "No"

Let more work be laid on the men
That they may labor in it
And let them not regard false words
This is my decree, I do submit

The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, this we see
But it was done in a passive way
Pharaoh instead hardened his own heart actively
He rejected the word of God on that day

Who is responsible then, in the matter of Pharaoh's heart?
Can someone say that he was in any way free of guilt?
Not at all, for in this he did his own part
He made his own design, like the weavings of a quilt

And we too make the choice about our destiny
Jesus gave His life if we so choose the heavenly pardon
Or we can walk another path, one which ends in misery
By rejecting the cross, God's heavenly beacon

Don't be found in such a sad, sad state
Instead, call out to Jesus, eternal life to receive
And then together with the redeemed patiently wait
On His coming again, for all who do believe

Sure and sound is our heavenly hope
Faithful and true are the promises of the Lord
And so in this life of trials we can cope
Because of the wonders ahead, guaranteed in His word

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 5:10-23

(GATHERING STUBBLE TO MAKE BRICK)

Introduction: You've heard the sermon verses read out loud. Now ask yourself, "Is Israel yet ready to be delivered from bondage?" Why did God include these verses in this passage? Yes, it tells us what happened, but in relation to many other things which surely happened during the same time-frame, they're probably less important. Certain people have been mentioned in these verses and yet they will never be mentioned again in the Bible. Certain words have been used – work, stubble, brick, and so on. Sometimes, different Hebrew words are described the same way in English.

We miss a lot in translations, not because translators do a crummy job, but because they aren't thinking about pictures of other things. They are thinking about the meaning of individual words. If I translate "job," "work," "chore," and "task" into Japanese, I might use the same Japanese word simply because it's how I want to convey what I am saying.

However, my wife, who spent many years translating both Japanese into English, and English into Japanese, for various governments, might choose to be more specific, or maybe not. Translators do what they can to provide the best meaning of something as they perceive it.

In the case of Bible passages, there are often multiple words which are translated into one English word. Further, there are many individual words which are translated in many different ways based on the context. But even context can be subjective.

Because of this, there are a multitude of possible interpretations of individual passages and so, as the King James Version translators noted in their own preface, a "variety of Translations is profitable for the finding out of the sense of the Scriptures."

In other words, study every translation you can, study the originals if possible, and then study some more. Find yourself approved by searching out what God intends for you to see in His word. One way you can do that is to read acceptable commentaries.

Another is to attend in-depth Bible studies. And a third way is to attend the Superior word and listen to sermons which probe the depths of whatever passage is being looked at. And then after doing this, check what you have been taught. Charlie Garrett may be completely wrong in his analysis.

Text Verse: *Blessed is the man whom You instruct, O Lord,
And teach out of Your law. Psalm 94:12*

As we started a moment ago, I asked, “Is Israel yet ready to be delivered from bondage?” The answer is, “No, not yet.” The Lord is waiting to deliver Israel, watching as they continue to work making brick. And what is even more important is that they are working to make brick with stubble.

What is this picturing? Why did God include this in his word? Sit back and pay attention... If you doze off, please no snoring! And we will continue to see Israel being prepared for deliverance from Egypt. In the future, Israel will be building a temple once again. At that time, they will be striving to please God by following the law.

Are these two accounts connected? If so, how? The answer is to be found in God’s superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Insufficient Deeds (verses 10-14)

¹⁰ And the taskmasters of the people and their officers went out and spoke to the people, saying, “Thus says Pharaoh: ‘I will not give you straw.

The word went out from Pharaoh and those who received it have now, in turn, passed that word on to the laborers. What was said has been amended a bit though. In verse 7, Pharaoh said, “You shall no longer give the people straw to make brick as before. Let them go and gather straw for themselves.”

However, the taskmasters and officers equate the orders of Pharaoh to them as a direct statement to the people, “I will not give you straw.” In this is a contrast to how Pharaoh handled the words of Moses and Aaron, from our last sermon. He said they spoke *false words* when they quoted the word of the Lord.

And so a distinction is made between how the words of the Lord, and the words of Pharaoh, are treated in this chapter. This is especially notable because the officers mentioned in this verse are Hebrews, not Egyptians. They have seen the Lord’s word called *false* and yet they ascribe weight and importance to the words of Pharaoh which were spoken to them.

¹¹ Go, get yourselves straw where you can find it; yet none of your work will be reduced.”

The speakers continue to amend the words of Pharaoh, ascribing the words spoken to them as having been spoken directly to the people. This might seem unimportant, but it's not. I take care of a mall on Siesta Key. A homeless guy sleeps behind the mall from time to time.

He doesn't do anything wrong. and he keeps an eye on things, so I don't bother him. However, if one of the owners said to me, "You aren't allowed to let that guy sleep back there anymore," would it have more weight for me to say to him, "The owners said you can't sleep here anymore," or "I can't let you sleep here anymore."

Obviously the first carries the most weight. If Pharaoh has spoken directly to the people, then unless they want even more trouble, they will comply with the words of Pharaoh. Further, what will come about in the chapters ahead will have much more significance for them.

In essence, the words of Pharaoh to the Hebrew people will be pitted against the words of the Lord, which the Hebrew people have already been made aware of. In the short term, the situation will be trying, the people will question the ability of Yehovah to accomplish what He has spoken, and the people will suffer more.

However, in the long run, the people will see the contrast between the two more clearly. This same truth will be seen in the end times when the word of the Lord, the Holy Bible, will be pitted against the threats of the antichrist. The people will be able to look back on its record, match that up what their own eyes and experiences behold, and they will understand that the Lord is true to His word.

¹² So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw.

The Hebrew here says *l'qoshesh qash la'taben* – literally, "to gather stubble for the straw." The word for "straw" is *teben*. It is something useful and which generally has purpose, even for feeding animals.

Qash on the other hand is something left behind, like stubble or chaff. As the reapers in the fields cut the grain, they would leave behind any stalks. In the place where grain was

threshed and winnowed, they would leave piles of the chaff that was separated from the grain. The chaff, or *qash*, had no value at all.

The Hebrews went anywhere to look for anything left over that they could use for binding of the mud in the brick-making process. Without straw being provided, they were left to use whatever came their way, even what was considered worthless to the field workers. This shows desperation and a tiresome search as the words “throughout all the land of Egypt” imply.

Not only did they have to make bricks, but they had to spend time traveling on foot looking for the stubble. They would have to bring it back and chop it to the right size for brick-making. Then they would have to make the bricks at the full measure they previously made. The next day, they would get up and start again.

¹³ And the taskmasters forced *them* to hurry, saying, “Fulfill your work, *your* daily quota, as when there was straw.”

There has been a standard demanded in the past and it is expected to continue regardless of the situation. The term “daily quota” comes from the Hebrew term *yom b’yommow* – daily by day. It’s an idiom implying a set portion for the given day, thus a quota.

They are being asked to fulfill this quota, just as when there was straw, but there is none. Instead, there is only *qash* – stubble. This word, *qash*, is used 16 times in the Bible and it is always used to indicate something worthless. It may be a person, or a thing, but it is as chaff which is swept away in the wind. An example of this is found in Isaiah 33 –

“Now I will rise,” says the Lord;

“Now I will be exalted,

Now I will lift Myself up.

¹¹ You shall conceive chaff,

You shall bring forth **stubble**;

Your breath, *as* fire, shall devour you. Isaiah 33:10, 11

The taskmasters are known as *nogeshim*. They would tirelessly drive the Hebrews on a good day, and so how much more when things weren’t going well. As we will see, they were brutal in their attitude and actions, demanding what was expected at any cost.

The word for “work” here is *maaseh*. It implies either a deed done or a thing made. It is a word used to describe the work of man as well as the accomplishments of God. In this verse here, it is speaking of *human effort* for its accomplishment.

And so a contrast can be seen between the efforts of man in order to please Pharaoh which is insufficient, and the work of God which will destroy Pharaoh. The people have placed their works above reliance on Yehovah and they are suffering because of it. However, they will also see the Lord prevail with their own eyes.

If you can see what is being relayed, the Hebrews have been under the authority of Pharaoh, who pictures the end-times anti-Christ. He has been a harsh taskmaster. They have now been told that they would be delivered by the Lord and at first they believed.

However, their burdens have only increased. And their burdens have increased with *qash*, stubble. What they are working with is useless and incapable of delivering them.

The picture is that of the people of Israel. They have been in exile and under the authority and influence of Satan. They have worked and accomplished deeds in their religious life. Deeds are always insufficient to save, but deeds are what Judaism is all about.

Now, in the end times, the Lord has called them back to the land and is preparing to deliver them from the authority and bondage of the devil. But until they trust the Lord completely, they will only suffer more.

The temple *will be* rebuilt, sacrifices *will be* made, the law *will be* reinstated – Daniel 9 shows us this specifically. Their deeds will increase as they conduct sacrifices and offerings in the rebuilt temple which is coming. But this will be ineffective to save them. They will be *qash*, stubble. We’re given these stories to show us what has occurred, but what is yet to come as well.

The Lord desires faith from His people concerning *His* provision. He desires trust that *He* is capable of saving. But until He receives it, the people will suffer more. And yet, His glory will be multiplied when their deliverance comes.

¹⁴ Also the officers of the children of Israel, whom Pharaoh’s taskmasters had set over them, were beaten *and* were asked, “Why have you not fulfilled your task in making brick both yesterday and today, as before?”

These officers are Hebrews, not Egyptians. They are those who were responsible for counting the daily tally of bricks and making the reports on labor practices. They are placed between the harsh taskmasters and their own people.

Now they are facing the consequences of that position. The Egyptians are accusing them of not being responsible over the laborers, thus they are blaming them directly for missing the quota. The Hebrew here is much more expressive than our translations. It actually says, “yesterday, third, both yesterday and today.”

It’s a way of saying, “In the past you did this, but now it’s not happening.” The officers are being accused of increasing negligence which then results in their being beaten. The scholars Jamieson-Faucett-Brown note in their commentary that –

“The mode of beating was by the offender being laid flat on the ground and generally held by the hands and feet while the chastisement was administered” [Wilkinson]. (De 25:2). A picture representing the Hebrews on a brick field, exactly as described in this chapter, was found in an Egyptian tomb at Thebes.”

The beatings would have been unpleasant in the extreme and a source of even greater consternation for the laborers because the officers wouldn’t want to face this a second time. Thus the burdens on the people would only increase yet again.

This type of treatment by Hebrews against their own people isn’t unique. Something similar is found in the book of Nehemiah when the wealthier people exacted usury against the poorer Hebrew people. This is found in Nehemiah 5 –

“And there was a great outcry of the people and their wives against their Jewish brethren. ²For there were those who said, ‘We, our sons, and our daughters *are* many; therefore let us get grain, that we may eat and live.’

³There were also *some* who said, ‘We have mortgaged our lands and vineyards and houses, that we might buy grain because of the famine.’

⁴There were also those who said, ‘We have borrowed money for the king’s tax *on* our lands and vineyards. ⁵Yet now our flesh *is* as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children; and indeed we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and *some* of our daughters have been brought into slavery. *It is* not in our power *to redeem them*, for other men have our lands and vineyards.’” Nehemiah 5:1-5

What we are evaluating here is the process of making brick. It's the same word, *lavan*, used in the construction of the Tower of Babel. In all, as a verb, it is used eight times in Scripture to indicate one of two things – making brick, or purification of people.

The three times it is used for brick are in the Tower of Babel account and this account. The other five times are concerning purifying from sin and uncleanness – several times it is referring to the end times, something this account is picturing.

Here in Exodus, they are using stubble to make brick and it isn't working. It is a picture of works-based salvation which can never purify a person. They have not yet learned to trust the Lord. Remember, the rapture of the church has already been pictured back in Chapter 3. This then is pointing to Israel and the end times.

The officers are picturing the spiritual leaders of Israel who are under the authority of the antichrist, pictured by Pharaoh. This will become more evident in the verses ahead.

*What works can I do to build a tower to heaven?
With what effort can I reach from here to God?
My life is already tainted, like bread filled with leaven
And in my walk, it is an unholy path which I trod*

*Purge me from on high and I will be pure
Wash me with the blood of my Lord Jesus
Then I know that my eternal fate is sure
He has done such marvelous things for us*

*No longer will I work to earn my way to heaven
Through Christ I am purified, bread purged of its leaven*

II. Servants of Whom? (verses 15-19)

¹⁵ Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried out to Pharaoh, saying, “Why are you dealing thus with your servants?”

Even though these officers are Hebrews, they had access to Pharaoh. This may sound less than believable, but according to the writings of Herodotus, “Egyptian monarchs were accessible to all. It was a part of their duty to hear complaints personally; and

they, for the most part, devoted to this employment the earlier hours of each day.” (Ellicott)

With this type of freedom to petition Pharaoh himself, they do just that, questioning why such strict and firm standards have been levied upon them. The people have been given an impossible set of demands, the taskmasters have been given the authority to enforce the standards, and the Hebrew officers are stuck between the two, beaten for something they didn't initiate and have no control over.

In their words, they identify themselves as servants of Pharaoh. Because of this, they want to know why he would treat them in this way. Their words imply that they have been obedient to their master and yet have been treated unfairly by him.

This then is a picture of those Jewish leaders who have made an alliance with the antichrist. They will think that they will be safe from the troubles of the common people, but they will find out it isn't so. All of this is picturing what is coming upon the people of Israel, just as Jesus warned in the Olivet discourse of Matthew 24.

¹⁶ There is no straw given to your servants, and they say to us, ‘Make brick!’ And indeed your servants *are* beaten, but the fault *is* in your *own* people.”

The words of this verse are obvious, and commentary is seemingly unnecessary, but there are actually three ways of looking at it. The word “own” as in “your own people” isn't in the original. The Hebrew says, *v'khatat ammekha* – “and fault your people.” In this wording, it can mean that the officers are saying that the fault is in the Hebrews who aren't doing their job, so why are they being beaten? They have identified themselves as servants of Pharaoh, and so they are being beaten even though they are faithful to him, and so they feel what has happened isn't their fault.

The second option is that they are speaking of the taskmasters who are between them and Pharaoh and who have been beating them. There is no straw and yet the same quotas are demanded. Because this is impossible, their beatings are unjustified and the fault is in the taskmasters for beating Pharaoh's own servants.

The third option is that the Hebrew has an error in it. The scholars at Cambridge say, “The text cannot be right: not only is the Heb. ungrammatical, but the fault was not in the people, but in the king.”

And so they note that by adding a single letter into the Hebrew, the text will read as several other manuscripts, like the Greek Old Testament, which basically says that Pharaoh is committing a wrong against his own subjects.

I believe it is the first option and that it speaks of the Israelites. These scribes have identified themselves as servants of Pharaoh, and therefore they have placed themselves in contrast to the Hebrew's under them. If they said the fault was in the taskmasters, it would imply that the fault was in Pharaoh because he gave the orders. It's unlikely that they would chance this.

The unusual wording is probably why the Greek translation was changed. They may have seen the difficulty and not wanted to leave open the option that the Hebrew people were somehow at fault. But I think that is what is being said. They are blaming their own Hebrew people in order to avoid punishment.

It is convenient to say the Hebrew is wrong, but it is also unnecessary. What we are seeing is a picture of something else. Leaving the Hebrew alone does allow for clarity. The word for "brick" in this verse is the noun form of what was used above. It is *levanah*. This word is used just 11 times in the Bible.

Again, it is used in the erection of the Tower of Babel and in the Exodus story. The other times it is used, it is always in a negative connotation which is dealing with the sinful workings of the people. In one, it is specifically speaking of the buildings which had fallen during the Lord's judgment. That is in Isaiah 9 –

“The bricks have fallen down,
But we will rebuild with hewn stones;
The sycamores are cut down,
But we will replace *them* with cedars.’

¹¹ Therefore the Lord shall set up

The adversaries of Rezin against him,
And spur his enemies on,

¹² The Syrians before and the Philistines behind;

And they shall devour Israel with an open mouth.” Isaiah 9:10-12

Everything about these unique words shows us a contrast between faith in the Lord, which brings in a right relationship with Him, and man's ineffective works which put up a barrier between man and Him. These Hebrew leaders are following the sinful path in Exodus and they picture the sinful leaders of Israel in the future.

¹⁷ But he said, “You *are* idle! Idle! Therefore you say, ‘Let us go *and* sacrifice to the Lord.’

Repeating and even doubling his comment from verse 8 about the Hebrews, Pharaoh proclaims that they are idle and therefore they desire to go and sacrifice to Yehovah. It is known that idleness was considered one of the worst sins in Egyptian society.

So much so that they would actually post epitaphs on tombstones which disclaimed any idleness in their lives because it was believed by them that idleness was a reason for condemnation at the final judgment.

For Pharaoh to use this term in the superlative way that he has by repeating it twice, shows his utter disdain for both the Hebrews and the God whom they desire to serve. He is literally taunting them from his throne, challenging them to do anything about the decision he has rendered.

What he is doing is equating their religious desire with idleness rather than as complimentary to it. But people who are diligent in proper religion are more often than not diligent in work too. This is particularly true with the worship of the true God who fashioned man to be diligent in all of his affairs.

Because of their familiarity with the notion of idleness being a damnable sin, he was challenging them even further, both in their eyes and in the eyes of the Egyptian people in general. He has truly proven himself to be a ruthless tyrant to the people of God.

¹⁸ Therefore go now *and* work; for no straw shall be given you, yet you shall deliver the quota of bricks.”

Curiously, this a different word for “work” than the previous one of verse 13. There it was *maaseh*, here it is *abad*. It is the same word that the officers used concerning themselves when they said they were his servants. It is also the same word that Moses was told to speak to Pharaoh in Exodus 4:23 –

“So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me.”

He is telling them to work in his service rather than work for, or *serve*, the Lord. Again, he is exalting himself above the Lord in his words to these officers.

¹⁹ And the officers of the children of Israel saw *that they were* in trouble after it was said, “You shall not reduce *any* bricks from your daily quota.”

This is the fifth and last time that the term “officers” will be applied to these men who have been working for Pharaoh. They now perceive that there is no substantial difference between them and the other Hebrews in his eyes.

They also perceive that they are in trouble because of their standing. For any infractions, they will be held accountable. Their status and positions reckon them as Hebrew first and officers of Pharaoh secondly. Because of this, they will elevate their frustrations in a new direction.

*Lord, give us leaders who will be faithful to You
Keep us from one who would sell his own soul
We wish to follow You in all that we do
Keep us from those who are under the devil’s control*

*May our lives be dedicated to You, pure and undefiled
Let our works be of faith, pleasing and right
In the past You have upon us smiled
Let that be so now and forever, acceptable in Your sight*

*Hear and be attentive to our prayers to You
Be pleased with our lives, O God, in all that we do*

III. The Time of Jacob’s Trouble (verses 20-23)

²⁰ Then, as they came out from Pharaoh, they met Moses and Aaron who stood there to meet them.

It is not a chance meeting, but one planned by Moses and Aaron. They had already been told that Israel would not be allowed to go out to conduct a sacrifice to the Lord. They had also surely seen what additional conditions had been levied on the people, and they would have known of the treatment of the officers.

If their hopes were that the officers would have met with more success than they had, their hopes were in vain. Deliverance may come, but it won’t come from those who

claimed to be servants of Pharaoh. And in fact, those supposed servants had only been rebuked in the process of petitioning.

²¹ And they said to them, “Let the Lord look on you and judge,

The irony of the words of these men is palpable. To say *Yehovah alekhem v'yishpot* – “Yehovah look on you and judge” means that they are calling on Yehovah. And yet, it is Moses who had come from the Lord, declared to them the name of Yehovah, and had given proof of his commission by Him.

The very fact that they complain to Moses while complaining about the matter which was initiated by Yehovah implies that they have absolutely no confidence in the Lord. They are the words of those who pay lip-service to Him while ignoring the very words of the Lord they pay lip-service to.

It is no different than people who very rarely or never step into a church in their life and yet they love to quote “Jesus says to not judge” whenever a Christian says something that offends their sensibilities. They heap insults upon God’s people while all the time their actions show that they are servants of the devil.

All we need to do is look around the world at any time in history and the land is filled with such troublemakers. They were there for Moses to contend with, they are there today, and they will be there in the end times challenging the two witnesses who stand and accuse the world, prophesying the word of the Lord to closed minds and hard hearts.

^{21 (con’t)} because you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants,

The Hebrew here says, “you have made our **smell to stink** in the **eyes** of Pharaoh and in the **eyes** of his servants.” We use similar terms in English, but the Hebrew has more force than most of our idioms. There is an incongruity between “smell” and “eyes” which gives the notion of the entire face welling up in disgust.

It is as if the smell is so bad that the eyes start to run from it. And the smell they mention will permeate the entire house of Pharaoh because they include the term “in the eyes of his servants.” Suddenly, they are speaking of the servants of Pharaoh as if they are *not included* in that distinction, even though they had just moments before made the claim that they were.

The Hebrew people, including those Hebrews who had previously been distanced from them by an arm's length, are all lumped together into one basket. It is a pattern which has repeated time and again throughout history and will occur again in the end times.

²¹ (con't) **to put a sword in their hand to kill us."**

The meaning is obvious. They are accusing Moses of bringing them to the point of destruction because he has meddled in their affairs. They were safe and secure and suddenly they are facing the same calamity that all of their people had previously faced.

Because they are Hebrews, they are identified with the Hebrews. They cannot change who they are any more than a leopard can change his spots. Esther was informed of exactly this when Mordecai spoke to her about their impending doom –

“Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews. ¹⁴ For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?” Esther 4:13, 14

And so, in realizing their plight, they heap reproaches upon the Lord’s designee over them. Jesus faced this as well and they nailed him to a cross. In fact, in Acts 7 Stephen spoke to the leaders of Israel about numerous such instances in their history, constantly following the same disobedient pattern.

Moses received no gratitude at this time, but as Jamieson-Faucett-Brown notes –

“...as the greatest darkness is immediately before the dawn, so the people of God are often plunged into the deepest affliction when on the eve of their deliverance; and so it was in this case.” Jamieson-Faucett-Brown

²² **So Moses returned to the Lord**

It is unknown just what these words mean. There is no explanation of them and there is no hint to offer expanded guesswork. And so all we can do is speculate. Later we find out that the Lord spoke to him in Egypt. Did he have a spot picked out to meet the Lord, or did he simply prostrate himself because of his troubled heart?

Whatever the case is, the old adage “A praying heart never lacks a praying place” rings true. The Lord is there for His people and their petitions do not go unheard. And so Moses returned to the Lord.

²² (con’t) **and said, “Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why is it You have sent me?”**

Some scholars find these words impetuous, others might say he is lacking faith or irreverent. Augustine took a different stand and said that, “These are not words of contumacy or indignation, but of inquiry and prayer.”

But there is more than this. There is a heartfelt desire being spoken of by Moses here to know the depths of the wisdom of God concerning a matter which involves a seeming hand of discipline when it appears it should be a hand of comfort.

This type of comment to the Lord is not at all uncommon in the Bible. It’s found in the books of the law, the books wisdom, the prophets, and even in the New Testament. In Psalm 74 and from the hand of Asaph we read this –

“O God, why have You cast *us* off forever?

Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?

² Remember Your congregation, *which* You have purchased of old,

The tribe of Your inheritance, *which* You have redeemed—” Psalm 74:1

Rather than simply saying that the Lord has brought trouble on the people, in a more literal sense, Moses’ question to the Lord asks why He has afflicted the people with evil?

He has already been told twice that he should expect Pharaoh to not respond favorably towards his petitions, but what he didn’t expect was that there would be evil consequences towards Israel in the process.

Just like the psalmist, he wanted to understand the process and not just the outcome. But this tells us that there is more involved than just the story of Moses delivering Israel from Egypt. If it were only that, the Lord would have surely told him that things would get worse for the people before they got better.

Or, he would have surely kept harm from coming upon the Israelites *while* He accomplished His work. But neither of those things have occurred. Because of this, we can know that what is recorded here is an appeal for faith for all times, as well as being a picture of the end times.

Job understood this as he pronounced his great affirmation that God is sovereign and that he would serve him through both blessing and adversity. And the Bible is asking us to follow the same path. If the world spirals out of control before the rapture of the church, we are to hold fast to the sure promises of God despite the troubles.

And Israel will be asked to do the same through the tribulation as well. We're asked to have faith and to be faithful, even when we don't understand the troubles which seem to come from the hand of the Lord Himself.

²³ For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all."

Moses expected deliverance, but he didn't expect Pharaoh's evil treatment of the people in the process. And these words clarify what he said in the previous verse when he asked, "why have You brought trouble on this people?"

The evil was actively brought on by Pharaoh, but was passively allowed by the Lord. The Lord is never the cause of evil, and if He does cause something which we perceive as evil, then we have misperceived what has happened. Moses understood this and so his questions are probing and specific.

In Hebrew his words are *v'hatzel lo hitzalta* – "and delivering no delivered." The words indicate that what was started is left uncompleted despite the evil which Pharaoh has brought upon Israel. Rather than an abundance of accusations and a snippy attitude, his words are frank and filled with perplexed curiosity.

And this is the way we should conduct ourselves as we speak to the Lord about those things which trouble us. We can't hide the obvious and so there is no point in ignoring it. And yet, we lack the full picture and so there is no point in being wordy or demanding. In what is a good parallel thought to complement how Moses has addressed the issues on his heart to the Lord, we can look to words from Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes–

"Do not be rash with your mouth,
And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God.
For God *is* in heaven, and you on earth;
Therefore let your words be few." Ecclesiastes 5:2

The verses today are filled with hints of other things, they picture what is coming in the future, and they show us once again that God is not pleased with human effort in an attempt to be reconciled to Him. The religious leaders of Israel will find this out someday.

If the Lord told Moses in advance what was coming, or if these things didn't happen, then the specific words which have been used wouldn't have been included in the account. Work, stubble, officer, brick, and so on, have all been used in specific ways to show us not just a story of the past, but a story of what is coming in the future.

Moses didn't understand because his life and circumstances were being used to show us that future. And these things are starting to come to pass in our own lives! Israel must learn that instead of working deeds of the law, that it is faith in the Lord that brings harmony and reconciliation between God and man.

Anything else, no matter how seemingly good to human eyes, is mere stubble. No matter how much stubble we find, it will never be sufficient to make enough bricks to get to heaven.

Let us turn away from pleasing the devil in our attempts to please God. Instead, let us please God through the work of His Son which was given for that purpose. If you've never understood why you need Jesus and you'd like to call out to Him to save you today, give me another moment to explain how you can do just that...

Closing Verse: *"...to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,⁶ just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:*

⁷ 'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,

And whose sins are covered;

⁸ Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.'" Romans 4:5-8

Next Week: Exodus 6:1-13 (I Will Rescue and I Will Redeem) (16th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Gathering Stubble to Make Brick

And the taskmasters of the people and their officers
Went out and spoke to the people they saw
Saying, "Thus says Pharaoh:
'I will not give you straw

Go, get yourselves straw where you can find it
Yet none of your work will be reduced, not a little bit

So the people were scattered abroad
Throughout all of Egypt the land
To gather stubble instead of straw
With whatever they could fill their hand

And the taskmasters forced them to hurry
Saying, "Fulfill your work, your daily quota
As when there was straw the full tally
And make sure it's not less, even one iota

Also the officers of the children of Israel
Whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had over them set
Were beaten and were asked to tell
Why at the end of the day things weren't accomplished yet

"Why have you not fulfilled your task
In making brick both yesterday and today, as before?"
This is the question that we ask
Why can't you even up the daily score

Then the officers of the children
Of Israel came and cried out in a fuss
To Pharaoh, saying to him then
"Why are you dealing with your servants thus?"

There is no straw given to your servants
And to us, 'Make brick!' they say
And indeed your servants are beaten
But the fault is in your own people, this we convey

But he said, "You are idle! Idle! This his word
Therefore to me you say
'Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord
So that from your work you can get away

Therefore go now and work
For no straw shall be given you
Yet you shall deliver the quota of bricks
This is what I order and what you shall do

And the officers of the children of Israel
Saw that they were in trouble, more than an iota
After it was said to them what Pharaoh did tell
"You shall not reduce any bricks from your daily quota

Then, as they came out from Pharaoh
They met Moses and Aaron in the way
Who stood there to meet them
To see what occurred with them that day

And they said to them without just warrant
"Let the Lord look on you and judge
Because you have made us abhorrent
In the sight of Pharaoh, to us he bears a grudge

And in the sight of his servants, it's a bitter pill
To put a sword in their hand in order us to kill

So Moses returned to the Lord
And said in a manner speaking frankly
"Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people?
Why is it You have sent me?

For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name
He has evil to this people done
Neither have You delivered Your people at all
They are still dwelling here under Egypt's sun

God is patiently waiting to deliver Israel
He has a plan and it will come about as it should

This is a truth which the Bible does tell
In the end, all that the Lord does is good

God allows us to make brick if we choose
And even brick with crummy stubble
And he lets us direct the path of our own shoes
Even if it gets us in a bit of trouble

But the good news is Christ, whom He has sent
In Him there is freedom from all trials
And with Him our eternity will be spent
When we call out to Him our future is guaranteed smiles

Praise You O God for our precious Lord Jesus
Who has certainly done all things wondrously for us

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 6:1-13 (I WILL RESCUE AND I WILL REDEEM)

Introduction: Before we start looking at the verses today, I want to share with you a chiasm that I found while preparing this sermon. It comprises all of Exodus 6:1-11. If it seems like there is repetition in the verses we're looking at, it's because there is. They are specifically formed to highlight what the Lord is going to do and why.

Exodus 6:1-11 - Words of Covenant Surety (Seven "I Wills")
A Promise of Redemption and Inheritance (1/5/2015)

- a. (vs 1) Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land."
- b. (vs 3) I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob,
- c. (vs 4) I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan,
- d. (vs 5) The groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage,
- e. (vs 6) 'I *am* the LORD;
- f. (vs 6) **I will** bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians,
- g. (vs 6) **I will** rescue you from their bondage,
- g. (vs 6) **I will** redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.
- f. (vs 7) **I will** take you as My people, and **I will** be your God.
- e. (vs 7) Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD your God
- d. (vs 7) The burdens of the Egyptians.
- c. (v 8) And **I will** bring you into the land
- b. (vs 8) I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and **I will** give it to you *as* a heritage
- a. (vss 10, 11) And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Go in, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the children of Israel go out of his land."

The Chiasm is centered on two parallel thoughts – 1) I will rescue you, and 2) I will redeem you. But even more than that, it encompasses seven "I wills" spoken by the Lord. Time has borne out that the Lord fulfilled His word exactly as He stated.

The last of the seven "I wills" is that He would give the land of Israel to the people as a heritage. Some could claim that this promise failed because they have been kicked out of it twice. Or they might incorrectly state that this promise is fulfilled in the church, not Israel. But both of these would be incorrect.

The land was given to Israel. When they remained obedient to the Lord, it was their land and they could use it. When they were disobedient, it was their land and they could not use it; like a parent withholding a toy from a child. It belongs to them, but they cannot use it until their behavior is corrected. But either way, the land has remained God's gift to Israel.

Additionally, Israel is Israel and the church is the church. Crossing the two lines only confuses one's theology. Regardless as to how one feels about Israel, God's promises to them stand. Those promises, going all the way back to Abraham, are repeated in today's verses. Now is the time for them to begin to be fulfilled.

We'll see this as we research out the verses ahead of us today.

Text Verse: *"Now therefore, our God,
The great, the mighty, and awesome God,
Who keeps covenant and mercy:
Do not let all the trouble seem small before You
That has come upon us." Nehemiah 9:32*

Trouble has befallen Israel, and the burdens have seemed beyond their ability to bear, even more so since Moses spoke to them the first time. And Pharaoh has already hardened his heart against Moses once as well.

Now he is being told to once again speak to both Israel and Pharaoh. Without understanding the reasons for the first seeming failure, he will feel that he is wholly unqualified for the task set before him.

We too may feel this way about the challenges we face, but it is absolutely certain that if we are in Christ and we are being obedient to Him, whatever seems to be hindering us is there for a reason. Knowing this then must surely help take the stress off of the moment.

Let us be determined that the end we are working towards is being directed by Him, and our steps are carefully selected to meet His final goal. It is a continuing theme of the Bible that speaks to us, so let us apply this truth to our lives at all times. It is a truth found in God's superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Land Grant of Canaan (verses 1-4)

The last words of the previous chapter were those of Moses. He was practically in a state of desperation over the treatment he had received from the officers who were over the people of Israel. They complained against him because he caused them to receive the same grief that the common people had suffered.

Despite their leadership status, they had been first and foremost lumped in with their own people. It formed a picture of the future when the political and spiritual leaders of Israel will be in bed with the anti-Christ, thinking that they will be safe from persecution through their faithfulness to the one-world religion and government – something that is beginning to happen before our eyes in today's world.

But they will find this to be false. They will be persecuted *as* Jews because they *are* Jews. And so they will come to understand that they need true deliverance as well. Their false hope in the antichrist will prove to be just that... false hope. After all that occurred, Moses was distraught and he cried out to the Lord with these finishing words of chapter 5 –

“So Moses returned to the Lord and said, ‘Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why *is* it You have sent me? ²³ For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all.’” Exodus 5:22, 23

That appeal to the Lord has now set up the response of the Lord which is found in our first verse of the day...

¹ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh.

In response, the Lord promises action “Now.” There was a delay which Moses didn't understand, but taken in the context of the previous chapter, it is clear. The people weren't *ready* to be delivered. The officers over them had their allegiances tied to Pharaoh, not toward the people under them.

Until they realized that they were no different, but instead needed the Lord, the affliction continued. This precept is found explicitly stated by Peter, who is writing to the Jews of the end times, and so the pattern fits perfectly. Here's what he said –

“The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” 2 Peter 3:9

Sure enough, he had withheld action until repentance was possible. There was a need to refine the people in preparation for the exodus. The account shows us that even after the exodus, many of the people continuously rebelled against the Lord. They had seen all of His wonders, and yet their hearts continuously turned back to Egypt at the slightest experience of discomfort.

As this is so, how much worse would they have acted if the Lord hadn't allowed them time to more fully rely on Him. It is the constant theme of the workings of the Lord, He does things that at first seem hard to understand, but later become clear. This is why even on the night before the crucifixion, He had to tell His disciples to trust Him.

His words in John 13:7 can be applied to His actions before the people here at the time of the Exodus –

“What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.”

The ways of the Lord are perfect, and His timing is always exact in order to meet His intended purposes. Pharaoh would be dealt with, it would be now, and Moses would see it with his own eyes.

^{1 (con't)} **For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.”**

Some translations make it seem that the “strong hand” He is speaking of could be the hand of Pharaoh as he drives the people from the land. This is certainly not the intent. Rather it is the work of the Lord which is being referred to. The NIV translates this very clearly by saying –

“Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country.”

It is a less literal translation, but it is certainly a more accurate one. The strong hand of the Lord on behalf of His people is seen time and again in Scripture. A great parallel to this is found in Jeremiah. There the Lord again promises to redeem the people and return them to the land of Israel –

“For the Lord has redeemed Jacob,
And ransomed him from the hand of one stronger than he.
¹² Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion,
Streaming to the goodness of the Lord—
For wheat and new wine and oil,
For the young of the flock and the herd;
Their souls shall be like a well-watered garden,
And they shall sorrow no more at all.” Jeremiah 31:11, 12

² And God spoke to Moses and said to him: “I am the Lord.

This verse follows the same pattern that was seen back in Exodus 3:1. There it said, “..when the **Lord** saw that he turned aside to look, **God** called to him from the midst of the bush.” In other words, the term “God” and “Lord” are used in the same verse. However, the translation is much, much better rendered as “I am Yehovah” instead of “I am the Lord.” Otherwise, when we get to the next verse, it won’t have the same effect and force. As readers of English versions, the word “lord” can be used in many ways, but the name Yehovah means only one thing.

For the most part, I have no problem with the name Yehovah being translated as LORD, but there are times when clarity demands the name be given. This is one of those times. He is declaring His name. It is the same name He gave at the burning bush, and it is a declaration to Moses that He will perform what He has spoken.

³ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name Lord I was not known to them.

What this means is that the way that God expressed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was as El Shaddai, or God Almighty. His words to them were words of covenant faithfulness and great fruitfulness. The title Yehovah wasn’t actually unknown to them, but the full import and weight of the name wasn’t understood.

Now He has revealed it as more than a title; it is His name. As a name expresses behavior and being, it signifies that He is the Existent One. It appears that the reason He waited until this time to finally reveal His name in this way was because of the idolatry and polytheism which surrounded Israel and to which even Israel had fallen prey to.

By now proclaiming Himself as the Existent One, He was revealing to them the truth that there is but One God and that He was it. No other god is a god, but is rather a false god.

The Lord waited for over 2500 years of human existence to reveal Himself in this way for a reason.

That reason is that this group of people is being prepared for an encounter with Him where He will reveal His holiness to them. They will learn that this One true God has certain standards which He cannot compromise. In order for the world to learn this, He will use this group of people as an object lesson to learn from.

Before that meeting takes place, however, this One true God will prove Himself against the false gods of Egypt. The ten plagues on the ten false god's of Egypt are emblematic of the final destruction of all the false gods of the world in the end times. Each step of how God reveals Himself is taken with purposeful care.

⁴I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers.

It needs be understood that the words of promise encompass everything from verse 2 to verse 8. God appeared to the fathers as El Shaddai and He established the covenant with them. That covenant was to give them the entire land of Canaan which was the land of their pilgrimage.

They never possessed the land, but rather lived there as strangers. God gave Abraham the reason why they couldn't possess the land at that time, which was because the Amorites who lived there had not yet reached their full level of iniquity.

In His grace, He gave them 400 years before bringing in Israel to destroy them and assume the land as their own. And before that would occur, Pharaoh and Egypt would be judged as well. But again, this is given not only as a historical account, but as a lesson of the work of Christ all the way through to the end times.

God promised to never destroy the world by flood again even though the inclination of man's heart is evil all the time. Instead, God will judge the world through the plagues of Revelation and the land of Canaan will be where Christ returns to; He being the true Israel returning to the land of promise. Every story in the Bible is used to show us patterns of future history.

*The Land of Israel is for the people of God
It is defiled by those who are unholy
And so may God's people in righteousness trod
When they enter His land, so may it be*

*Let all of God's people walk rightly each day
Let each of us be examples for others to see
In our actions, let us holiness display
And may justice spread out like branches of a tree*

*This we petition, and for this we pray
O God, let us always walk in Your holy way*

II. I Have and I Will (verses 5-9)

In verse 5, the Lord will say "I have" twice. And then from verses 6-8, He will say "I will" seven times. The Lord is aware and the Lord will perform.

⁵ And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant.

This is almost a repetition of the thought which came at the end of Exodus 2. There, just before the account of Moses leading his flocks to Horeb, which was a picture of the rapture of the church, and which was immediately followed by the account at the bush, it said this –

*"Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. ²⁴ So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵ And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged *them*." Exodus 2:23-25*

The Lord is giving Moses a full accounting of what has transpired, even from the time of Abraham until the time of his own calling. Moses asked why all the trouble had come upon the people since he arrived in Egypt, and he reminded the Lord that nothing had been done about it.

Without explaining the reason directly, he has indirectly shown Moses that there is a time and a place for everything and that the proper time had now arrived. Certain things had to happen which Moses was unaware of and he needed to trust that all was occurring as it should. It is an appeal to Moses to have faith.

⁶Therefore say to the children of Israel: ‘I *am* the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.

The redemption, or purchase, of the people of Israel is mentioned for the very first time in this verse, and it will continue to be used throughout Scripture. This is actually accomplished in two separate ways. The first here is noted in the great judgments that the Lord will perform.

They will go from slavery to the Egyptians to being servants of God through these judgments. This is the first time that these judgments are referred to, and the word will be used sixteen times in the Old Testament. God will use such judgments both for and against Israel and others in the future as He deals with their sin.

The second way Israel will be redeemed is when they are led through the Red Sea and are forever delivered from the death that pursued them. It is, in essence, being “purchased anew.” (Ellicott)

These two types of redemptive acts picture our own salvation by first being delivered from the power of the devil and then being delivered from the presence of sin. It is a pattern which Paul explains in the book of Romans.

Finally, one more term is used in this verse for the first time. It is the “outstretched arm” of the Lord. It is a term that will be used repeatedly concerning the Lord in the Bible after this and it makes an obvious picture.

When a man desires to show His strength or to defeat an enemy, he will stretch his arms out. In this one stance, he will both defend some and work against others. This is what the Lord says he will do with His outstretched arm. He will redeem Israel and destroy Egypt.

⁷I will take you as My people, and I will be your God.

Later in Exodus 19, the term *segullah* will be used to describe Israel. They are considered a peculiar possession who belong to the Lord. He has taken them as His people in order to fulfill the promises that He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

However, this idea of the Hebrews being a special possession to God doesn’t in any way imply that He had abandoned the rest of the people on earth. Throughout the Old

Testament, and even in the New before Christ's cross, people are noted as joining to God, or being given particular favor by Him.

The selection of Israel is a demonstration of God's wisdom for a multitude of reasons. One was to have a people set aside to usher in the Messiah. Another was to show that a chosen people, who were set apart to live under God's standards, were still unable to meet those standards.

Through Israel, the world would learn two important lessons. 1) The law cannot save anyone. Instead it only shows how utterly sinful sin is, and 2) It was used to show the world their absolute need for Christ, who was to come through the very people who proved these two points.

In this selection of Israel to be God's people, He is fulfilling His promises and He is also demonstrating what His name implies, which is that He is able to perform His spoken word. Their later unfaithfulness in no way negates His faithfulness. In fact, it only highlights it as He has remained faithful to them all along.

^{7 (con't)} **Then you shall know that I *am* the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.**

In performing His word, the people will know that He is, in fact, the One He claims to be, and that He has done exactly what He said He would do. But again, there is the immediate understanding of these words and there is a prophetic fulfillment of them. If these verses only pertained to Israel, then it would actually be a failure of the greater plan of redemption.

Abraham's promise was one based on faith, and it was given long before he was circumcised. The pattern of being redeemed based on faith then must pertain to all people and not just Israel. It must ultimately be based on the work of the Messiah. And in this verse is a picture of that.

Verses 6 & 7 contain the very last two uses in the Bible of the word *siblah*, which is translated as "burdens." All six have been in the book of Exodus. This word *siblah* comes from another word *sabal*. It is a word used to describe the work of the Messiah in Isaiah 53:4 and 53:11 –

Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;

Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted. Isaiah 53:4

He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied.
By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many,
For He shall bear their iniquities. Isaiah 53:11

This word, *siblah*, is being used for the last time to show that the burdens are lifted in the work of the Lord. And so it is with Christ. The burden of our sins is taken from us when we call on Him. Although these stories might seem distant and quaint, they are words which are near and right now. They picture the eternal gospel which proclaims that the Lord, not our deeds, is what rescues us.

I have carefully noted this unique word, *siblah*, in each account in which it was used, and now you know why. Our burdens are lifted in Christ, all pictured here in Exodus.

⁸And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you *as* a heritage:

The imagery of the Hebrew is much more exciting than the English. It says, *nasathi eth yadi* – “I have lifted up my hand.” Yes, to lift one’s hand implies to “swear,” but in many translations we miss the action and the mental pictures which the Hebrew portrays.

Three promises have now been given concerning what the Lord will do. The first is that He will deliver His people from bondage. The second is to take the Hebrew people as His own; in essence, to adopt them. And the third is to bring them into the land of Canaan and give it to them as a heritage.

This is true at the time of the Exodus, and it is true of the end times which Exodus pictures. But it is also true in the greater picture of the Lord and His church, who are those who have crossed over from death to life. Let’s see it from the New Testament. He has promised to deliver us from bondage to sin which ends in death, and He has done it. Hebrews 2 says –

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Hebrews 2:14, 15

He has promised to adopt us as His people and He has done it. Galatians 4 says –

“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” Galatians 4:4, 5

And He has promised us heaven, and it is accomplished, we are just waiting on its actualization. Ephesians 2 tells us this is so –

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:4-6

This exodus story shows us history, but it also shows us the present and the future. It is the continuing pattern of the Bible –

“That which has been *is* what will be,
That which *is* done is what will be done,
And *there is* nothing new under the sun.” Ecclesiastes 1:9

⁸ (con't) **I *am* the Lord.”**

Ani Yehovah – “I (am) Yehovah.” “My name is my guarantee. What I have said is inviolable because I am the Existent One. My words cannot fail because I encompass time. What I have spoken is already performed and is merely waiting for your present to catch up with that future where I already exist.”

⁹ **So Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel; but they did not heed Moses, because of anguish of spirit and cruel bondage.**

Proverbs says, “Hope deferred makes the heart sick” (Proverbs 13:12). The first time they heard the news from Moses, the Bible says that –

“...the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.” Exodus 4:31

At that time, Moses presented to the people the three signs which He was granted from the Lord. Those signs, accompanied by the word of the Lord, were all the people needed to believe. But the signs were forgotten and the word lost its significance. Now, instead of hope, they don't even heed.

And the reason is because of the anguish of the spirit. In Hebrew the words are *kotzer ruach* which is literally a "shortness of spirit" or a "shortness of breath." The suffering was so continuous and burdensome that there wasn't time for the people to breathe, much less revive their spirits.

It is an exacting picture of what could be expected in the end times. As the world falls apart, there will be few who will remember the promises of the Lord, but the Lord would ask for them to persevere, even through the times of despondency.

*Where is your hope and in whom do you place your trust?
What will you do when the world around you shatters?
Place your hope in the Lord, who is faithful and just
Abiding in His truth is, in the end, all that matters*

*To place your hope in man is like air passing through a vent
To place your hope in money is a terrible dark pit
When man has failed you and your money is all spent
What meaning is found in your life? Please don't do it*

*Instead, place your hope in the Lord, so I say
You will be found safe and secure for all eternity
Place your hope in the Lord, Yes! Do it today!
And then watch history unfold, great things you will see*

III. Who will Heed The Word of the Lord? (verses 10-13)

¹⁰ And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

At times, verse numbers are given which don't seem to make sense. Why would it stop in the middle of a sentence and begin a new verse? Six other times in this chapter alone, this type of introduction is used and all six of them contain a complete sentence.

And the last time is in verse 28 which is a recap of this verse, and yet it isn't divided as this one is. Only this once is the sentence divided into two verses. What seems to be the reason is that it shows a contrast between what was just said and what is coming.

The people of Israel didn't heed Moses in the last verse and yet Moses is instructed to speak to Pharaoh in the next verse. The words "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying" are given for our benefit. Everything that was spoken from verse 2 to verse 8 is what the Lord said.

Verse 9 tells us that Moses repeated it to Israel and they didn't heed. And now, without any other words between the directives, the next thing Moses will hear is another command to do something even more difficult than what he just did. Therefore, this portion of a sentence is more pertinently highlighted by being offset from the words to come, which are...

¹¹ "Go in, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the children of Israel go out of his land."

The last time Moses went before Pharaoh to speak the word of the Lord, he said, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.'" Now, no reason is given and no limitations on where they would go are made. Instead it is a fixed demand to let them go out of His land.

What becomes clear in this is what the Lord said to Moses before he departed for Egypt in Exodus 4:21 –

"But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go."

The first visit to Pharaoh was a mild request which could have been easily granted. No signs were given and no power was displayed before Pharaoh. By coming in this manner, the Lord has already hardened Pharaoh's arrogant heart to any future demands.

Now, when a *demand* rather than a request is made, it will certainly be met with greater resistance. And as the plagues come, they will come from lesser to greater plagues. Each step is calculated to only harden Pharaoh's heart further and thus magnify the work of the Lord.

Unfortunately for Pharaoh, he should have been more lenient at the beginning and saved himself the wrath of God at the end. It is a valuable lesson for all people. As Ellicott says about this –

“If we refuse a light cross, a heavier cross is laid on us. If we will not close with the Sybil on the first occasion, she offers us a worse bargain on the second.” Charles Ellicott

¹² And Moses spoke before the Lord, saying, “The children of Israel have not heeded me. How then shall Pharaoh heed me,

The people of Israel had seen the signs of the Lord. They had been convinced once of the surety that their freedom was at hand. And yet they had forgotten those things and were left in the shortness of their breath as their bondage continued.

As this was so, and as both Moses and the Lord knew this, the question to the Lord is all the more pertinent. Certainly one who didn't believe the first time, and who was both insolent and deaf to that command, would respond even more negatively than those who at first openly welcomed His words.

But this is exactly what was intended by the Lord. Moses has just failed to see it from the Lord's vantage point.

¹² (con't) for I *am* of uncircumcised lips?”

In verse 4:10, Moses said he was “slow of speech and slow of tongue.” His words here expand on that. He says he is “of uncircumcised lips.” It is as if he had a foreskin over his mouth which hindered his tongue. It is a claim that his speech makes him unqualified to perform the duty he has been directed to perform.

In Genesis 17, any person who was uncircumcised was outside of the covenant of God. In Leviticus 19, fruit which was unacceptable as food was considered uncircumcised. In Leviticus 26, hearts that are uncircumcised are hearts which are guilty before the Lord. And in Jeremiah 6:10, an uncircumcised ear is one which will not heed the word of the Lord.

To be circumcised means to be right, acceptable, and pure. And so to be uncircumcised meant that his words would be considered impure and unacceptable. Because Aaron has already been assigned as his speaker, Moses has now made the assumption that even what he transmits to Aaron is defiled and thus it is the reason why both Israel and Pharaoh have rejected his words.

Said differently, Moses is intimating that he has a defect which is actually a moral hindrance to the plans and words of the Lord. His petition isn't because of a fear of

personal danger, but of being the *cause* of failure in what the Lord intended. It is the honor of the Lord that he is concerned about.

This is exactly the same sentiment found in Isaiah 6 –

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. ² Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one cried to another and said:

‘Holy, holy, holy *is* the Lord of hosts;
The whole earth *is* full of His glory!’

⁴ And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

⁵ So I said:

‘Woe *is* me, for I am undone!
Because I *am* a man of unclean lips,
And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;
For my eyes have seen the King,
The Lord of hosts.’” Isaiah 6:1-5

Like Isaiah, Moses had personally experienced the majesty of the Lord and he assumed that he had failed him. The command to speak to Pharaoh brought him to a new low as he only contemplated more failure would come from him.

¹³ Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, and gave them a command for the children of Israel and for Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

Without any prior introduction of Aaron in this account, and no mention of him since near the end of the previous chapter, he is suddenly named in this verse. Moses spoke, the Lord heard, and the Lord acted.

To show Moses that he *is qualified* for the task, he now speaks to both Moses and Aaron together. And he does it not just for speaking to the obstinate Pharaoh, but to the disheartened children of Israel. It is a command to both parties and it is to be carried out.

In both verse 11 and this verse, Pharaoh is called “king of Egypt.” And yet the title wasn’t given in verse 1 or verse 12. Why would this be? The reason is that in verse 11

and here, the children of Israel are mentioned. In other words, there is a contrast which the Bible is asking us to see.

Though Pharaoh is the king of Egypt, he is *not* the king of Israel. Thus the title is specifically mentioned when they are mentioned. This follows perfectly with the idea of the kingdom of Christ in contrast to the kingdom of this world, ruled by the devil. This contrast is made between the two until the final pages of the Bible when it says in Revelation –

“The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” Revelation 11:5

Following little hints like the terminology used when speaking of or to Pharaoh shows us greater patterns of what God has done and what He continues to do in the world. Never be afraid to stop and think on these types of things because what may seem unimportant never is. And what seems like a passing thought can often lead to the greatest of discoveries.

Our verses for today have ended and yet they continue on in our lives from moment to moment. The pictures of the Lord, Moses, and Israel, and their interactions with Pharaoh picture our own interaction between Christ and the devil.

If we remember that the eternal truths found in these ancient stories are given to remind us of that, they become all the more relevant to our own lives, and the lives of those around us who still have not called out to Christ.

We are either under the rule and authority of the devil in his world of sin, pictured by Pharaoh and the kingdom of Egypt, or we are under the rule and authority of Christ. Someday, just like Egypt, this world will be destroyed through judgment. Those who don't belong to Christ will be destroyed with it.

If you've never made a commitment to the Lord, stop rebelling and start yielding. Open your heart, open your eyes, and call out to Him. He is mighty to save. Let me tell you how you can receive Christ, even today...

Closing Verse: *“Cast your burden on the Lord,
And He shall sustain you;
He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.” Psalm 65:22*

Next Week: Exodus 6:14-30 (The Family of Moses and Aaron) (17th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

I Will Rescue and I Will Redeem

Then the Lord said to Moses
Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh
With a strong hand he will drive them out of his land
With a strong hand he will let them go

And God spoke to Moses this word
And said to him: “I *am* the Lord
I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty
To their eyes, this is how I was shown
But *by* My name Lord
To them I was not known
I have also established My covenant with them
To give them of Canaan the land
The land of their pilgrimage
In which they were strangers beforehand

And I have also heard the groaning
Of the children of Israel
Whom the Egyptians keep in bondage
And I have remembered My covenant as well

Therefore say to the children of Israel:
I *am* the Lord; I will bring you out
From under the burdens of the Egyptians
I will rescue you from their bondage, no doubt
And I will redeem you, I will not hesitate
With an outstretched arm and with judgments great

I will take you as My people and I will be your God
Then you shall know that I *am* the Lord

Your God who brings you out from under
The burdens of the Egyptians, this is my sure word
And I will bring you into the land
Which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob too
And I will give it to you *as* a heritage:
I *am* the Lord, this I will certainly do
So Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel
But they did not heed Moses because
Of anguish of spirit and cruel bondage
This is what being disheartened does

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
“Go in, tell Pharaoh, Egypt’s king
To let the children of Israel, as I am relaying
Go out of his land, tell him to do this thing

And Moses spoke before the Lord, saying
“The children of Israel have not heeded me
How then shall Pharaoh heed me, I am praying
For I *am* of uncircumcised lips as you already see
Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron
And gave them a command
For the children of Israel, and for Pharaoh king of Egypt
To bring the children of Israel out of Egypt the land

Once again, the words have been carefully selected
To show us of the great work of the Lord
In each word and in each verse can be detected
Greater pictures found in His superior word

O God, with such attention and such care
How could we quickly pass through without careful note?
When you have been so meticulous everywhere
And in every word You did Your wisdom upon us dote

Grant us hearts that desire to see every detail
Grant us eyes that can see Your precious Son
Even if we have to go slow as a snail
Let us not miss a thing, no – not even one!

Thank You for this wonderful book
And all the joy it reveals to us
Remind us daily to open it and upon its pages look
And to seek out there our precious Lord Jesus
Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 6:14-30

(THE FAMILY OF MOSES AND AARON)

Introduction: Genealogies and records of ancestry can be important for a multitude of reasons. An example which I chew on probably more often than I should is listening to people whine about the past and how they have a right to reparations for one supposed offense or another.

It is quite common among the black community today to lump all whites in as “former slave owners,” and people like our current president, Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, Eric Holder, and others of their ilk, use race in an attempt to divide, not unite, the American people.

They have steeped the black community of our nation into believing that whites only have their worst intent in mind, and that it has always been this way; it is all about race and subjugation to them. Such is not the case and their version of history is riddled with misrepresentations and lies.

Having a truthful account of one’s ancestry then can be used to bring out the truth of a matter which is necessary to quell the tide of such revolting nonsense. In the case of the Garrett family – my family, we have an unusual right, honor, and privilege to recognition from the African American slave community.

Our ancestry leads to my great, great grandfather, Thomas Garrett. He was born on August 21, 1789 in Upper Darby, PA. He is one of the most prominent figures in the history of the Underground Railroad.

He has been called Delaware’s greatest humanitarian and is credited with helping more than 2,700 slaves escape to freedom in a forty-year career as a Station Master. He was a white Quaker, whose family hid runaway slaves in its Delaware County farmhouse.

As a child, he credited an experience which he characterized as “transcendental” with directing his life’s work toward aiding in the escape of slaves. The incident, in which a black servant employed by his family was kidnapped and nearly forced into slavery, was a watershed moment in his life.

Because of it he would devote his life to the abolitionist cause. He was a friend and benefactor to the great Underground Railroad Conductor Harriet Tubman. She passed

through his station many times, during which he frequently provided her with money and shoes to continue her missions.

Of note, he personally provided Tubman with the money and the means for her own parents to escape from the South. In 1848, he and fellow abolitionists were tried and convicted for aiding in the escape of a family who had been slaves in Maryland. Both were given considerable fines which rendered them nearly bankrupt.

In his closing address, Garrett regaled those in the courtroom with a redoubled commitment to help runaway slaves. Eyewitness accounts detail the particular contrition of one slave-holding juror from southern Delaware who actually rose to shake Garrett's hand and apologize at the close of the impassioned speech.

Following the Civil War, he continued his work for minority groups in America. In 1870, when blacks were given the right to vote, he was carried on the shoulders of black supporters through the streets of Wilmington as they hailed him "our Moses."

There was the Moses of Wilmington, and knowing his accomplishments is both something I take joy in, and it is something that I wish I could put right in the face of the race-baiters of today. Our president disgusts me because of his one-sided, misguided, and skewed view of Christian history and of American history.

All men are on an equal standing before God and the terrible consequences we are paying because of this modern mindset of ignoring the deeds of those who worked to secure freedom for blacks, can only result in greater animosity and division.

There is another Moses, the first Moses, who also had a genealogical record which is found Scripture to prove that he was of the same stock of those who he was sent to lead out of their own bondage. God ensured this record was maintained and the placing of it in the Bible is absolutely perfect.

Text Verse: *But for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the Lord."* Leviticus 26:45

Yes, it is good to know our roots. But even if they have been lost through the ravages of time or carelessness, we still can trace who we are back to our one father Noah and from him back to our original father, Adam.

So in the end, we are all really one blood and one people, divided by petty divisions which the Lord does not see as we do. He sees us in one of only two ways, either redeemed by Christ, or a child of the devil. He would choose that you become His adopted son once again so that you can fellowship with Him for all eternity.

A portion of the great story of how that is possible is found in today's verses. Yes... it's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Generations of Levi (verses 14-19)

¹⁴ These *are* the heads of their fathers' houses:

Suddenly after the last 13 verses, there appears this genealogical listing which was preceded by a note from Moses declaring his inability to speak properly and then a command by the Lord concerning the children of Israel and Pharaoh about their departure from Egypt. The exact words of verses 12 & 13 were –

“And Moses spoke before the Lord, saying, ‘The children of Israel have not heeded me. How then shall Pharaoh heed me, for I *am* of uncircumcised lips?’

¹³ Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, and gave them a command for the children of Israel and for Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.”

Now, with what seems sudden abruptness, the Bible turns to 14 verses of the names of families and individuals. And then as soon as they end, they will be followed by two verses which give a command for Moses, and then a note from Moses, declaring his inability to speak properly.

What liberal scholars see as arbitrary and even ill-planned is actually a beautifully formed chiasm which acknowledges the right of Moses and Aaron to the leadership of Israel. This chiasm is the second such chiasm in the chapter and which, together, span the entire chapter, from verses 1-11 and then from verses 12-30 –

Exodus 6:12-30 - The Family of Moses and Aaron
A Foreshadowing of the Coming Prophet and Priest (1/12/2015)

a (vs 12) And Moses spoke before the LORD, saying, "The children of Israel have not heeded me. How then shall Pharaoh heed me, for I *am* of uncircumcised lips?"

b (vs13) Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron ... for Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

c (vss14-15) Families of Reuben and Simeon (rejected as leaders)

d (vss 16-19) Genealogies of Levi "according to their generations."

x (vs 20) The family of Moses and Aaron

d (vss 21-25) Houses of Levi "according to their families."

c (vss 26, 27) Moses and Aaron (selected as leaders)

b (vs 28, 29) The LORD spoke to Moses ... "Speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you."

a (vs 30) But Moses said before the LORD, "Behold, I *am* of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh heed me?"

Despite the attacks of liberal theologians, there is harmony, purpose, and order to what is being given in these verses. The term for "father's houses" is *rashey beit avotam*. It refers to the heads of the individual houses. This listing is given for quite a few reasons as we will continue to see in the verses ahead.

One of those reasons is to establish a direct line from Abraham to Moses and Aaron, through Isaac and Jacob. This can be discerned when compared with the other sets of genealogies which have been presented already in the Bible.

A second reason is that God made a promise to Abraham in Genesis 15 concerning his descendants –

"Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ But **in the fourth generation** they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete." Genesis 15:13-16

This listing is given to show that the Lord's words were true. Jacob went to Egypt with His family which included his son Levi and Levi's three sons, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. This is recorded in Genesis 46. In Egypt, Kohath had a son named Amram and Amram had a son named Moses.

Thus, Moses is the fourth generation from Jacob who went to Egypt. This listing is a proof of the fulfillment of covenant promise. A third reason is that the specific ages of Levi, Kohath, and Amram will be given.

By knowing their ages, the approximate length of time which the Israelites dwelt in Egypt can be determined. This dating can then be checked against other dating and confirm that there are no missing names in the genealogies.

In other words, the line goes directly from Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to Levi, to Kohath, to Amram, and then to Moses without any interim generations being left out. The line is complete and unbroken. Moses is the 7th from Abraham; from Promise to Deliverer.

This might seem unneeded, but it's not. It proves the right of Moses and Aaron to lead and it also shuts up scholars who either negligently or willfully claim the Bible has errors or omissions in it – and there are lots of them that do.

Some scholars will say this listing, without missing generations, is impossible because of the number of Levites who are recorded later in Exodus. It is a faulty conclusion based on a misunderstanding of who is included in those census numbers. There is nothing missing from this genealogy.

The placing of this listing here is natural and appropriate because the Lord will now begin His decisive actions against Pharaoh. The time has reached its fullness and action is coming. In order to establish that Moses was qualified for assuming this responsibility, the listing is given now.

This type of specific recording is the same as for that of Christ. It is also somewhat of a picture of His record. Moses is to be Israel's prophet and Aaron is to be their priest. Jesus' genealogy is likewise meticulously recorded to show that He is Israel's rightful Prophet and Priest.

¹⁴ (con't) **The sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel, were Hanoah, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. These are the families of Reuben.**

These are the same names recorded in Genesis 46:9, but with the additional note that Reuben was the firstborn of Israel. He has been rejected as a leader and so he will be passed over.

¹⁵ And the sons of Simeon were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman. These *are* the families of Simeon.

This is the exact same record as that given in Genesis 46:10. Simeon has been rejected as a leader and so he will be passed over.

¹⁶ These *are* the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. And the years of the life of Levi were one hundred and thirty-seven.

These are the same names as are recorded in Genesis 46:11, but something new is given... the lifespan of Levi. If one understands the clues of how to interpret what is going on in the Bible, they can tell from this one addition that the house of Levi will now become a central figure in the narrative.

A point that is worth remembering is that three people are recorded as living 137 years in the Bible – Ishmael, Levi, and Amram the father of Moses and Aaron. Ishmael pictured the law during his life and the families of Levi and Amram both encompass Moses and Aaron, the lawgiver and the law’s priest.

Another point of interest is that the term “generations” in this verse is the Hebrew word *toledot*. It can be spelled in one of four ways. The way that it is spelled for the generations of Ishmael, and often in the family of Levi is unique. Unlike other genealogies in the Old Testament, it is lacking the letter *vav*.

ו – vav

תּוֹלְדוֹת - 2 vavs

תּוֹלֵדָת - 1 vav

תּלְדָת - 0 vav

תּלְדוֹת - 1 vav

This is a hidden clue concerning the law which is given for us to understand what the Bible teaches. The clue is that the law can never save. In fact, relying on works of the law merely separate us further from God.

As the family of Levi is the steward of the law, this unusual spelling of the word in Hebrew shows us this. This information on the letter *vav* was explained in detail in earlier Genesis sermons and in the final sermon from the book of Ruth.

Seeing these hidden clues in Scripture gives us a much greater understanding of how God deals with man and what man needs to do in order to be right with Him. What is hidden in the Old Testament is explicitly explained in the New. Here are Paul's words on the matter –

“...knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” Galatians 2:16

¹⁷ The sons of Gershon were Libni and Shimi according to their families.

Gershon was the firstborn of Levi and so his family is listed first.

¹⁸ And the sons of Kohath were Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. And the years of the life of Kohath were one hundred and thirty-three.

Kohath is the second son of Levi and so his family is listed next. However, like his father, his age at death is given. If we were to stop here and pick up in the future, we could first say to ourselves, “Sometime important will come from the line of Kohath.”

¹⁹ The sons of Merari were Mahli and Mushi.

Merari is the youngest of Levi and so he is listed last.

¹⁹ (con't) These are the families of Levi according to their generations.

Again, the spelling of the word *toledot* is without a *vav*. The Bible is showing us a clue that the generations of the law will come to an end and they will be replaced with something greater – the dispensation of grace found in Christ Jesus.

*So many generations, name upon name
Why are they there in the Bible's pages?
If they weren't there, wouldn't it be the same?
Would it make any difference to scholars and sages?*

*The answer is that they are there for a reason
Each name is important as God reveals to us
Things that have been, and that will also be in a season
Things that point to the Lord Jesus*

*If we skip them or pass by them without a care
We will miss so much that we could know
In these lists God is willing to share
Many hidden treasures that He desires to show*

II. Aaron and Moses; Moses and Aaron (verses 20-27)

²⁰ Now Amram took for himself Jochebed, his father's sister, as wife;

Amram is the father of Moses. For a wife, he married his own father's sister, Jochebed. She is a daughter of Levi and a sister of Kohath. At this time, such a marriage was common and accepted.

As their father lived to be 133, he could have had Amram many years earlier and the two of them could have been the same age, or Amram could even be older; we can't know. Later, under the law, such a marriage will be forbidden. This is found in Leviticus 18 –

“You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's sister; she *is* near of kin to your father.” Leviticus 18:12

However, prior to the law, as we have seen repeatedly in such things, there were no prohibitions against them and there was nothing wrong in what occurred. Paul explains this in Romans 5 –

“For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.” Romans 5:13

Her name, Jochebed, or *Yokeved*, is the earliest known name which carries the abbreviated form of Yah, or Yehovah. Her name means either “Lord of Glory” or “Glory of the Lord.” What a fitting and appropriate time for such a name to come into the biblical account and what a fitting family for it to be recorded!

Her son, Moses, would literally be the one to first lead the united people of Israel to seeing the glory of the Lord in the most astonishing ways. And, as we’re considering names, we shouldn’t leave out Amram. His name means “A People Exalted.”

Looking at this union then, we see a picture of what is coming. Israel, A People Exalted, will be united to the Lord of Glory.

²⁰ (con’t) **and she bore him Aaron and Moses.**

From this union between Amram and Jochebed will come Aaron, which means “Light Bringer” and Moses, which means “He who Draws Out.” Thus we have another picture of what is coming in Christ.

Through this exalted people, Israel, (pictured by Amram) in their union to the Lord of Glory (pictured by Jochebed) will come the true High priest who will bring light to the people (pictured by Aaron), and the true Redeemer and Prophet who will draw out a people from the world for Himself (pictured by Moses). The names of this family show us a snapshot of what is coming in history.

²⁰ (con’t) **And the years of the life of Amram were one hundred and thirty-seven.**

Again, the years of this line are given. And for the third and last time in Scripture, a person will be noted as dying at 137 years of age – Ishmael, who pictured those under the law; Levi, whose name is used synonymously with the law; and Amram, from whom will come Israel’s human lawgiver, and also the priest of that law.

²¹ **The sons of Izhar were Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri.**

Izhar is the second son of Kohath and Amram’s bother. His family is listed showing the future heads of their houses. Korah will be the instigator of a most remarkable rebellion in Numbers 16. Though his family line will continue and be notable, even for the writing 11 of the psalms, he himself will forever be remembered as one of the great losers in the history of the Bible.

He's even mentioned in the New Testament book of Jude –

“Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.” Jude -11

Thus he is forever noted alongside two other troublemakers of history.

²² And the sons of Uzziel were Mishael, Elzaphan, and Zithri.

The third son of Kohath, Hebron, is overlooked and the record goes directly to his last son, Uzziel. Two of his sons will be remembered again in Scripture as they are asked to carry from the camp the dead bodies of Aaron's sons. That is recorded in Leviticus 10 –

“Then Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said to them, ‘Come near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp.’ ⁵ So they went near and carried them by their tunics out of the camp, as Moses had said.” Leviticus 10:4, 5

²³ Aaron took to himself Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, sister of Nahshon, as wife;

Aaron married a woman who is from the tribe of Judah. Both Amminadab her father and Nahshon her brother, are listed in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1. The name Elisheba is the same as the name Elisabeth which is the wife of Zechariah, the mother of John the Baptist.

Her name means “Oath of God.” At the exodus, her brother Nahshon will be the leader of the tribe of Judah. In her marriage to Aaron, we see a uniting of the lines of the King and of the Priest, both offices of the coming Christ.

²³ (con't) and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

These are the sons of Aaron who were born to Elisheba. The oldest two will die when they offer unauthorized fire before the Lord. This will leave Eleazar as the oldest son and through him will continue the high priestly line of Israel when Aaron dies.

It's interesting that this name Elisheba, or Elisabeth, is only given to these two women in the Bible. Together, they will have intimate contact with women named Miriam. The first became the sister-in-law of Miriam, Aaron's sister. The second is a relative of Miriam, or Mary, the mother of Christ Jesus.

And the Bible records the unusual deaths of each of their first born. Nadab died when he was burnt by fire before the Lord, and John the Baptist died by beheading.

²⁴ And the sons of Korah were Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph. These are the families of the Korahites.

Even though Korah was destroyed when he rebelled against the Lord, the whole family wasn't destroyed with him. At least three of them continue to be mentioned in Scripture, even to the writing of some of the psalms.

²⁵ Eleazar, Aaron's son, took for himself one of the daughters of Putiel as wife; and she bore him Phinehas.

The line of Eleazar is given to show where the high priestly line was heading. When Nadab and Abihu die, the line will continue through Eleazar and thus his son Phinehas. The Bible is being very specific, in advance, to show us hints of what is coming.

By simply reading the genealogies, one can divine clues as to the importance of individuals before their actions are ever mentioned. Such is the case with Phinehas who will become a great name in Israel's history. So great in fact that this is recorded in Numbers –

“Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. ¹² Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; ¹³ and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.’”

-Numbers 25-11-13

Wouldn't it be nice if all of us were so noted in our lives for the zeal of the Lord! The name Putiel isn't mentioned anywhere else and it's believed to possibly be of Egyptian origin. The same is true with the name Phinehas.

If this is so, then a son who partly comes from the line of Ham, the wayward son of Noah, figures predominantly in the high priestly line of Israel. God is no respecter of persons and many notable figures of the Bible come from what may seem unsavory or unclean lines of people.

In the end, we are all one race of people, human beings. In Christ, every curse is lifted and all are on an equal playing field. If you harbor racial or cultural prejudices against another, you're not looking at those people as God does. Get beyond those things!

²⁵ (con't) These are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites according to their families.

This verse sums up the entire listing of names which went from verse 16 through 25. The introduction has been carefully placed here to show us this most important family before they begin their awesome work before the Lord.

It is work which would continue until the time of Christ and only be annulled in His establishment of a New Covenant.

²⁶ These are the same Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said, "Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies."

With the matter of the genealogies established and properly recorded, and in preparation for what lies ahead, this verse is given. The words are emphatic. It is these – Aaron and Moses, to whom the Lord has spoken.

And so as quickly as the genealogical record appeared, it as quickly ended and the narrative commences where it left off. This list has been no unexplainable insertion, but rather a carefully placed listing intended to validate the offices of Aaron and Moses.

And as the narrative recommences, in this quote from the Lord, something new is given. It says, "Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies." The word for "armies" is *tsibotam*, plural of *tsaba*, which means "war, to train, army, struggle, etc."

This is the first time in the Bible the word is used when speaking of the people of Israel as a unified force, capable of mustering troops. Israel won't just leave Egypt as a ragged bunch of people, but rather as a well-organized group of people, each in ranks and each rank exhibiting dignity and power because of the power of the Lord their Leader.

²⁷ These are the ones who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt.

What was commanded is what was spoken to Pharaoh. Though the occurrence is still future in the overall narrative, it is past at the time of the recording of the genealogy which occurred, as all of the record of the exodus did, after the events happened.

Moses is looking back to show that those who were selected were those who performed, and those who performed were qualified to do so as testified to by their well-documented heritage. And more than just bring out the children of Israel, they brought them out from under Pharaoh *king of Egypt*.

The entire title, including the words “king of Egypt” are given as a contrast to the previous word “armies.” The power of the king was ineffective against the hosts of Israel when led by the Lord of Israel. Now is this only mild speculation by Charlie, something to just lengthen a sermon, or is this something we can be sure of?

It is, in fact, something we can be sure of. After verse 29 of this chapter, the title “king of Egypt” won’t be used again until Exodus 14:5, after the Israelites have departed from the land. And the entire title Pharaoh, king of Egypt, won’t be used until verse 14:8 when the fool decides to pursue Israel to try to recapture them.

However, in the intervening verses, from Exodus 6:29 until Exodus 14:5, the term Pharaoh will be used 72 times without the additional title of “king of Egypt.” It is during these verses that the Lord gives this stubborn individual a marvelous display of His power and majesty, showing him who the true King is.

27 (con’t) **These *are the same* Moses and Aaron.**

Again, the names are emphatically stated. It is these two who were called and who were obedient to the call. And thus they are noted once again. However, this time, the order is reversed. In the previous verse, it said “Aaron and Moses” to show the firstborn status of Aaron. Now in this verse, Moses is placed first.

As so often happens in the Bible, the second replaces the first in position of preeminence. It is a picture of Christ who is given preeminence over Adam. The concept is explained in detail by the hand of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, so take time to read that today!

So far we’ve seen this pattern occur many times, including Abel’s offering/Cain’s offering; Shem/Japheth; Abraham/Haran; Isaac/Ishmael; Jacob/Esau; Jacob’s Second

Wife/Jacob's First Wife; Perez/Zerah; Ephraim/Manasseh; etc. God is giving us these hints to think on and to understand what He is doing and why.

*If every name recorded was important to You
And then You handed them along for us to see
Then You must think we're pretty important too
Why else would you keep them so carefully*

*The details are all part of a great plan
They record special events and names in a tapestry
All intended to detail the redemption of man
And it's there for us if we will open our eyes to see*

*It all makes sense when we see how much you love us
And wrote each and every word to reveal Jesus*

III. I Can Do All Things (verses 28-30)

²⁸ And it came to pass, on the day the Lord spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt,

These words take us right back to the final verses of chapter 5 and which led us into this chapter. There, after being rejected by Pharaoh, this was recorded –

²² So Moses returned to the Lord and said, "Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why *is* it You have sent me? ²³ For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all." Exodus 5:22, 23

But in this verse now it says that "the Lord spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt." This wasn't just a call from the bush in Sinai where the Lord reigned. Rather, he made his presence known in Egypt as well. By speaking to Moses in this way in Egypt, he was granting him "a sort of divine dominion, namely, a theocratic dominion over Pharaoh." (Clarke)

On that same day and in the land of Egypt, the Lord spoke and gave His instructions as Moses now remembers for us...

²⁹ that the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “I *am* the Lord. Speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you.”

This was the general thought given in verse 10. After Moses’ words to the Lord, the Lord spent the next 9 verses explaining His intentions and the reasons for them. These reasons extended all the way back to the time of Abraham and the covenant with him. They gave a concise review of Israel’s state until that time.

And then in verse 10, he repeated his commission to Moses to do as he was instructed. But Moses had an excuse which he hoped would absolve him of the tasks which lay ahead...

³⁰ But Moses said before the Lord, “Behold, I *am* of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh heed me?”

This is not a newly spoken repeat of these words. Rather they are a reiteration of what Moses spoke in verse 12. In other words, it may seem that Moses is saying the same thing again to the Lord that he said in verse 12. But that isn’t the case.

Rather, Moses is re-recording, after the insertion of the genealogy which confirmed him and Aaron in their leadership positions, that he had once said these words to the Lord. That is why the previous verses said the names of Moses and Aaron emphatically and noted their accomplishments in the past tense.

The Lord chose someone who felt wholly unqualified for the task set before him, and yet the Lord demonstrated that he was perfectly qualified. He was selected, even from eons before, to accomplish the task which was known but to God alone when He made the promise to Moses’ long dead forefather Abraham.

Moses’ recording of this account for the second time is to show us the truth which is recorded in the book of Zechariah which says, “‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the Lord of hosts.” Zechariah 4:6

It is a concept which is restated in the New Testament as Paul says to the Philippians – ”

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13

The entire sixth chapter of Exodus has been carefully laid out into two separate chiasms to show us these and so many other truths. Both of these chiasms can be found on my

Wonderful1 website along with all the other chiasms I've found. Anytime you want, you can go there and review them and think on them.

As you do, you'll more clearly see how God works and why He does things the way He does. Everything has purpose and everything is directed to help us apply the same truths to our own lives. Now let's look at this chapter, with its two chiasms, and imagine our lives being recorded in this way.

If everything you did was carefully recorded to be displayed before all people someday, what would be the defining moment of your life? What would be the one thing that all other things pivoted on? If you were to give any answer other than, "I received Jesus as my Lord and Savior," your life would ultimately be a waste.

For all the money we make, we can't take a dollar of it with us. For all the hard work we did, it will be forgotten. If you worked cutting down trees, more trees will grow and replace them. If you sold insurance, there will be new policies written to replace yours. If you were a tugboat captain, well... that tugboat will someday be scrapped or sunk.

Everything has a season, but every season ends. Without the hope of Christ, it is all merely vapor on a cold morning which disappears from sight. But with the hope of Christ, there is an eternal walk in God's garden of delight. It is the only thing that gives our years and our toils any meaning or purpose.

If you have never called out to Christ to forgive you and redeem you from this fallen world of sin and death, please let me tell you how you can do that today...

Closing Verse: *"All flesh is grass,
And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.*

*⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades,
Because the breath of the Lord blows upon it;
Surely the people are grass.*

*⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades,
But the word of our God stands forever." Isaiah 40:6-8*

Next Week: Exodus 7:1-7 (Notable Obedience) (18th Exodus Sermon)

Less than a year after being hailed as the Moses of Wilmington, by the black community there, Thomas Garrett died on January 25, 1871. His funeral, attended by many of the black residents of the city, featured a procession of Garrett's coffin – borne from

shoulder to shoulder up Quaker Hill. He now awaits his final call for judgment of deeds done while in the body.

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Family of Moses and Aaron

These are the heads of their fathers' houses:

The sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel

Were Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi, not mentioned are their spouses

These are the families of Reuben as the Bible does tell

And the sons of Simeon

Were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar

And Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman

These are the families of Simeon of which you are now familiar

These are the names of the sons of Levi

According to their generations, living under heaven

Gershon, Kohath, and Merari

And the years of the life of Levi were one hundred and thirty-seven

The sons of Gershon were Libni and Shimi

According to each family

And the sons of Kohath were

Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel

And the years of the life of Kohath were

One hundred and thirty-three as the story does tell

The sons of Merari were Mahli and Mushi, making alliterations

These are the families of Levi according to their generations

Now Amram took for himself Jochebed

His father's sister, as wife

And Aaron and Moses to him she bred

And one hundred and thirty-seven were the years of Amram's life

The sons of Izhar were Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri
And the sons of Uzziel were Mishael, Elzaphan, and Zithri

Aaron took to himself Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab
Sister of Nahshon, as wife
And she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar
A very productive lady in her life

And the sons of Korah were
Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph
These are the families of the Korahites, for sure
They were guided by Korah's staff

Eleazar, Aaron's son, took for himself
One of the daughters of Putiel as wife
And she bore him Phinehas
Who was a notable figure during his life

These are the heads of the fathers' houses
Of the Levites according to their families
Along with a few of their spouses

These are the same Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said
"Bring out the children of Israel
From the land of Egypt according to their armies
This is what the Lord to Moses did tell

These are the ones who spoke to Pharaoh
King of Egypt, to bring out
The children of Israel from Egypt
These are the same Moses and Aaron, without a doubt

And it came to pass, on the day
The Lord spoke to Moses in Egypt the land
That the Lord spoke to Moses and did say
"I am the Lord as you understand

Speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you
But Moses said before the Lord

“Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, it’s true
And how shall Pharaoh heed me and Your word?”

Thus ends chapter 6 of Exodus
And we can see in it perfect order and harmony
If we research it well, it will speak to us
Of the hidden mysteries which reveal God’s glory

So it is with every detail of God’s word
It will teach us of the wonders of His plan
In sending to us Jesus the Lord
Who came to redeem fallen man

The Bible does this so that we will seek after God
And search for Him carefully in each detail
So let’s do it for as long as on this earth we tread
Until we at last hit that heavenly trail

Yes! Thank You, Lord, for this precious book
Help us to study it well and to each day take a look

There in its pages are wonders for us
Such beautiful wonders concerning our precious Lord Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 7:1-7

(NOTABLE OBEDIENCE)

Introduction: In our sixth of the seven verses today, there is a special emphasis placed on the *deeds* of Aaron and Moses. God placed this there for a reason. He loves obedience to His word and He cherishes those who are so obedient. Throughout His word, there are records of people which center on exactly that premise. The question is how will each of us be remembered? Is it your heart's desire to be remembered favorably by God? Listen now to our text verse for today and see how the book of Nehemiah ends...

Text Verse: *Remember me, O my God, for good! Nehemiah 13:29*

Is Nehemiah' prayer one that you long for in your own life? May it be so! Jesus said that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the Day of Judgment. (Matthew 12:36). Our words, our deeds, all of who we are and what we do, will be laid before our God when we stand before Him.

It's a truth which is found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Words for Pharaoh (verses 1 & 2)

¹So the Lord said to Moses: "See, I have made you *as* God to Pharaoh,

This follows directly after Moses' proclamation that he felt he was unqualified for the challenge ahead. In Exodus 6, he said this –

"And Moses spoke before the Lord, saying, 'The children of Israel have not heeded me. How then shall Pharaoh heed me, for I *am* of uncircumcised lips?'

¹³ Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, and gave them a command for the children of Israel and for Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt." Exodus 6:12, 13

This was essentially repeated later at the end of the chapter with the Lord telling Moses, "I *am* the Lord. Speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you." (verse 29).

Immediately following this exchange we come to this first verse of chapter 7 and the words, *re'eh netatikha elohim l'paroh* – “See, I have made you *as* God to Pharaoh.” Some translations, in order to avoid this sounding somehow inappropriate say “a god” instead of God. Either could be correct, but God is probably what is intended.

The reason why this is so is because this is a modified repeat of what was said in Exodus 4:16 –

“So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God.” Exodus 4:16

There, translators generally agree the intent is “God” rather than “a god.” In accordance with this, Aaron is to stand in a mediatorial role between Moses and Pharaoh. He is to be the mouthpiece of Moses who would announce whatever Moses intended.

Moses, after having been assured by the Lord of his position and capabilities, would no longer have a reason to fear Pharaoh. He would have something akin to divine authority, and his word would eventually bring Pharaoh to his end.

The power he would display would be the power of the Lord, and Aaron would be the one to relay this. But even more than this, the people of Israel would come to understand that Moses was truly selected to bring about their deliverance.

They had seen the three signs and believed for a spell, but eventually they lost heart in Moses. By the time the plagues were finished, they would fully understand his position.

And isn't this a beautiful picture of Christ. The early Jews bowed their head and worshipped at the coming of Christ with His fulfillment of those three signs, but eventually they turned away from Him. But the Bible says that they will come to acknowledge Him in the end times, when the world heads into the tribulation.

We will see Pharaoh, who is proud and exalted, be brought low by what the Lord brings upon Him through Moses. Plagues will come at his command and they will end at his will as well. This is what it means that he would be as God to Pharaoh.

^{1 (con't)} **and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.**

In the Old Testament, a prophet spoke the words that were put in his mouth by God. We see this in Deuteronomy 18:18 –

“I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.”

-Deuteronomy 18:18

It is seen also in Jeremiah 1:9 –

“Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: ‘Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.’” Jeremiah 1:9

It is Moses who will stand in this special position in relation to Pharaoh by speaking through a prophet and directing Aaron as to what he should say. Thus we see why Moses should be like God to Pharaoh, and why Aaron would be his prophet. And so, calling Moses “God to Pharaoh” rather than “a god to Pharaoh” is surely more accurate.

Interestingly, this role puts Aaron in the notable position of having been first a prophet and then a priest. Thus, he pictures Christ who spoke the words of God first and then fulfilled His priestly role for His people. It is the first of many times he will picture the Lord.

²You shall speak all that I command you.

Ultimately though, despite the words of Moses being spoken by Aaron, it is the Lord, Yehovah, who will direct the affairs which will occur. Moses will obediently follow the Lord’s directives, impart them to Aaron, and Aaron will speak them to Pharaoh.

^{2 (con’t)} And Aaron your brother shall tell Pharaoh to send the children of Israel out of his land.

The word will be repeated as directed. Aaron will be the speaker directly to Pharaoh. The term “say to Aaron” or “speak to Aaron” will be repeated several times to remind us that it is the Lord who initiates the words, and that Moses then conveys them to Aaron.

At other times, there will be exchanges with Pharaoh which will appear that Moses is speaking to him. Whether he does, or whether he speaks through Aaron at those times isn’t known, but when the Lord’s intended words are given, it is Aaron who receives them from Moses.

What is occurring here is very similar to that of the Trinity. The will of God the Father is expressed in a concrete manner through His Mediator Jesus. And this Mediator’s duties will be articulated with eloquence through His orator, the Holy Spirit. In the case of

Moses, the Lord directs what is to be said, just as Jesus relays the words of God the Father. That is from John 12 –

“For I have not spoken on My own *authority*; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.⁵⁰ And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.” John 12:49, 50

From there, what is given to Moses is spoken by Aaron, just as the Holy Spirit is given to speak from what Jesus possesses. That is found in John 16 –

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you.” John 16:13, 14

One more point on this verse – depending on what translation you use, there are different designations for “the children of Israel.” The NIV says, “let the Israelites go.” The NLT says, “let the people of Israel leave.” The NASB says, “let the sons of Israel go.” And the ISV says, “let the Israelis go.”

In Hebrew, the term is *bene yisrael*, literally, “the sons of Israel.” Translators choose what they believe the best intent is, but none of these are incorrect. The 12 sons of Israel are the children of Israel, and they then represent the collective group who issues from them.

*The time of redemption is soon ahead
The many years of bondage are at their end
Our bodies are weary, we have toiled and bled
Soon the Lord our Deliverer He will send*

*The many years we have been in bondage to sin
There seemed no hope at all for any of us
But at the cross of Calvary our Savior did win
He defeated the devil! Hail the Lord Jesus!*

*Now we have a sure hope and the promise of glory
Because of the truth contained in the gospel story*

II. My Armies; My People – the Children of Israel (verses 3-5)

³ **And I will harden Pharaoh's heart,**

The first time Moses was told this was in Exodus 4:21, but it used a different word than here. That word was *khazaq*, a word used quite a few times in the exodus account. But the word used here is *qashah*. It's used only here and in Exodus 13:15.

In this verse, it says that the Lord is the agent of the hardening, "I will harden." However, in 13:15, it shows that Pharaoh is the agent of the hardening. There is says –

"And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was **stubborn** about letting us go, that the Lord killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt." Exodus 13:15

These words are being used with definite purpose. They are given to show that the Lord is working behind the scenes to effect His purposes, and yet we are ultimately responsible for our own choices, be they stubborn or be they soft and yielding to His will.

By paying attention to the words of the Bible, we can certainly learn more about ourselves and more about how to perceive those around us who are either belligerent to the Lord or who are responsive to Him.

If we can pay attention to these things, it is even possible to use them as examples to those belligerent souls in hopes of having them change their hearts. The first time the Lord told Moses that He would harden Pharaoh's heart, Moses didn't grasp the plan and he became disheartened, feeling that he had failed the Lord.

But the Lord knew how to manipulate Pharaoh in order to harden his heart. Moses didn't, and so he misunderstood the first rejection by both Pharaoh and the Hebrews. By making a polite request to let the people go into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was started.

When no consequences for his refusal came about, he was thus emboldened against future requests. In the coming plagues, each will have less of an effect than the one to follow. And the first two plagues will actually be repeatable by Pharaoh's magicians.

Because they are, Pharaoh will be duped into believing that his gods and his magicians are comparable to Yehovah. Thus *he* will harden his heart. It will be a passive hardening

by the Lord which will be actively responded to by Pharaoh. And the reason for this process is given as we continue...

^{3 (con't)} **and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.**

There is a truth that permeates the Bible. It is that God will receive the glory He is due. He will either receive it in a repentant heart and a bowed knee, or He will receive it in judgment upon the unrepentant sinner. In His display of the signs and wonders upon Egypt, he will be more glorified.

He will be more glorified in the eyes of His people at the majestic display of His wonders, and He will be more glorified in those who reject them because the wonders will be a witness against them in judgment. Either way, God will receive the glory.

As Egypt is a picture of the sin-filled world, the pattern holds true. Those who call on Christ give glory to God, and through those who reject Him, He is glorified. And the pattern hold true as well for the tribulation period of the end times which is pictured here.

It is through the signs and wonders that these things came about in the past, and it is through signs and wonders that they will come about in the future. The word for "signs" is *owth*. It is a sign *of* something. The stars in Genesis 1:14 are said to be given for signs. They would be used, not just as pretty lights in the sky, but for signs of other things.

They form the constellations which, according to the Bible, give us a story of God's redemptive plans. The Bible shows also that stars unite at certain times in history as signs of divine occurrences.

When king Ahaz was told to ask for a sign to confirm the Lord's word, he refused to do so and so Isaiah turned to the people of Israel and said this –

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14

God's signs during the coming period of this exodus account are then not just for the eyes of the people of Egypt, but are signs for all to read about and remember. They can even be considered as precursor signs to the parallel events of judgment upon the world in the end times.

The sign was both an immediate promise and one which looked forward to the coming Messiah. Thus signs are given to represent other things. The other word the Lord uses here is translated as “wonders.” It is the Hebrew word *mophet*. This word speaks of something out of the ordinary course of nature.

These wonders would be unusual phenomena, either natural or supernatural, which cry out for an explanation. Whether natural or supernatural, they imply that the divine hand is behind them. Thus they act as a testimonial of being a messenger of God. For example, the parting of the Red Sea is a natural event. The Bible tells how it happened – an east wind blew all night.

However, there is the implied divine hand behind it. First, the Red Sea doesn’t just divide whenever there is an east wind. Secondly, the east wind doesn’t just blow at any given time. But the east wind blew, and the waters were parted at the exact moment needed to deliver Israel.

Therefore, it is a supernatural occurrence, even though it came about by natural causes. The parting of the Red Sea was, in essence, God’s messenger to His people that He was there for them. It was also His messenger to those who saw or heard. They would be alerted to the greatness of God through it.

⁴ But Pharaoh will not heed you,

Knowing in advance both the person of Pharaoh, as well as how he will respond to the series of encounters that he will have with Moses and Aaron, the Lord reminds Moses once again that there will be resistance to his words before Israel is delivered. He is being informed of this again so that the resistance won’t be unexpected or to be taken as a sign of failure.

^{4 (con’t)} so that I may lay My hand on Egypt

Pharaoh represents Egypt as its leader. The actions against Pharaoh then are an action against Egypt. And so the Lord says that He will lay His hand on Egypt. Through signs and wonders, Jesus validated His office while at the same time laid His hand on the world of sin.

He defeated the devil at the cross, and through the resurrection He took away the power of sin in those He redeemed. The pattern is exactly detailed for us to see.

Christ has laid His hand on the world and He has done so in a way which will allow the world to willingly follow Him in His victory.

⁴ (con't) **and bring My armies *and* My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.**

The purpose of the signs and wonders was to progressively harden Pharaoh's heart in order to lay His hand on Egypt. And in that, the Lord will then bring out His people from Egypt. Think of the church. Christ performed His wonders and He continues to do so today in each repentant soul who bows to Him.

And in this He is gathering to Himself His people, bringing them out of spiritual death and decay and into His kingdom. This is all being pictured in the events of the past. Jehovah promises Moses here that He will bring out His armies and His people, or more rightly it is translated as "My armies; My people."

The people are the armies and the second term explains the first because the people are His. At the exodus, there will be 603,550 men of fighting age who will depart. With them will be their families and their possessions. All of them will be delivered, as it says, by great judgments.

And these judgments have a purpose beyond the annihilation of Pharaoh and his armies. They are intended to stand as a memorial to the world concerning the work of the Lord. This is explained several times in the Bible, such as in Deuteronomy 2:25 –

"This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the nations under the whole heaven, who shall hear the report of you, and shall tremble and be in anguish because of you." Deuteronomy 2:25

These judgments had the intent of calling to mind the work of God on behalf of His people so that others would hear of them and pay heed. This was certainly the case because after their years of wilderness wanderings, this is recorded in Joshua 2 –

"I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt Joshua." 2:9, 10

And even many years later, about four hundred years or so, the surrounding people still remembered the stories of Israel's deliverance. Before a battle between the Philistines and the Israelites, we see this recorded in 1 Samuel 4 –

“So the Philistines were afraid, for they said, ‘God has come into the camp!’ And they said, ‘Woe to us! For such a thing has never happened before. ⁸ Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These *are* the gods who struck the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.’” 1 Samuel 4:7, 8

The purpose of God's judgments upon the Egyptians was not limited to a short span of time or to an isolated location in the Middle East, but they were intended to show the world of His power over the elements, and His care for Israel.

In this then, they are intended even for the people of the entire world to take heed to and learn from. First, God is God and He alone controls the elements, not man. So much for global warming and man's denial that God is really in control of the world.

Secondly, God is the God of Israel. He is the God not just of Abraham as Muslims and the confused religious world states, but the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the Defender of Israel whether Israel deserves His defense or not.

Third, He is Jesus Christ, who is the fulfillment of the pictures which we see in these signs and wonders, and who we see fulfilling the judgments that are pictured as well. Thus, He is also the Defender of His church and His called-out bride. In Him for us, there is hope, assurance, and ultimately deliverance.

⁵ And the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the Lord,

Egypt in Hebrew is *mizraim*. It means “double distress.” It is a picture of the world; people without God and without God's law. They are, in essence, in double distress. In this, is another purpose for what God is doing. It is so that those who are in double distress shall know that *ani Yehovah* – that “I am Yehovah.”

In other words, God intends to demonstrate that He is who He claims to be through His signs, wonders, and judgments. I AM is the self-existent God. I AM is the Creator. I AM is the Sustainer. I AM is, and there *is* no other. I AM Yehovah. This is the force and intent of the words that are given.

This saying, that “XX shall know that I am the LORD,” or a near form of the words, is repeated about 75 times in the Bible, and the vast number of those times are in the book of Ezekiel. A large number of those times it is referring to the nations surrounding Israel, but a very large percent of them refer to Israel herself.

In other words, it is not just the nations of the earth who need to learn this lesson, but also the very people who bear His name. The promises of future restoration and protection of Israel, which began with the return of them to the land in 1948, are included in this.

He has called them home, He is currently working on them, and He will continue to do so until they call out to Him once again. It is both a sad commentary on the Jewish people, and an immense act of love, mercy, and grace – even covenant faithfulness, on behalf of Yehovah. They nailed Him to a tree and yet He still longs for them to know Him.

But the question is, “How can we be sure that they will know Yehovah is Jesus someday?” The answer is that it is through the claims of Yehovah in the Old Testament, and the application of those claims to Jesus in the New. There are too many to count, but one read through the book of Isaiah will show an abundant number of them. In Isaiah 44 we read –

“Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel,
And his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts:
‘I *am* the First and I *am* the Last;
Besides Me *there is* no God.’” Isaiah 44:6

In that one verse, Yehovah says He is the King of Israel – a term applied to Jesus in the New Testament. He says He is the Redeemer, a term used of Jesus. He is the Yehovah Sabaoth, or the Lord of Hosts – a term applied to Jesus in the book of James.

He says I am the First and the Last – a term applied to Jesus in Revelation. And it says there is one God and no other. In the New Testament, that is Jesus. This is one verse, in a succession of verses in the book of Isaiah, which show this to be true of Jesus.

And Isaiah is just one of 39 books in the Old Testament which are all filled with references to Him – explicit references, implicit references, and hidden nuggets which need to be wrestled from the wisdom of God through study and prayer, but in the end, they all point to Jesus.

Everything God is doing in history brings us to the thought that humanity shall know that He is the Lord; He is Yehovah; He is Jesus. All intuitively know there is One God, and all will come to the sure realization that He is the God of the Bible; Jesus!

^{5 (con't)} **when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them.”**

Again, think it through from the greater panorama of the Bible. The Lord stretched out His hand upon Egypt and yet He did it in order to bring out the children of Israel out from among them. There was intent and purpose for His actions.

Throughout the Bible, the Lord is said to stretch out his hand for or against people groups. The symbolism here is that He has stretched out His hand in a negative way against Egypt, and at the same time it is in a positive way for Israel.

Mentally we can think of an arm in one motion, toppling over the enemies like bowling pins, and then at the same time that arm gathers in His cherished people as if they were loved children who will rest in the safety of His lap.

And in this is the greater picture of Christ, toppling over the enemies of addiction, deceit, adultery, bitterness, hatred, and lies, while He draws to Himself a purified people who will spend eternal days in His presence. From the land of double distress come forth a people called by His name.

And yet, there is more. Because these early Exodus stories are picturing the future during the tribulation period which comes after the rapture of the church, they again picture the Lord, the fully revealed Lord Jesus, destroying the wicked powers of the world in order to rescue and redeem Israel once again so that He may be glorified in them and among them.

The premise of the Bible which is found in Ecclesiastes 1 is seen in this repeating pattern. There it says –

“That which has been *is* what will be,
That which *is* done is what will be done,
And *there is* nothing new under the sun.” Ecclesiastes 1:9

God does this so that we can know what is ahead by looking behind, and He does it so that when things repeat we will know that His hand was involved in the event. Every

story is true, and yet every story contains more than just its immediate fulfillment. They are given for us to see the hand of the Lord in all things.

*How long with you harden your heart to the truth?
How long will you dismiss the word of God?
Even since the earliest days of your youth
While as a child, on a wayward path you did trod*

*But patient is the Lord for those who will yield the heart
He continues to reach out hands scarred by nails
Waiting for any who desires a fresh new start
Waiting for those weary of life's many travails*

*So don't harden your heart and be cast away
Instead be receptive to the truth found in His word
Call out to Jesus, don't wait another day
All will find new life who call upon the Lord*

III. Notable Obedience (verses 6 & 7)

⁶Then Moses and Aaron did so;

These words are general in nature and they anticipate what lies ahead throughout the entire time of the plagues on Egypt. Everything that happens up until the departure of the Israelites will show obedience to what has been stated.

There will be no fear in Pharaoh's presence, and there will be no shying back from their duties. Because of this, the words of Hebrews 3 are recorded concerning the obedience of Moses to the call he has been given –

“And Moses indeed *was* faithful in all His house as a servant.” Hebrews 3:5

And yet, even in this obedience which is recorded about Moses and Aaron, there is a picture of Christ. Continuing the same verse in Hebrews 3, we see that, yes, Moses was faithful in His house as a servant... –

“...for a testimony of those things which would be spoken *afterward*, ⁶ but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.” Hebrews 3:5, 6

What the Bible is repeatedly telling us is that it is all about Jesus. Every word is given to show us our precious Lord. The author of Hebrews is writing this for the Hebrew people, but particularly the words are directed to the Jews of the end times.

They are intended to open eyes long blinded, and to awaken minds long dumbed-down, to the truth of who Jesus is and to the perseverance they will need for the difficulties which lay before them. They will need to conduct themselves in a particular manner, just as Moses and Aaron did...

^{6 (con't)} **just as the Lord commanded them,**

The Bible is many things, one of which is a book requiring obedience. The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron; the Lord speaks to us. The Lord commanded Moses and Aaron; the Lord commands us.

Moses and Aaron heard the word, they received the command, and they were obedient to it. The same voice speaks to us today, though it is in the written rather than the spoken word. But despite being written, it should be as audible to our hearts as that which fell upon the ears of Moses.

How often do we see it neglected though! Churches dismiss those portions which they find burdensome, outdated, or old fashioned. They make excuses for bad conduct and they rationalize away the severity of their sin. Believe it or not, this will be seen in just 25 more chapters, a time which is just a few months after the Exodus.

The faithfulness of Aaron will take a fall and he will participate in a gross display of idolatry which will be followed by one of the lamest excuses for what happened in the pages of the Bible. And even Moses will fall prey to a short disobedient spell. His failing will cost him the privilege of leading Israel across the Jordan and into the Promised Land.

It is always better to follow the Lord's commands, be ready to engage the battle with confidence, and not allow ourselves to fall prey to weakness, temptations, or frustrations which so easily catch us in their hold, tripping us up and bringing us into God's hand of judgment.

^{6 (con't)} **so they did.**

The whole verse reads, "Then Moses and Aaron did so; just as the Lord commanded them, so they did."

The final portion isn't superfluous, but rather it is emphatic and intended to show that they were fully compliant. Their actions were exact, complete, and in accord with the word of the Lord. Nothing was skipped and nothing was added.

If you wonder why words like this are recorded, and you should, then you should stop and think on why they are, in fact, recorded. What does the Lord want us to see in a few extra added words that could have been left out without changing the general meaning?

The answer is that He wants us to see that this type of obedience to His word is pleasing to Him and thus it is worthy of note. In this one verse, we can think of people like good King Josiah. Imagine these words being written about you –

“Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did *any* arise like him.” 2 Kings 23:25

How pleasing this person must have been to the Lord. Not only are they recorded after the fact, but he and his actions were actually anticipated by the Lord before they happened. In 1 Kings 13, this was written about Josiah –

“Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the Lord, and said, ‘O altar, altar! Thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men’s bones shall be burned on you.’” 1 Kings 13:2

Imagine that! It is as if the Lord Himself were waiting for this person to come along that He could delight in. So much so, that He told in advance that he was coming. And in contrast to that, there are other levels of adherence to His word. There is the account of Solomon. This is the Lord’s evaluation of him –

“Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord, as *did* his father David.” 1 Kings 11:6

And then there is the record of Manasseh –

“Manasseh *was* twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name *was* Hephzibah. ² And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel.” 2 Kings 21:1, 2

So wicked was Manasseh, that the Lord could not forgive what he did. In Jeremiah 15, this is the verdict which He pronounced –

““And I will appoint over them four forms of *destruction*,’ says the Lord: ‘the sword to slay, the dogs to drag, the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy. ⁴ I will hand them over to trouble, to all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, for what he did in Jerusalem.” Jeremiah 15:3, 4

Whether you spend your time thinking about it or not, there is also a record of your actions which is being kept. Moses and Aaron were faithful in their actions before Pharaoh and we have the record of that. They failed in the wilderness and we have the record of that.

Good kings came, and bad kings replaced them, and we have their record to instruct us as well. And your life is being recorded too. There is the record of salvation which is done, once and for all. But there is also the record of deeds which is on-going. And all of your deeds will be held against the standard of God’s word.

Those deeds which are worthy of reward will be rewarded. Those which aren’t will be burned in the fire. But Paul says that for those in Christ, the fire will only go so far and all in Him will be saved through that time of purification. Thank God for such mercy.

⁷ And Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three years old when they spoke to Pharaoh.

There is a lot to learn from these few words. First, we have the seemingly advanced ages of the two men. In fact, in the 90th Psalm, the oldest psalm in the Bible, and the only one written by Moses, we read this –

“For all our days have passed away in Your wrath;
We finish our years like a sigh.

¹⁰ The days of our lives *are* seventy years;
And if by reason of strength *they are* eighty years,” Psalm 90:9, 10

The two men were not young by any stretch. Secondly, we know from this and from Acts 7:23 and Acts 7:30 that Moses’ life has thus far been divided into two equal

portions of 40 years each. He was 40 when he first attempted to rescue Israel from bondage and was rejected. He is now 80 when he will accomplish the task.

This pictures the work of the Lord Jesus in fulfillment of His covenant promises. Moses' heart was first turned toward his people at forty in hopes of ending their time of bondage. However, they rejected him and their probation continued for another forty years. And so it was with Christ and Israel. And so they continue on to this day awaiting their final deliverance.

Thirdly, we are told in Deuteronomy 34:7 that Moses died at the age of 120 years. Thus his life is divided into three equal portions of 40 years each. This reflects the three periods of Christ's interactions with humanity.

There is the pre-advent period. Like Moses who lived in Pharaoh's house, Christ dwelt in heaven, ruling as Yehovah, and appearing only when necessary to direct events. Then there is the time of Christ's first advent where He was rejected and tended to flocks in a Gentile location. This is the Christ of the nations.

And finally, there is the third period which begins with Moses leading His people out of bondage and into a forty-year period under His rule. This is the Messiah of the Jews, who will redeem captive Israel and rule from Jerusalem for a thousand years.

Three periods of Moses' life equate to these three times of Jesus' interaction with humanity. Then forth, the dating of Moses and Aaron here, combined with the life spans of their father Amram and their grandfather Levi, show us the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham concerning the years that the people of God would be afflicted.

In total, it is 430 years from when the promise was made to Abraham until the giving of the Law. This is found in Galatians 3. Fifth, the ages of Moses and Aaron show that Aaron is older than Moses. This continues the pattern of the younger being preferred above the older.

This pattern will continue on through the Bible and help us to understand better the doctrine of divine election as well as the grand picture of Jesus replacing Adam; the second Man replacing the first.

And finally, in this we see a contrast between Joseph and Moses. Joseph rose to power under Pharaoh, second in position to him, at the age of thirty. However, Moses is said to be as God to Pharaoh at the age of eighty. The thirty years of Joseph are comparable to the thirty years of Jesus' life recorded in Luke 3:23.

The eighty years of Moses are comparable to the completion of Israel's two periods of exile and their coming exaltation during and after the tribulation period. Each thing is connected to each other thing, while building upon one another in order to show us a snapshot of what is going on in redemptive history.

All this is seen in one sentence about the age of two brothers. Great stuff! But imagine... if God has given so much for us to learn from a simple sentence about the ages of two brothers, how much more He surely wants us to know the overall message of the Bible – that He loves us enough to send His Son to redeem us!

If you have never called on Jesus to forgive you and restore you to our heavenly Father, please give me another moment to tell you what you can do to settle that, once and for all...

Closing Verse: *“Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord his God, as his father David had done.” 2 Kings 16:2*

Ahaz was one of Israel's crummy kings. When he died, the people refused to bury him in the tombs of the kings of Israel. His life is now recorded for all to see and contemplate. As we finish today, think soberly on how you will be remembered. Live for Christ, honor the King, and hide His word in your heart that you might not sin against Him. Be remembered as one of the good guys.

Next Week: Exodus 7:8-13 (The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart) (19th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Notable Obedience

So the Lord said to Moses plainly
“See, I have made you to Pharaoh as God
And Aaron your brother shall your prophet be
So shall it be while in Egypt you trod

You shall speak all that to you I command
And Aaron your brother shall tell
Pharaoh to send out of his land
The children of Israel

And I will harden Pharaoh's heart
And multiply My signs and My wonders too
In the land of Egypt
But Pharaoh will not heed you

So that I may lay on Egypt My hand
And bring My armies and My people whom I designate
The children of Israel out of the land
Of Egypt by judgments great

And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord
When I stretch out upon Egypt My hand
And bring out the children of Israel according to my word
From among them, from out of this land

Then Moses and Aaron did so
As the Bible does to us relate
Just as the Lord commanded them so they did
Yes, as the written word to us does state

And Moses was eighty years of age
And Aaron eighty-three years old
When they spoke to Pharaoh
This is their years as we have been told

Obedience to the Lord should be our life's desire
Living our life in a manner fitting and right
Let us not get bogged down in sin's swampy mire
But may the Lord's word be our heart's delight

By applying it to all we do in our life
We will stay on the path which is correct
The one which is free from trial and strife
From God our Father, there will be no disconnect

Keep close to the word; keep in prayer always
Remember to go to church and have some fellowship there
And your life will be blessed as you live your days
In Christ there is joy and hope, not sadness and despair

Heavenly Father, we thank You for your precious word
And of the wonders and treasures in it, given to us
All of which tell of our glorious Lord
Our Savior, our Redeemer, our Friend... our Lord Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 7:8-13 (THE HARDENING OF PHARAOH'S HEART)

Introduction: Every time I type up another sermon, I think “there’s a lot of difficult stuff here for people to listen to.” And then, almost immediately, I also think, “Thank You Lord for the people who come to hear these sermons. I am so grateful for people who are willing to sit through difficulty in order to know You more.”

Today is no different. It’s just six verses which are necessary to understand the logical progression of what is happening in Egypt, why it happened, and what the result of those steps will be. Two of those results are 1) the redemption of Israel, and 2) God receiving the glory He is due from His creatures.

In order for those things to come about, we are told that the Lord hardens Pharaoh’s heart. Some questions which then arise may be, How can this be fair? Is the hardening of one to save another morally right? And why is God due glory at all? Is God a narcissist as so many over the ages have claimed?

In order to understand the truth of these questions, we have to carefully evaluate the passage and we need to thoughtfully consider what it means to harden one’s heart or to harden another’s heart. To misunderstand this concept will lead one down an entirely different path.

For the non-believer, they will come to see God as overbearing, unrighteous, and morally faulted. For the believer, misunderstanding the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart will lead to a completely different theological perspective on the nature of God and His relationship with man.

The misanalysis of just a few words can have an enormous bearing on how we perceive our relationship with God.

Text Verse: *“And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.”*

-2 Corinthians 11:14, 15

Satan is behind all deception, including the dismissal or distortion of God’s word, and the Lord’s intent for the people of the world. Today, we’ll see actions which Satan took

to deceive Pharaoh through his magicians. The fact that the Lord knew this would occur doesn't show either a manipulating or an uncaring God.

Rather, by properly seeing what occurs, it will show that God understands the human heart. He works within the framework of that understanding to accomplish His sovereign purposes. This is the glory of God as is revealed in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Show Me a Miracle (verses 8-10)

Today we arrive at 6 verses which come after the Lord's assurances that He was ready to act on events which will lead to the exodus of the Israelites and which come before the first plague on Egypt. Everything which is coming will occur in a methodical way which is designed to increasingly harden the heart of Pharaoh in order to bring maximum judgment upon him and upon Egypt.

This first account is given as an introduction to the plagues. It is a chance for Pharaoh to see what the Lord could do in comparison to Pharaoh's wise men and sorcerers. Even if Pharaoh doesn't see the truth of what will occur, they will. But they will fail to counsel him on the matter.

By the time they actually begin to advise Pharaoh that he needs to respond, it will be too late. His heart will be too hardened to respond. Thus, this failure of his advisors leads to his own hardening. This is not unique in the Bible. An account which occurs after the death of Solomon is comparable to it.

In 1 Kings 12 after Solomon's death, the people of Israel came to his son Rehoboam and asked that the burdens which Solomon had placed on them be lightened. He told them to return in 3 days and he would give his answer to them. He first consulted the elders of Israel who served under Solomon. Their answer was –

“If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever.”

-1 Kings 12:7

Sadly, the next words of the Bible say –

“But he rejected the advice which the elders had given him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him.” 1 King 12:8

Their advice was just the opposite of the elders –

“Thus you should speak to this people who have spoken to you, saying, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but you make *it* lighter on us’—thus you shall say to them: ‘My little *finger* shall be thicker than my father’s waist!’¹¹ And now, whereas my father put a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!” 1 Kings 12:10, 11

By not listening to his elder advisors, the people of Israel rebelled against Rehoboam and the kingdom was, from that time forward, divided. The two kingdoms became known as Israel to the north and Judah to the south.

However, even this was anticipated by God. That is recorded in minute detail in 1 Kings 11:26-40. Read that passage today and you will see that God knew in advance the outcome of the situation. He even directed the events to ensure they would transpire as they did.

The hardening of Rehoboam served God’s purposes for Israel and the nations of the world, just as the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart did. The Lord could have told Rehoboam in advance concerning what he should do, but He didn’t. Thus, His plans came out in the intended way.

Because these verses lead directly into the plagues on Egypt, before getting into them, now is the time to see some of the patterns which are to be found in the coming plagues. You don’t necessarily need to remember these patterns, but if you simply comprehend them as I read them, you will be able to more clearly see that there is design and purpose to how they occur.

The entire account, from this miracle, to the final hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, goes from Exodus 7:8 until Exodus 11:10. After that, the final plague will come upon Egypt, and Israel will be freed. Within the nine first plagues is an arrangement which shows groups of threes.

In plagues 1 and 2, 4 and 5, and 7 and 8, there is an announcement by Moses to Pharaoh of what is coming before it occurs. However, in plagues 3, 6, and 9, there is no announcement. Also, in plagues 1, 4, and 7 the announcement is given in the morning time.

Plagues 1 and 4 are announced by the Nile River because they deal with Nile's waters; the plagues come from it. However, the location at the announcement of plague 7 isn't given because it comes from the heavens.

In the sign of the rod becoming a snake, and for the two first plagues, the sorcerers of Egypt were able to copy what Moses and Aaron did, but by plague 3, they acknowledge that it is the finger of God.

In plague 6, they will be personally afflicted by boils so that they cannot even stand before Moses. And in plague 9, Pharaoh will break off any further negotiations with Moses and Aaron. Thus you again have the pattern 3, 6, & 9.

A distinction begins to be made between Egypt and the people of Israel in plagues 4 through 9. Egypt and the Egyptians are affected, but the Lord's people aren't. In each of plagues 5, 7 & 9, and only in those plagues, the term "the children of Israel" is used, and they are explicitly noted as being spared from the plagues which occur.

Throughout all of this, the term "king of Egypt" will never be used. Rather, only the term "Pharaoh" will be used, and it will be used 66 times. Not until after the exodus of Israel will he be called the "king of Egypt" again in verse 14:5. These 66 times Pharaoh is mentioned during the plagues of Egypt are a sign, and they are a precursor to mark of the best, which is 666.

The last plague is unique and set apart from the others. It is a direct action from the hand of God rather than a natural occurrence directed by God as the first nine plagues were. During these plagues, their severity slowly changes Pharaoh's mind about what he should do.

He eventually will agree to let the people go, but with conditions. Each time he does so, Moses counters by removing the conditions imposed by Pharaoh, or by stating more clearly what must be allowed when they do go.

Each time, Pharaoh weighs the information and rejects it, or he changes his mind once the plague is removed. He determines to ignore the advice of his highest counselors and even his own senses as the marvelous events, in which he personally becomes a participant, are ignored. And so his heart increasingly hardens to the amazing events which occur around him.

The Bible's progression through these plagues is a masterful work of patterns and logical design, but it is also a precise roadmap of how the human heart, which is opposed to God, will eventually work itself into a most stubborn and hard state.

If one reads the book of Revelation and wonders how such terrifying events, which were proclaimed in advance of their coming, will be ignored by the people of the world, all they need to do is come back to Exodus and see how it happened to Pharaoh.

⁸Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,

Although there's seemingly not a lot to consider in this first verse, it is still a bit unusual. Normally when it says, "Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying..." it is followed in the same verse with what the Lord began to say. We will see this again and again in the coming verses before the exodus.

However, these words are separated as a stand-alone verse. I personally believe in the divine inspiration of even the chapter and verse divisions. They exactly show patterns which permeate Scripture. For a specific reason, the Lord ensured that this would be a separate introductory verse to the short account.

And that reason may be to show the fulfillment of the previous section of seven verses. In them, the Lord once again showed that Moses was preferred above Aaron when it said,

"See, I have made you *as* God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet." Exodus 7:1

This is despite the fact that Aaron is the elder of the two, which was explicitly noted in the very last verse, which was verse 7 –

"And Moses *was* eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three years old when they spoke to Pharaoh." Exodus 7:7

Despite being younger, Moses is the Lord's preferred instrument for the work set before them and so we are having our attention called to that fact by this introductory verse which notes that Yehovah speaks to Moses and Aaron rather than Aaron and Moses.

Further, it will become apparent that this is the case because in the next verse, Moses is told by the Lord to speak to Aaron. This then implies that the Lord is speaking to Moses

directly and Aaron indirectly. Again, as we have already seen quite a few times in Exodus, this then makes a picture of divine inspiration.

The Lord speaks to some and then His word is transmitted to others. However, the weight and authority of the *original words* remains. The Lord spoke to and through Jeremiah the prophet and the people of Israel were expected to respond.

Likewise, the Lord spoke through the apostle Paul and we are expected to respond. The weight of divine authority rests upon the words of those He chooses to speak through. Thus, when we disobey the words of the Bible, we disobey the One who spoke out the Bible through those He spoke through.

Let us never forget this as we read its words, consider its commands, and look in expectation to its promises. It is either all or nothing to God, and thus it should be “all in all to us.” It is our divine source of knowing God, learning how to live, and understanding what we should do with that knowledge.

⁹ “When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, ‘Show a miracle for yourselves,’

It’s obvious from this that during their previous encounter with Pharaoh, no sign was requested by him. They had asked for Israel to be allowed to go sacrifice to Yehovah and Pharaoh turned them down. There was no need to go further with the meeting because he held the upper hand.

However, with their return to Pharaoh now, the Lord knows that he will demand something more of them if he is going to even listen. If they can’t demonstrate that they have the authority of Yehovah, then there will be one of two options to consider – 1) Either Yehovah doesn’t really exist, or 2) that even if He does exist, they are not His messengers.

Thus, he will certainly request proof of their claimed authority. Further, if they can really support their claim through a miracle, he knew that his own sorcerers would be able to do one as well. And because they could, he then would have an immediate claim to dismiss their request.

The Hebrew word for “miracle” here is *mophet* which speaks of something out of the ordinary course of nature. It is an unusual phenomenon, either natural or supernatural, which cries out for an explanation. It is not the same word used when Moses presented his three signs to the people of Israel.

Those signs were meant to validate the office and authority of Moses to the people of Israel as a token of future deliverance. The difference between these words may seem difficult to grasp, but maybe the best way to do so is to see *signs* as proofs of something which is coming, and miracles as proofs of something that *is*.

God will give a sign in the sun's movement that spring is coming or that it has arrived, but He will give a wonder or miracle to show that He is currently engaged in an activity, such as turning water into blood. However, even a miracle such as that can also be a sign of something else.

I can ask for a sign that you will pay me back borrowed money by seeing your pay stubs. That would demonstrate to me that the future is assured by the job you are doing. Or I can ask for a different type of sign, call it a wonder, by asking you to run 2 miles in 10 minutes, thus proving you are physically capable of working and so able to pay me back.

There is a difference in the two, but they can overlap and they can end with the same basic result – Whoo hooo, I get repaid. In this, Pharaoh won't ask for a sign as if he is anticipating something from Yehovah. Rather, he asks for a miracle as if he is expecting Yehovah to simply prove Himself here and now.

The miracle is asked of the representatives of Yehovah to prove that they have the divine commission from Him. The miracle will stand as their validation.

^{9 (con't)} **then you shall say to Aaron,**

As we can see here, the Lord speaking to Moses and Aaron in verse 8 was actually the Lord speaking directly to Moses and indirectly to Aaron. It is Moses who receives the word and passes it on, and it is Aaron who will act.

^{9 (con't)} **'Take your rod and cast *it* before Pharaoh,**

Coming later in this chapter, we will read this –

“So the Lord said to Moses: ‘Pharaoh’s heart *is* hard; he refuses to let the people go. ¹⁵ Go to Pharaoh in the morning, when he goes out to the water, and you shall stand by the river’s bank to meet him; and the rod which was turned to a serpent you shall take in your hand.’” Exodus 7:14, 15

In this, we can see that the rod which is noted as Aaron's rod here is actually Moses' rod; the rod of God. This then reveals what was meant in Exodus 7:1, which said –

“See, I have made you *as* God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.”

As the rod belongs to Moses and yet it is given to Aaron to perform the miracle, it will demonstrate that Moses has not only been granted power, but that he has been granted authority to delegate power. Thus Moses is “as God to Pharaoh.” He has the divine authority and he has a designated representative of that authority.

⁹ (con't) **and let it become a serpent.”**

The word here for “serpent” is *not* the same as the word used concerning the snake which Moses saw at the burning bush. That word was *nakhash*. This word is *tannin*. It is used 27 times in the Bible, but only three times in Exodus – 7:7, 7:9, & 7:12. It is used to signify any type of large reptile or even a sea monster.

It corresponds to the Egyptian word *tanem*, which according to Albert Barnes is “a synonym of the monster serpent which represents the principle of antagonism to light and life.” The Greek translation of this word is *drakon*, from which we get our word “dragon.”

This word, *drakon*, is used 13 times in the New Testament book of Revelation and is used as a metaphor for the devil, who is Satan. In Jeremiah 51, this same Hebrew word for serpent is used when speaking of Nebuchadnezzar, the oppressor and destroyer of Israel, when they were taken exile to Babylon –

“Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon
Has devoured me, he has crushed me;
He has made me an empty vessel,
He has swallowed me up like a **monster**;
He has filled his stomach with my delicacies,
He has spit me out.” Jeremiah 51:34

¹⁰ **So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, just as the Lord commanded.**

This verse is based on Exodus 7:2 which said –

“You shall speak all that I command you. And Aaron your brother shall tell Pharaoh to send the children of Israel out of his land.” Exodus 7:2

Pharaoh didn’t just ask for a sign as soon as they walked in. Rather, they were granted access before Pharaoh and they first spoke what they were instructed to speak. Only then were they asked for a miracle to prove themselves.

In obedience to the Lord, they told Pharaoh what Yehovah expected and so Pharaoh responded with His request, just as the Lord said would happen.

10 (con’t) And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent.

Upon Pharaoh’s request, Aaron produces his miracle. The rod becomes a reptile. Almost all Bibles interpret this as a serpent or a snake. But the Jubilee Bible denotes a daringly descriptive designation of “dragon,” and Young’s Literal Translation most meaningfully and marvelously mentions it as “monster.”

I would carefully consider the correct case of this confusingly crazy conundrum to correlate it to a cobra. The cobra would be a direct challenge to Pharaoh. It was the snake which adorned the headdress of Pharaoh. If so, it would then represent Uraeus, which was the symbol of sovereignty, royalty, deity, and divine authority.

The reason why I believe it is a cobra rather than a crocodile is because later, in verse 15, the word used to describe what happens here in this verse will again say *nakhash* instead of *tannin*. Therefore, it is a serpent. But why are both words used? I believe it is because it is a picture of Christ. Christ came and was lifted up on the cross, just as the *nakhash*, or snake, was placed on the pole in the wilderness. Jesus spoke about this in John 3. However, the significance of what He did was missed by His people. The word *tannin* here then shows that Pharaoh failed to accept this as a true sign. Instead He takes it as a false sign.

What type of a sign is it that you require of the Lord?

What is it that you would expect God to do?

Do you demand of Him more than His word?

Without even checking to see if His word is true?

*Would you demand more of Him that He expects of you?
What He desires is faith, from an obedient heart
In this He will know you believe His word is true
And in faith comes life eternal; from God a brand new start*

*His word tells us of the giving of His Son
To die for sinners, He was nailed to a cross at Calvary
His word tells us that through Him everything is done
Eternal life awaits all who to Christ willingly bow the knee*

II. An Angel of Light (verses 11-12)

¹¹ But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers;

When Pharaoh saw what Aaron did, he called his own wise men and sorcerers. The wise men here are *khakamim*. They are men educated in both human and divine knowledge and are able to apply that knowledge in a wise way, thus the term “wise men.”

The sorcerers are known as *mekashshephim*. These would be like charmers or those who utter magic words. Just as Moses instructed Aaron, Pharaoh would then set himself against Moses by calling in his own subordinates.

The question is, “Would the gods of Egypt be able to produce the same effects through his men as Yehovah could through Aaron?” And if so, would they do so in a manner as least as notable, if not greater than, Aaron?

¹¹ (con’t) so the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.

Here we have another category of people called “magicians.” This is the word *khartummim*. It is thought to be either scribes or those who knew sacred words because it comes from the word *kheret* which means tool, such as an iron pen or a stylus.

Through their magic, which could be nothing more than a magic show which works by sleight of hand, all the way to true black magic which uses the power of the devil to effect its work, they did the same with their enchantments. The word here for enchantments is *lehatim* which equates to secret or hidden arts.

Whatever is to be said about their secret arts, they were enough to be convincing to Pharaoh, even if they were false. This is no different than what is coming in the future as well. In Revelation 16, there is a comparable occurrence which will deceive the world and it is certainly of satanic origin –

“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴ For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, *which* go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” Revelation 16:13, 14

This power is also spoken of concerning the antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10 where we read this –

“And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. ⁹ The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”

-2 Thessalonians 2:8-10

And lest we feel we’re safe in this dispensation, before the coming of the antichrist, we should probably remember Paul’s words of Ephesians 6 that tell us even now we are facing a spiritual battle against the forces of wickedness.

Only by covering ourselves with the implements of battle will we be able to stand unharmed against the devil’s attacks. Take time to read that passage today and ensure you’re prepared for this unseen and yet truly real battle that we are in.

¹² **For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents.**

Sure enough, by deceit or by true satanic powers, they were able to accomplish a similar feat. The result was that there were real reptiles there on the ground before both Moses and Pharaoh. But, the fact that they were able to do this may another the reason why the word is different than the word which was used when the rod became a snake at the burning bush.

This second reason for using the word *tannin* instead of *nakash* may be that both produced reptiles, but they were different reptiles. Because *tannin* can mean a host of

things, from a crocodile to a cobra, it may be that different reptiles were produced. The account doesn't say this, but the use of the word may imply it.

If so, then it would explain why the next event comes about...

¹² (con't) **But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.**

These reptiles, whatever they actually became, are noted as rods here, not *tanninim*. The *matteh*, or rod, is the symbol of the power which it displays. Thus, this is "the rod of God." It is a symbol of the power of Yehovah. The rods of the Egyptians symbolized the power they possessed.

Therefore, we are told *the rod* swallowed *the rods*, not the reptile swallowed the reptiles. One could ask why the Lord would choose this miracle before sending the plagues and why he chose it, knowing that Pharaoh's men would be able to reproduce the effect.

There are several reasons for this. One is that in order to clear Moses from appearing as a mere magician, this wonder was chosen first. If not, then whatever he did after this could also be considered mere magic.

But by defeating the false signs, the true sign would stand out more apparently. The dragon of Moses was of far greater power than that of Pharaoh's. What they considered a protector god, the cobra, was of no protection against the greater force which came against them.

A second reason would be to bolster the confidence of the Israelites. Word would come to them of what happened and they would have a renewed hope because even if this challenge is ignored by Pharaoh, their God had displayed that He was more powerful than the powers of Pharaoh.

And third, this miracle, along with the coming plagues, is given as a direct confrontation to the many gods of Egypt. Knowing that Yehovah defeats Egypt through the very objects which the Egyptians worshipped would be a sign to them that only Yehovah was worthy of their worship.

And sure enough, the miracles of Egypt are recorded in both the 78th and 105th psalms as a testimony to the people of the greatness of Yehovah and His superiority over the

false gods of Egypt. Earlier I cited Albert Barnes concerning the Egyptian beast *tanem* to which *tanin* corresponds.

He said it is “a synonym of the monster serpent which represents the principle of antagonism to light and life.” If this is so, then Yehovah has proven His Light and Life to be greater than the antagonist, Satan, who transforms himself into an angel of light and yet who thrives on darkness and death.

However, despite the victory of Yehovah over these workers of iniquity in this first miracle, we will see that Pharaoh has been coaxed into believing that he is still able to withstand the Force which has come against him.

*Don't you be distracted by Satan's cunning lies
Don't allow his deceit to creep in and steal your heart away
On the Lord Jesus, there alone fix your eyes
Press on for the goal of Christ each and every day*

*Surely there is a glorious reward awaiting those of us
Who walk in this life with our gaze firmly fixed on Jesus*

*Though the devil has power, against it we can stand
Having the shield of faith to quench every fiery dart
And with the Bible always ready, always at hand
Let us press on towards the goal, with Jesus in our heart*

III. The Hardening Heart (verse 13)

¹³ And Pharaoh's heart grew hard,

The words are *v'yekhezaq lev parah*. Some translations, such as the King James Version, incorrectly state “And he hardened Pharaoh's heart.” This would be a mis-translation. The verb is neuter and intransitive, and ‘Pharaoh's heart’ is its nominative case. It should be translated as, “Pharaoh's heart hardened itself.”

It is true that passively, it is the Lord who is acting upon Pharaoh to harden his heart, but it is an active measure of Pharaoh to respond to it. A child can passively make me angry by sticking his tongue out at me, but I am the one who actually gets angry.

Thus saying, “The child made Charlie angry” is sort of true, but it doesn’t convey the whole matter. Rather, to properly identify what is going on, you would say, “Charlie allowed himself to get angry at the prodding of a little kid.” I could have just ignored him or laughed him off, but instead, I allowed myself to get upset.

In the same way, Yehovah has purposefully chosen a path which has been favorable to Pharaoh’s own arrogant demeanor, but Pharaoh is still fully responsible for his actions. God does not act in an arbitrary manner, ever.

He will only act to harden those who are disposed already to being hardened. And if He does so, it will be for His purposes. In this case, it is to lead ultimately to the redeeming of His people. But he could have done this at a time when a different Pharaoh would have responded differently, couldn’t He have!

The fact that He didn’t shows that He has a specific purpose for choosing this Pharaoh at this time. If he were to have done it for this same purpose at a different time, and yet expected the same results, then He would have to violate His own moral character, by actively hardening someone *who would have* let them go.

This Pharaoh, right from the beginning of Exodus, has proven to be a tyrant, self-willed, and obstinate. He has already hardened himself against God and therefore, the actions taken by the Lord now are in accord with His perfect moral character.

Any action by God in the hardening process is because this man has already hardened himself. Therefore, the punishments which will result in the chapters ahead will be just and they will be justly due, not arbitrary or vindictive. This is what sets Yehovah apart from all other gods.

He is infinite in His being, and His being is moral, just, righteous, and holy. He does nothing which is wrong, and He will never pervert justice in the sentencing of His creatures. In other words, when we receive penal judgment, we get what we deserve.

The cries of “foul” that ring out by the world against the God of the Bible are wholly unfounded and fail to take His perfect character into consideration. What we need is mercy – not getting what we do deserve. If God always gave us what we deserve, we would be swept away, just like Pharaoh.

In the end, whether Pharaoh actually believed that the reptiles were real, and that one really devoured the others, didn’t matter to him. Instead, he looked at this miracle by the Lord as just a different degree of the same thing accomplished by his men.

He saw it as one type of work that happened to be a bit better coming from Moses. Thus he hardened his heart. Even though this was the Lord's intent, it was still Pharaoh's decision to act upon.

^{13 (fin)} **and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said.**

ka'asher dibber Yehovah – "... as had said Yehovah." The Lord spoke because the Lord knew. He knew what Pharaoh would do when calling for his magicians, and He knew what Pharaoh would do when his magicians performed a miracle similar to Aaron's. He allowed himself to be taken in by a lie. Satan had his hand in the situation, further deceiving Pharaoh who was already deceived. As Matthew Henry notes about what has transpired –

"None assist more in the destruction of sinners, than such as resist the truth by amusing men with a counterfeit resemblance of it. Satan is most to be dreaded when transformed into an angel of light." Henry

Those who practiced the devil's arts, though not on par with the hand of the Lord, were enough to seduce Pharaoh into believing he was on a sound path. All the while though, he is heading towards his own final doom.

Paul warns us of exactly the same thing in his second letter to Timothy. There in the third chapter, he actually cites two men by name. They are the magicians who faced off against Moses. Paul's warning stands as a testimony to us to watch out for false workers who masquerade behind their false works. Let me read you his sobering warning –

"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ² For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴ traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! ⁶ For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, ⁷ always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁸ Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; ⁹ but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was."

-2 Timothy 3:1-9

The word of the Lord is filled with proof that it is what it claims to be. It is the divine authority to guide and regulate our lives. But if we willingly choose to neglect it, speak against it, or disobey it, then he may allow a snare to entangle us. Let us endeavor to not be so trapped, but to be willing, open, and obedient to His good word.

And of all of the things we need to be obedient to in that precious book, the first is to call on Christ as Lord. If we were to perfectly do everything in the Bible that is demanded of us, we would still fall short of the glory of God. We can never attain to His perfection because we already have sin in our lives.

Only Christ Jesus can take away that sin. Only He can restore us to God. In fact, if we try to please God through our works without going through Christ, we actually make it worse. That becomes self-idolatry because we reject the Gift He has offered. Don't be obstinate like Pharaoh, but rather, yield to the Lord. Let me tell you how you can...

Closing Verse: *Happy is the man who is always reverent,
But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity. Proverbs 28:14*

Next Week: Exodus 7:14-25 (The Plague of Blood) (20th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Hardening of the Heart

Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying
“When Pharaoh speaks to you, in this way
Saying, ‘Show a miracle for yourselves, I am praying
Then to Aaron you shall say

“Take your rod and before Pharaoh cast it
And let it become a serpent
As I instruct you, so you shall your actions commit

So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh
And just as the Lord commanded, they did so

And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh
And before his servants too
And it became a serpent as we now know
Just as the Lord told them, so it did do

But Pharaoh also called his men too
The wise men and the sorcerers in their assignments
So the magicians of Egypt they also it did do
In like manner with their enchantments

For every man down his rod threw
And they also became serpents too

But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods
And Pharaoh's heart, hard it grew
And he did not heed them, there were no favorable nods
As the Lord had said, just as the Lord already knew

Though Aaron performed a miracle with his rod
Pharaoh hardened his heart even more
He rejected the sign, though it was from God
Becoming stony to the core

We too have a miracle presented to us
One that is well documented and attested to
It is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus
It is a sign which offers life to me and you

If we soften our hearts and receive Jesus as Savior
We will be sealed with the Holy Spirit, a heavenly guarantee
And with His guidance, we can adjust our life's behavior
Becoming more like the Lord, as we follow obediently

So let us follow this, the right and holy path
And be saved by His blood shed on the cross of Calvary
In this we become God's children, saved from His wrath
And we are set on a heavenly course for all eternity

Thank You, O God, for this wonderful assurance
Thank You for what You have done for sinners like us
Give us O God continued endurance
Until the day we are called home, to be with Jesus

Yes, thank You O God, for our precious Lord Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 7:14-25 (THE PLAGUE OF BLOOD)

Introduction: One premise of a Creator God is that He is all knowing. Everything from the beginning to the end is known to Him immediately and intuitively. He doesn't have to make deductions or conclusions. Rather, He simply knows.

And this doesn't just mean mechanical things like 1 plus 1, or how birds are able to fly. It includes all things, including the secret things of the heart and mind. Every thought that we have, everything we will do, and even what will prompt us to do other things, are all known to Him.

The Bible says He searches out our hearts in order to effect His purposes on earth, He searches us out in order to judge us, and He searches us out so that He can guide us. It is a way of saying that everything about us is known to Him. In this, there is nothing that we can keep secret from Him.

Why did you give to a particular charity? Though you may say it was to do good, it may have been for a reason that you've suppressed so deeply that you might not even realize the truth of the matter. The Lord, however, knows exactly why you did it.

Text Verse: *"The heart is deceitful above all things,
And desperately wicked;
Who can know it?
¹⁰ I, the Lord, search the heart,
I test the mind,
Even to give every man according to his ways,
According to the fruit of his doings. Jeremiah 17:10*

Today, we will see the first plague that was brought upon the land of Egypt. It, like the miracle of the rod turning into a serpent, will be repeatable, at least in part, by Pharaoh's magicians. Because of this, he will fail to see the plague in the proper context.

Not only is it on a completely different scale, but it is a precursor to more plagues intended to secure Israel's release. If Pharaoh had heeded the Lord already, he would have saved Egypt and himself much grief. But in order for the Lord to be glorified, He selected this plague first.

He did it, not to obtain Israel's freedom, but to further harden Pharaoh's heart. And it will have its intended effect because it is the Lord who searches hearts and minds in order to effect His purposes. Let's remember this and keep our hearts soft to the things of God and to the truths which are found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. You Shall Know that I Am the Lord (verses 14-18)

¹⁴ So the Lord said to Moses: "Pharaoh's heart *is* hard; he refuses to let the people go.

The last words we saw came after the miracle of the rods turning to serpents. Aaron had cast down his rod and it became a serpent, but the magicians of Egypt had done the same. In response it said, "And Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said."

But, that wasn't the only thing to bring hardening to his heart. In chapter 5, the Lord had instructed Moses to simply go and ask Pharaoh for permission to allow Israel to go into the wilderness to worship. By taking this avenue, and knowing the obstinate nature of Pharaoh, the Lord knew he would harden his heart, and he did.

Pharaoh felt he had gained a victory over Israel and the God of Israel by his refusal. In turn he laid a heavier burden on them. This too would have given him perverse satisfaction and a further hardening of his heart. Each thing done has been calculated to bring about a desired end, known to the Lord who created man.

The first miracle of the rods wasn't a judgment on Egypt, but a display intended to lull Pharaoh into a greater state of dullness. It served that purpose well. He wasn't convicted, but rather emboldened.

The light that was given was swallowed up by the darkness of his false magicians, thus closing his eyes to what lay ahead. Now the judgments would begin. Knowing this, the Lord says to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart *is* hard." However, a completely different word than in the previous verse is used.

It says, *kaved lev paroh* – "Pharaoh's heart is heavy." The previous word was *khazaq* – hard; this word is *kaved*; – heavy. There is dullness and a stupidity of response to the plagues which are coming. Unlike for example, a bird which flits away at danger, an ox

will fail to see the disaster ahead and plod into it directly. This is the intent of the Lord's words now.

¹⁵ Go to Pharaoh in the morning, when he goes out to the water,

There is specificity here that we're asked to look at. Two things in particular – it is morning time, and Pharaoh is going out to the water. Scholars have looked at various reasons for this, such as he was going to bathe, to pray to the Nile which is one of the deities of Egypt, to see how high the river was in order to determine when to plant crops, and so on.

I would suggest that it is for worship, and that the worship is two-fold. First he is there to worship the Nile, but secondly, to worship the sun as it first lights on the Nile. Pharaoh, believing he is the son of the sun-god Ra, would be there to honor his supposed father-god as well as the Nile which reflected the coming of Ra. This is speculation, but it fits the placement of both words.

^{15 (con't)} and you shall stand by the river's bank to meet him; and the rod which was turned to a serpent you shall take in your hand.

This seems straightforward enough that no commentary is really necessary, except that commentary is necessary. The word for "serpent" here is not what it was in the previous passage. When Aaron cast down the staff before Pharaoh, it says that it turned into a *tannin*. Here it says that it has turned into a *nakhash*.

This asks us to consider why. I have three possibilities. The first is that Moses and Aaron each had a different rod. The rod Moses threw down in front of the bush turned into a *nakhash*; the same rod that would have been seen by the Israelites. But the rod that Aaron threw down was his own and it turned into a *tannin*. And so now, the first rod is being used, which turned into a *nakhash*.

The second option is that the same rod was thrown down and one time it turned into a *nakhash*, and the second time it turned into something different, a *tannin*. Here in this verse then, the Lord's words would be referring to the first account.

The third option is that the words are being used synonymously in one way, but are showing a distinction in another. The *nakhash* was revealing Christ as the giver of the miracle, but the *tannin* was assumed to be a false miracle by Pharaoh, and thus Christ

was hidden from his eyes. Based on the use of the word *nakhash* elsewhere in Scripture, I believe this last option is correct.

¹⁶ And you shall say to him, ‘The Lord God of the Hebrews has sent me to you, saying, “Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness”; but indeed, until now you would not hear!

This refers right back to Exodus 5, especially verses 1-9. Rather than “The Lord God of the Hebrews *has* sent me to you” it should say, “The Lord God of the Hebrews *sent* me to you.” He is reiterating what was said, not stating something new.

That first request was a mild one. It wasn’t a demand and it wasn’t requesting release, but rather simply a time of worship with an implied return to Egypt. But the obstinate nature of Pharaoh immediately set him at odds with the request of Yehovah, the God of the Hebrews. Instead, he wouldn’t hear.

¹⁷ Thus says the Lord: “By this you shall know that I *am* the Lord.

When Moses first spoke to Pharaoh in chapter 5, his response was, “Who *is* the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go.” Now, Yehovah promises that Pharaoh will know who He is.

However, he will have to repeat this several more times to Pharaoh. It isn’t just this coming miracle then that will convince Pharaoh, but all of them combined and stored in his memory that will collectively cry out that He is Yehovah.

Pharaoh, like many of us, is a tough nut to crack. But we can thank the Lord that He is long-suffering as He waits for us to yield our stubborn hearts to Him. Unfortunately for Pharaoh, it will never truly transpire and he will be swept away by the Red Sea’s waters.

^{17 (con’t)} Behold, I will strike the waters which *are* in the river with the rod that *is* in my hand, and they shall be turned to blood.

In this we have the commonly accepted idea of *Qui facit per alium, facit per se* – “He who acts through another does the act himself.”

It is the Lord who pronounces *anokhi makkeh ba'matteh asher b'yadi*, "I will strike with the staff that *is* in my hand." The action of the instrumental cause – the rod and hand of Aaron, is ascribed as the action of the principle cause, the work of the Lord.

In this verse though is one of the most difficult to determine aspects of any of the ten plagues upon Egypt. It requires care and contemplation; not belligerence. The words are, "and they shall be turned to blood." Question: "Is this actually blood or is it not?"

The answer is one which haunts all scholars to some extent. Among other things, actual blood implies red and white blood cells, it implies DNA, and it implies platelets. It would be beyond the scope of the other miracles to produce all of these things. And yet, the word "blood" is used.

However, it is also used in a one-for-one comparative way many other times in Scripture. In Joel, it says this about the moon –

"The sun shall be turned into darkness,
And the moon into blood,
Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord." Joel 2:13

It would be ludicrous to not see that as a metaphor. The blood moon is an eclipse. This is repeated in Acts 2:20 in the Greek and it again says, it "*shall be turned into blood*" there. It doesn't say "like blood," but simply that it will be turned into blood. However, this type of sign is explained in Revelation 6:12 where it says –

"I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became **like blood**." Revelation 6:12

Again, in Revelation 8:8, in the second trumpet judgment on the earth, it says, "Then the second angel sounded: And *something* like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea **became blood**." It is again understood that this is "like blood" even though elsewhere it says it became blood.

Considering that the plagues of Egypt are given as pictures of the coming plagues upon the world, we see that the turning of the Nile into blood means blood in a figurative sense.

And yet, it is a figurative sense with a literal biblical meaning. At times in the Bible blood implies life, it implies death, and it implies judgment. The Nile being turned into blood is a demonstration of God's ability to give life, to take life, and to judge.

Therefore, the description of blood, though not literal blood as we think of it, carries all the connotations of *blood* in the Bible. This is not a sign, but a judgment. Just as the house of Pharaoh judged that the Hebrew children were to be cast into the Nile to die, the Lord is now bringing judgment upon Egypt by bringing death to the Nile.

The Nile, this false "god" of Egypt, will come under the judging hand of the true God of the Hebrews. As Matthew Henry says –

"... the river of Egypt, was their idol. That creature which we idolize, God justly takes from us, or makes bitter to us." Henry

¹⁸ And the fish that *are* in the river shall die, the river shall stink, and the Egyptians will loathe to drink the water of the river."''''

The fish are singled out in this verse because it is known that at least three types of them were considered sacred to the Egyptians. But these supposedly sacred fish could not survive in the now- bloodied waters.

Fish are infrequently mentioned in the Old Testament, but a study on them will show marvelous patterns. The first time they're seen is right in Genesis 1 at the creation of the various types of life. After the exodus, the people of Israel will complain in the wilderness that when they were in Egypt, they had fish to eat.

But they forgot that it is the Lord who created the fish and the Lord who destroyed the fish of the Nile. Later in Ezekiel which speaks of the time of the millennial reign of Christ, it says this –

"Then he said to me: 'This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. *When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed.* ⁹ And it shall be *that* every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes.'"''

-Ezekiel 47:8, 9

The living waters of the Nile died at the hand of the Lord, and the dead waters of the Dead Sea will come alive by His hand as well. Such is the nature of the Lord who creates, sustains, and judges.

*All life is bound up in the hand of the Lord
What He chooses for us is for Him alone to decide
For those who humble themselves to Him, there lies a reward
Eternal joy will be found in heaven at His side*

*Those who reject His life will remain eternally dead
But those who die through Him will be granted life eternal
Better to choose the Lord now and be reconciled instead
Than to suffer the flames of the land infernal*

*Oh wayward man, learn the lesson of Pharaoh
Don't harden your heart to the sacred word
Instead, travel upon the path which is narrow
And call out for salvation to Jesus the Lord*

II. Blood Throughout the Land (verses 19-22)

¹⁹ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your rod and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their streams, over their rivers, over their ponds, and over all their pools of water, that they may become blood.

In a direct command from Yehovah, the rod of God by which the plagues of Egypt are to be carried out is ordered to be stretched out over the waters of Egypt, and this directly in the presence of Pharaoh. When this is done, the water would become blood.

The waters of Egypt included the Nile itself, which is the lifeline of water throughout the country. To this day, it remains as such. The *nahar* or "streams" are the natural waterways which branch off from the Nile. Seen from above, they appear as fingers which branch out as the Nile progresses towards the north.

From there are the *yeor* which would be the lesser streams or canals. They may be natural or man-made and they would progressively rise and overflow during the wet season. After that are the *agam*, translated as ponds. These could be lakes or marshes that would particularly flood as the Nile's high season arrived.

And finally are the *miqveh*, or “pools.” The word *miqveh* implies a gathering, such as when God gathered together the waters and called them “seas” in Genesis 1:10. These then would be cisterns, mostly were probably man-made, which could be filled as the Nile overflowed, or which could be filled by going to the Nile and manually carrying it to the cistern.

Everything that received the once-living waters of the Nile would be affected. They would now only receive the bloodied waters of judgment.

19 (con't) And there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in *buckets of wood and pitchers of stone.*”

This final portion of the verse has to be considered based on the verses to come. The words “buckets” and “pitchers” are inserted and it makes it sound like any receptacles of water which were in a house were affected as well. But that can't be the intent.

What it means is that any water collected in those things would be equally affected. The receptacles aren't being tied to the spoiling of the water directly, but that the water which would be collected in either wood or stone was affected. In essence, subsequent methods of purifying the water wouldn't work.

20 And Moses and Aaron did so, just as the Lord commanded.

In obedience to the word of the Lord, and showing no fear that the miracle may not happen, thus leaving them in a state of embarrassment, they did as requested. The fears of failing once noted in Moses have disappeared. Now only obedience is seen.

20 (con't) So he lifted up the rod and struck the waters that *were* in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants. And all the waters that *were* in the river were turned to blood.

Directly in the sight of all, the miracle is performed. In this, the waters of the river, meaning anything into which the river flowed, is singled out. Judgment has come upon the Nile and it serves as a double punch to Pharaoh. It is an attack against their supposed god of the Nile and the fish which they revered.

But it also would be an immense physical affliction upon the people of Egypt. This terrible plague is followed in type and pattern by the third trumpet and the third bowl judgments upon the world of the end times. In the third bowl in Revelation 16, it says –

“Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.” Revelation 16:4

After that, the reason for the judgment is given –

“You are righteous, O Lord,
The One who is and who was and who is to be,
Because You have judged these things.
⁶ For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets,
And You have given them blood to drink.
For it is their just due.” Revelation 16:5, 6

Just as the Egyptians shed the blood of the Lord’s Hebrew people, the unrepentant world has shed the blood of the Lord’s saints and prophets. In response, the Lord will give them blood to drink as is their just due. That which has been, will be again. Just as the Bible both depicts and proclaims.

²¹ The fish that *were* in the river died, the river stank,

As the Lord proclaimed, so it happened. The Nile and the life in it died. This then is not a normal seasonal occurrence which has at other times been documented in the Nile. Before the Aswan dam was built, the Nile fluctuated greatly.

In the time before the Nile started to rise, it would be greenish. However, eventually, as the waters increased, they would carry in microscopic organisms which would turn it reddish. It would also stink during the process. If this is all that occurred, it would be neither miraculous, nor unexpected. And it wouldn’t have killed everything in the Nile.

Rather, this is something that was far worse than normal. But it also was a plague which Pharaoh could mentally brush off as simply “worse than normal.” This is especially true because of what is coming concerning his magicians. Thus the Lord is passively continuing to harden Pharaoh’s heart through the order of the plagues that He is delivering to the land and people.

²¹ (con’t) So there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

From the biblical perspective, this blood is judgment and this blood is death. And thus, judgment and the stench of death permeated all of the inhabited land of Egypt. Where the Nile flowed, there judgment was found.

The death of the fish would be an unusually difficult thing for the Egyptians because it was, and continues to be in modern times, a main source of food for the people. They would now lose this, and because the blood flowed to all places where the Nile flowed, it would mean that the entire stock of fish was affected.

Even after the clearing of the waters, it would be a long and difficult time to repopulate the Nile with enough fish to once again feed the people. The judgment is a harsh one indeed.

²¹ (con't) **and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river.**

The waters that were in any capacity directly tied to the river truly become impossible to drink. Not only would it have been contaminated with the judging substance termed “blood,” but it also would have very quickly been further contaminated with the rotting fish which had died in the water. Within a very short time, the people would truly be suffering from the effects of this horrendous first plague.

*Woe unto man who will not heed the Lord
Terrible are His judgments upon the unrepentant world
For man has forsaken the Holy and Precious word
And so upon their hardened hearts, His judgments will be unfurled*

*But there is escape from this terrible fate
There is hope found in the Lord Jesus
Don't put it off – No! Please don't hesitate
Call out to the One who died and rose again for us*

*In Him is found life eternal, sure and sweet
In Him is found the love of God
And so will be the joy there before our feet
A heavenly path which forever we may trod*

III. Seven Days of Plague (verses 22-25)

²² **Then the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments;**

A stumbling block is placed right before the feet of Pharaoh. The Lord has chosen a plague which is repeatable by the magicians of Egypt. As God is the Giver of life and the

life is in the blood, it is assured that the “blood” noted in the previous verses is not truly blood in the literal sense.

Whatever the magicians did, it was sufficiently comparable to that of what occurred in the Nile to be considered the same by Pharaoh. And this also demonstrates that the buckets and pitchers mentioned above are not those containing water that were in houses at the time of the plague. If they were, then how could these have contained water?

The arrogance of Pharaoh here is evident. Just because the magicians could reproduce the effects of this plague, they could not do so on the same scale as Moses and Aaron. The Nile was already converted to blood. Further, a portion of the miracle is the fact that the Nile died as Aaron stretched the rod over it.

The timing was exact and the scope of the event was total. Also, there is no note of an attempt to undo what the Lord had done by these guys. If Pharaoh were willing to simply pursue this path of understanding before turning away, he would see that the plague of the Lord was beyond the scope or control of his magicians. Despite this, Pharaoh willingly sides with that which is unreasonable. As a result...

22 (con't) **and Pharaoh's heart grew hard,**

From the Hebrew, it is apparent that the ability of the magicians to reproduce the same effect as the plague is what hardened Pharaoh's heart. The two clauses are connected in such a way as to conclusively imply this.

As the Lord knew the magicians would be able to do so, and as the Lord knows the hearts of men, it is His actions which harden Pharaoh, even though Pharaoh has willingly hardened his own heart. Though this may seem nitpicking the subject to death, it is something we all need to continually remind ourselves about.

If we harden our hearts to the things of God, then the Lord will allow our hearts to be hardened against Him by those things that He sends in our direction. In the end, His purposes will always prevail, but they work in accord with His knowledge of how we will respond to Him based on the condition of our heart.

In other words, be soft, open, and forever willing to comply with the Lord and His word. In this, you will always know that He will deal well with you as you live out your days.

22 (con't) **and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said.**

Who did Pharaoh not heed? He didn't heed Aaron and Moses. The word is *alehem*; it is plural. But in verse 17, the Lord said He would strike the waters. As Aaron and Moses are the designated representatives of the Lord, Pharaoh is not only rejecting them, but he is rejecting Yehovah. This same pattern is seen in the end times.

In Revelation 11, there will be two witnesses who will carry the authority of the Lord. Their testimony, like that of Moses and Aaron will be rejected and they will be killed, but before that happens, they will have the same type of authority granted to them by Jesus. In Revelation 11:6, we read this –

“These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.”

Their words will be a sign to the people of the world. If they are heeded, those who heed will be saved. If they are ignored, those who harden their hearts will be lost. The condition of the heart will dictate the outcome of the final destiny.

The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is attributed to the heart itself. It is not an active hardening by the Lord, but a self-willed hardening wrought by Pharaoh at the prompting of the Lord. Pharaoh could have yielded, but he chose not to. In this, the Lord's knowledge of the heart and of the person's response is revealed.

In 1 Kings 8:39, we are told that the *Lord alone* knows the hearts of all of the sons of men. In Revelation 2:23, this same attribute is ascribed to Jesus, thus it is one of the countless proofs that Jesus of the New Testament is the same as the Lord of the Old Testament. Here is what that verse says –

“...all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.”

Pharaoh's heart has been searched out by the Lord, he has willingly hardened himself to the Lord's passive promptings, and he alone is responsible for the judgment he will receive. The same is true with the people now and those in the end times too. The hardened heart is a terrifying and powerful source of eternally sad consequences.

²³ And Pharaoh turned and went into his house. Neither was his heart moved by this.

This takes us right back to Exodus 7:10-13 where the rod was changed into a serpent. At the end of that encounter, it said, “And Pharaoh’s heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said.” Two demonstrations before Pharaoh have been repeatable by his magicians.

Despite these being on a much higher order than that of his own people’s tricks, he was convinced enough to remain unchanged in his attitude towards the Lord. Unfortunately, we can make a very good comparison to this and to the Bible.

The Lord has spoken and His words are recorded there. But other books make many of the same general claims as the Bible. In Luke 6:31, we read what is commonly known as the Golden Rule –

“And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.”

But this general precept is found in a host of other religions in one form or another. For example, Confucius said it this way –

“Never impose on others what you would not choose for yourself.”

Such knowledge will often lead the hardened heart to immediately assume that one religion is the just the same as another. However, just as the miracle of the Lord is on a completely different level than the false miracles of the magicians of Egypt, the word of the Lord, when studied and understood, is on a completely different level than that of any and all other religions.

We are each responsible for where we place our faith. To exercise it without checking the facts and then contemplating the sources of those facts, can have eternal consequences. Pharaoh, despite being the ruler of the greatest nation on earth, was actually a very shallow thinker.

²⁴ So all the Egyptians dug all around the river for water to drink, because they could not drink the water of the river.

Those who know the layout of the land of Egypt are aware of the fact that apart from the Nile, there are no other natural sources of drinking water available in the land such as springs, fountains, or other rivers.

However, there is water underground which can be accessed, but it isn’t suitable for drinking because of the soil conditions of the land. Unlike other areas where wells are

commonly dug, Egypt didn't follow this practice because of it. However, with the only truly palatable water ruined, they were left with only this option.

Because of the record here, even the most liberal of scholars must admit that the author of the account had an exacting knowledge of the geography and water system of Egypt. It is a nice touch concerning the authenticity of Moses as the true author.

²⁵ And seven days passed after the Lord had struck the river.

Chapter 7 ends with a note of specificity concerning the duration of the plague, seven days. Some attempt to tie this 7-day period into the start of the next plague recorded in chapter 8 verse 1, but that is unlikely. Rather, the plague itself lasted seven days.

It has been documented that the normal period of discoloration of the Nile lasts for much longer. Therefore, this is again an evidence of the divine nature of the plague. The clearing of the blood from Egypt took less time than the normal flow of the river to do the same.

The question which I had to ponder for quite some time is "Why seven days?" After rereading the account, it seems to me that this goes back to the original request which was made in Exodus 4:3 which said –

"The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go three days' journey into the desert and sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword." Exodus 4:3

The request was repeated in verse 16 – that they wanted to go into the wilderness to serve the Lord. But because of Pharaoh's refusal, it was said that the plague of blood would immediately ensue. Thus it is a sign to Pharaoh.

They had asked for a trip which would require travel of three days in each direction. Thus, with the day of sacrifice, it would have been a seven-day journey. The plague of blood was given as punishment, a day for a day, for depriving the Lord of the honor He was due at the ceremony in the wilderness.

This appears to be a one-to-one comparison with the 7-year tribulation period coming in the end times. Daniel 9:27 shows that a 7-year covenant will be made between Israel and the antichrist. There will be a year of tribulation for each year of this covenant. And so there is a pattern reflected here.

The glory of the Lord is proclaimed throughout the Bible. It is man's duty to recognize it and to proclaim it. From the intricate spider's web, to the complexity of the cosmos, every part of creation cries out "Glory" and it tells us of infinite wisdom.

God created us as sentient beings because He desires us to share in His glory, to acknowledge it, and to rejoice in it. But from moment to moment we fail to do so. We set up idols in our hearts, we ascribe worship to the creation rather than the Creator, and we follow our own paths, rarely giving Him any regard at all.

Only when things get bad do we normally even think to give Him remembrance. Let us do our best every day to pursue Him, to consider His goodness in our lives, and to give Him the glory He is due. And in order to truly have a right fellowship with Him, we must deal with the sin in our life which separates us from Him.

Let me tell you how this can come about. He has done everything necessary to restore us to a happy and eternal relationship with Him once again. He did it in the giving of His Son, Jesus. Let me explain that to you...

Closing Verse: *Sing to God, sing praises to His name;
Extol Him who rides on the clouds,
By His name YAH,
And rejoice before Him. Psalm 68:4*

Next Week: Exodus 8:1-7 (The Plague of Frogs, Part 1))

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Plague of Blood

So the Lord said to Moses about Pharaoh
"Pharaoh's heart is hard
He refuses to let the people go

Go to Pharaoh in the morning
When he goes out to the water and you shall stand
By the river's bank to meet him

And the rod which was turned to a serpent...
You shall take in your hand

And you shall say to him, even so
“The Lord God of the Hebrews has sent me for this address
Saying, “Let My people go
That they may serve Me in the wilderness

But indeed, until now you would not hear!
Thus says the Lord: “By this you shall know
That I am the Lord whom you shall fear
Behold, I will strike the waters which are in the river...
Even I will do so

With the rod that is in my hand
And they shall be turned to blood throughout the land

And the fish that are in the river shall die
The river shall stink,
And of the water of the river
The Egyptians will loathe to drink

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, “Say to Aaron
‘Take your rod and stretch out your hand
Over the waters of Egypt – their streams, rivers, ponds
And over all their pools of water throughout the land

That they may become blood, and there shall be blood
Throughout all the land of Egypt
Both in buckets of wood and pitchers of stone, an overwhelming flood

And Moses and Aaron did, just as the Lord commanded so
So he lifted up the rod and struck the waters
That were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh

And in the sight of his servants it was done
And all the waters that were in the river
Were turned to blood, of fresh water, there was none

The fish that were in the river died; the river stank
And the Egyptians could not, we understand
Drink the water of the river, of it no one drank
So there was blood throughout all of Egypt the land

Then the magicians of Egypt did so
With their enchantments, a lie they spread
And grew hard the heart of Pharaoh
And he did not heed them, as the Lord had said

And Pharaoh turned and into his house went
Neither was his heart moved by this event

So all the Egyptians dug all around
The river for water to drink
Thus they searched for water in the ground
Which would not be foul and stink

Because they could not drink the water of the river
In it was a plague, of whom the Lord was the Giver

And seven days passed according to the word
After the river was struck by the Lord

This is the first terrible plague upon Egypt the land
But nine more will come because of Pharaoh's hard heart
It is a lesson for us to hear and understand
And in our own lives, to make a new start

Let us soften our hearts to the word of the Lord
So that to Him we will be acceptable, each of us
And to the cross let our eyes look toward
Remembering always the work of Jesus

Yes, O God, keep us on the path that is true
May we keep our hearts soft, and be pleasing to you

And some day we know You will come again for us
We anxiously await Your return Lord Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 8:1-7 (THE PLAGUE OF FROGS - PART I)

Introduction: The second plague, that of frogs, is what we'll be looking at this week and next week. It's filled with interesting tidbits from the Hebrew and we'll try to fit in every one of them that we can. But it's filled with marked rebellion by the leader of Egypt as well.

He was given an advanced warning of what was ahead and he chose to refuse to listen. When the frogs come, they will infest everything, even down to the kneading troughs where bread is made. The same is true for later in Israel's history.

God warned Pharaoh in advance that the very place where his bread was made would be defiled by this curse. Knowing this to be true because they had actually witnessed it, the Israelites were warned that their own kneading troughs would be cursed if they didn't pay heed to the word of the Lord.

They didn't and God's judgment came upon them...

Text Verse: *"But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: ...¹⁷ "Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Deuteronomy 28:15 & 17*

The word for kneading trough is only used four times in the Bible. It is used twice in the exodus account and twice in Deuteronomy – once in the promise of blessing for obedience, and once in the promise of a curse for disobedience. In Egypt, the kneading troughs of the Egyptians were cursed, but the kneading troughs of the Israelites were spared.

It was to be a sign to them and a warning. The two times in Deuteronomy let them know this is true. Oh, how good it would be for God's people to read the words of the Bible and to heed them! If only we would humble ourselves and be obedient to His superior word.

The way to do that is to read it, study it, cherish it, and apply it to our lives. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Let My People Go that They May Serve Me (verses 1-4)

¹And the Lord spoke to Moses,

The last verse of chapter 7 said, “And seven days passed after the Lord had struck the river.” This is generally agreed to be tied to the time the waters were as blood, not specifically the time between the first and second plagues.

However long the time was between these plagues isn’t said, but the Lord now again speaks to Moses his words of instruction. The second plague is coming, but before it does, He will give Pharaoh an opportunity to be released from it by heeding His word.

However, we will see that Pharaoh won’t do so. The Lord knew this in advance and so it’s a good time to contemplate the natural nature of these plagues, even if of divine origin. In other words, at least some of these plagues can be logically tied to one another as the result of the first plague, that of blood.

The river which turned to blood will naturally lead to the second plague of frogs. The second of frogs will naturally lead to the third plague of lice, etc. Though directed by God, He is using natural and normally occurring means to effect His desired outcome.

If this is so, and I believe it is, then it still shows us a few things. First, the miraculous nature of the plagues isn’t diminished at all. The miracle of them is that Moses is able to pinpoint the moment the plagues would start or cease.

As soon as Aaron stretched out his staff, thus initiating the cycle, the plague of blood began. This will be the same for the starting of each of the plagues and for the ending of some of them as well. Moses even allows Pharaoh to choose the set time when the plague of the frogs would cease.

Second, even if the plagues follow naturally one after another, and were certain to happen whether Pharaoh yielded or not, it means that the Lord knew, in advance, that Pharaoh would harden his heart. He also knew when that would happen, and He knew when to instruct Moses concerning the next plague to come.

Regardless as to whether any of the plagues stem logically from a previous plague or not, the miracle of those plagues remains because of God’s advanced knowledge of every detail that would come about in the unfolding of them. The time for the second plague has arrived, and so the Lord now speaks to Moses...

¹ (con't) **“Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Let My people go, that they may serve Me.**

This is the standard demand that is made time and time again throughout the unfolding drama. It was made in Chapter 5, it was made in Chapter 7, it is made twice in this chapter, it will be made twice in Chapter 9, and once again in Chapter 10 as well.

Each time the Lord states this, He includes a reason. Once it was to hold a feast to Him in the wilderness. Once it was to sacrifice to Him. And six times, as in this verse, it is said so that they may serve Him. Though it is a demand, it is still a merciful offer because in the next verse he will explain the consequences if His request isn't granted.

The implication is that if he obeys, there will be no negative consequences. If he doesn't, then there will be. But the choice is left up to Pharaoh. This is how the Lord works. He speaks His word and then allows those who hear it to receive it or to reject it.

In Leviticus 26 and in Deuteronomy 28, He offered prosperity and blessing to Israel if they obeyed His laws. And in the same chapters, He notes the curses that would come upon them if they disobeyed. He does the same for us in the New Testament. His word is an offering of peace to those who hear and obey it, but it is an assurance of destruction to those who refuse to listen.

And this is how he expected His people to act as well. Israel was told to act this way towards the surrounding nations whom they encountered. See how the pattern of speaking to Pharaoh fits with His directions to Israel in Deuteronomy 20 –

“When you go near a city to fight against it, then proclaim an offer of peace to it. ¹¹ And it shall be that if they accept your offer of peace, and open to you, then all the people *who are* found in it shall be placed under tribute to you, and serve you. ¹² Now if *the city* will not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it. ¹³ And when the Lord your God delivers it into your hands, you shall strike every male in it with the edge of the sword. ¹⁴ But the women, the little ones, the livestock, and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall plunder for yourself; and you shall eat the enemies' plunder which the Lord your God gives you.” Deuteronomy 20:10-14

Throughout the Bible in such an instance, just like the one here between Moses and Pharaoh, the people of a land suffer or are blessed because of the decisions of the

leader. When the leader accepts such an offer, there is peace. When he refuses it, everyone alike suffers.

This is something we need to remember as well. There is no reason to assume that God works any differently today. For the nation who elects a godly leader, blessing can be expected. For those who elect people like we have in office now, we can only expect judgment to come with a strong and punishing hand.

Pharaoh will continue to learn this lesson; we will learn it soon...

² But if you refuse to let *them* go, behold, I will smite all your territory with frogs.

An offer of mercy has been made and the results of the refusal are now stated. Pharaoh's choice will determine the result. As I said earlier, the plague of frogs is most probably a naturally occurring, logical result of the first plague of blood. The river died, including all the fish in it and the result is an explosion of frogs.

Because there was nothing to gobble up the tadpoles, the inevitable result is for frogs to multiply in an amazingly immense fashion. Despite the inevitable nature of the plague, the offer is still made to Pharaoh, thus showing the Lord's pre-existing knowledge of his hardened heart.

Knowing that a refusal would come from Pharaoh doesn't in any way demonstrate wrongdoing in the Lord. Nor does His knowing that we will refuse to obey His word demonstrate any wrongdoing towards us. We, like Pharaoh, are accountable for our actions towards His commands.

Pharaoh is now given his choice though. If he refuses to let Israel go, the land will be smitten with frogs. And in fact, the land will be smitten, just as the Lord already knows. He said as much already when He told Moses –

“And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. ⁴ But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies *and* My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. ⁵ And the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them.” Exodus 7:3-5

Knowing in advance the heart of Pharaoh, all of the land of Egypt will suffer. In this verse, the term for “territory” is *gebul*. It properly means “borders.” In other words, the

land within the borders is what will be infested. Wherever people are under his domain, they will be plagued with frogs.

The word for “frogs” is *tsephardea*. It is a word that is only used in connection with this plague. It is used 11 times in this chapter and twice in the psalms, referring to this chapter, and nowhere else. It comes from an unused word meaning a swamp or a marsh-leaper, and hence it indicates a frog.

It is believed that the species of frog which would have come in the plague is known as the *Rana Mosaica*. It is a large frog which apparently resembles a toad and it crawls more than it leaps. What is probably one of the most dreadful aspects of this particular frog is that it croaks perpetually.

This plague is actually an attack on the false gods of Egypt because they regarded the frog as a symbol of the power of procreation. Their goddess Heqet was represented as having a frog head. Because they were considered sacred, no one could voluntarily kill one.

But even the involuntary killing of a supposedly divine animal could lead to punishment, including death. Therefore, such a plague would be a burden almost beyond imagination. Every step would have to be taken with care as they trudged through a sea of croaking noise.

This is, however, the natural result of worshipping the creature rather than the Creator. Anytime we place the creation, or any part of it, above Him the inevitable result will be upheaval in the natural order of things. When a state forbids the hunting of deer because environmental wackos think it's wrong, then the natural order is upset.

Suddenly deer take over and become an enormous problem on numerous levels. Not only do they become a physical nuisance, by impacting vegetation, soils, and other environmental features, they also become a health hazard because eventually the ticks and other parasites they carry can cause diseases to spread.

Both humans and livestock can be at risk because of increased numbers of them. Highways can have significant increases in accidents and death, and so on. One thing leads to another and there are always consequences for our dismissal of the Creator as we interact with His creation.

This second verse of chapter 8 is one of warning against such things, but by the time we reach verse six, the warning will have become a reality. Pharaoh's hard heart will see his false god of procreation become a life force which has procreated into a state of destruction.

³ So the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly,

The river which the Egyptians adored in worship, giving it undue divine honors, will be the source of their coming agony. The same river which had died from the plague of blood will come alive with a most horrendous plague. The frog embryos survived through that first plague, but the predators of those embryos didn't.

Frogs and other amphibians normally lay an immense number of eggs. This is done in order to counter the large range of predators that eat frog spawn and tadpoles. It is normally considered that at best not more than one in fifty of the eggs laid in a pond will actually make it to becoming a frog.

All of the rest will be eaten by predators such as fish and the like. However, it was seen in the first plague that all those natural predators died. Not only would one of many survive, almost all of them would. The availability of food and the lack of predators would render their birthrate at close to 100%.

The balance of nature had been upset and now there would be a reaction to it. Life which would otherwise have been measured through God's use of natural forces was to be unleashed in an almost violent upheaval.

The frogs will come out in such a large fashion that it will appear that the river will literally vomit them out. And frogs, like all life, will look for a little space to exist and prosper. Because the banks of the river couldn't hold them all, they would have to find other places to relax and croak away the hours...

^{3 (con't)} which shall go up and come into your house,

Frogs generally stay in wet areas. They look for places that have reeds or grass. This is where the tasty frog treats would live. But the sheer volume of frogs would force them to separate according to the sound of the croak. With every near croak, they would look to move a hop or two further away.

As people stepped around them, trying not to squish their little gods, the frogs would continue to move along. Houses, which were previously devoid of frogs, would be filled

with them as they looked for their own space to fill. The lack of the croak would tell them that there was free space for them to move in.

But the sheer numbers of them would mean that many would move in at the same time. Because all human life in Egypt is close to the Nile or the branches which the Nile flows into, there would be a mingling of the homes of the Egyptians with the millions of frogs looking for their own pad to croak the time away.

And so Pharaoh is told, in advance, that these noisy little gods would come even *b'beitekha* – into your house. Pharaoh's house may actually have had it worse off than many others because he surely would have lived close to the Nile so that he could rest his eyes upon its supposedly divine waters.

But the sight his eyes would soon behold would turn horrifying to him. His own home would become a den of loathsome, noisy, and indescribably numerous little gods that he would learn to hate rather than revere.

^{3 (con't)} **into your bedroom,**

u-bakhadar mishkavekha – into your room of bedding, namely your chamber. The very place where you found solace, intimacy with another, or rest will now become a place of constant commotion, a complete lack of intimacy, and a place where rest would be utterly impossible.

The sheer number of frogs would mean that stepping like a man would be exchanged for sliding the feet like a snake. Even in the spot of what was normally the greatest ease would be the mental turmoil of noise and personal stress. “Because you have denied My people rest, you will be denied your rest.”

^{3 (con't)} **on your bed,**

v'al mi'tatekha – and yes, even on your bed, be it a mat strewn out on the floor, or a divan or couch which was raised off the floor, your little frog gods will find you there and torment you. Not only would the noise be continuous as they croaked away incessantly, but to merely roll over while sleeping could cause the wrath of the frog-god to descend on you.

There would be terror in sleeping, terror in working, terror in any activity because of the possibility of squishing one's hope of eternal bliss and being consigned to eternal pain.

Such is the life of one who worships the creation. Knocking on wood will quickly lose its appeal for the one whose knuckles fill with splinters as they realize the consequences of their actions.

³ (con't) **into the houses of your servants,**

u-b'beit abadekha – I have asked that you allow Israel to come into the wilderness to serve me. If you deny this request, *your* servants will suffer the affliction of the plague. They will be so overcome with the frogs, that they will not be able to serve *you*. Should you choose to deny Me what I request, I will ensure that you are also denied your service. When it becomes known that they have suffered because of you, their own hearts will harden towards you, just as your heart is hardened toward me.

It is an indication of divine reciprocity. And it will not be limited to Pharaoh's servants...

³ (con't) **on your people,**

u-b'ammekha – Yes, the people in your kingdom will suffer the consequences of your denying to let My people go. I have asked for their release, but if they are to continue to suffer under you, then your people will suffer from My hand.

³ (con't) **into your ovens,**

u-b'tannurekha – These ovens, or *tannur*, are basically small firepots or even portable earthenware furnaces. After bread was kneaded, it would be flattened out into a circular shape and hand pressed against the inside of the oven. It would bake while adhering to the wall and then be removed to enjoy.

This type of oven is actually still used in parts of the world today. The same word for them is used to describe the smoking oven which represented the presence of God in the vision Abraham beheld in Genesis 15 when the covenant with him was made.

In Isaiah and Malachi, this oven represents divine judgment. In Lamentations, it represents destructive famine. The parallels to this account are obvious. God's presence would be felt through the plague. The ovens, being filled with frogs, couldn't be used to make bread, thus it is a metaphor for His divine judgment. And this judgment would then result in hunger because of the lack of bread.

Pharaoh would have to consider all of this before making his decision to accept or reject the demand of Yehovah.

³ (con't) **and into your kneading bowls.**

u-b'misharotekha – What is worse than not being able to eat bread from the ovens is that even the kneading bowls would be defiled. The *mishereth* was a small household vessel of wood and shaped like a trough where flour would be mixed with water. Normally, there would be a piece of already-fermented dough as well so that the yeast would spread to the entire new batch of dough.

These same bowls will be mentioned again in Exodus 12 as the people prepare to leave Egypt. They were small enough to be wrapped in a person's clothing and carried right on the shoulder. In the case of the plague, the slimy frogs would even get into these most-personal of household appliances.

They would ooze their slime into them or maybe relieve themselves as they sat croaking in them. The Egyptian culture was known especially for its exceptional cleanliness. Such a plague would be as loathsome and revolting to them as just about anything we could envision today.

Just imagine the thought of being plagued with such slimy, noisy creatures that were just small enough to get into everything and to be a hindrance to any sort of normal mobility. But they were also creatures which couldn't be killed because they were considered divine.

Imagine trying to open a door or do whatever normal work needed to be done! You would fear that you might crush one of your little gods in the process! The very religion that they espoused would become as loathsome to them as the creatures themselves were. As the Pulpit commentary wisely notes –

“Their animal-worship was thus proved absurd and ridiculous. They were obliged to respect the creatures which they hated – to preserve the animals they would fain have swept from the face of the earth.” Pulpit Commentary

⁴ And the frogs shall come up on you, on your people, and on all your servants.””

Although it isn't explicitly stated here as it will be in later plagues, the words of verse 1 imply that the plague will only fall on the Egyptians. In verse 1, He said, “Let My people

go that they may serve me.” Now it is repeated that the frogs would come upon “**your** people, and on all **your** servants.”

An implicit distinction is being made. And so not only would the homes and all of the home life associated with the homes of the Egyptians be infested, but even the people themselves. The frogs would be so numerous that as people slept, they would crawl right up on them, maybe stopping on an arm or a cheek for a little rest.

As they took their baths, the frogs would join in for a swim. As they ate their food, the frogs would be there ready to crawl onto the plate or into the cup. The Lord has taken this minute-sized creature and turned it into a giant-sized problem. Adam Clarke notes that –

“In the present instance he shows the greatness of his power by making an animal, devoid of every evil quality, the means of a terrible affliction to his enemies.” Adam Clarke

The frogs would have become offensive to the eyes, harsh on the ears, grating to the weary mind, and repulsive to the touch as they brushed against them, stepped on them, or had them hopping around on them in the dark of the night.

*A little rest and a little ease as I lay me down
But it never comes: I fear rolling over on my bed
If I do, I may squash a god! Oh how heaven would frown!
All these terrible thoughts keep running through my head*

*What can I do? Nature has taken a stand against me
The very things I worship have become my enemy*

*If there were but one God, the Creator of all
Then I wouldn't have to serve the creation, wouldn't that be nice!
On such a marvelous God, surely I would call
It would be great because after these frogs will come the lice
Oh No!*

II. Stretch Out Your Hand with Your Rod (verses 5 & 6)

⁵Then the Lord spoke to Moses,

What is unstated, but implied in verse 5 is that Pharaoh declined the merciful offer of Yehovah. He may not have believed Him at all, or He may have actually believed Him, but misjudged the scope of the plague.

No matter what is true, Yehovah now speaks to Moses once again. The words will contain the divine direction to strike the mighty land of Egypt with a sorrowful plague for a second time...

⁵ (con't) **“Say to Aaron,**

In Exodus 4:16, the Lord said this to Moses about Aaron –

“So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God.” Exodus 4:16

As has already happened, and as will continue to occur, God speaks to Moses words which are to be relayed on to Aaron. He is the spokesman, but he is also the one who is often tasked with assuming the action to be taken as well. Such is the case with the second plague...

⁵ (con't) **‘Stretch out your hand with your rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up on the land of Egypt.’”**

The same bodies of water are mentioned here that are mentioned in Exodus 7:19 – the streams, rivers, and ponds. However, there is one difference. In 7:19, it also included *miqveh* or “pools” which we noted were probably manmade and used for storing water.

Thus we have an amazing confirmation of the surety of the truth of this passage. The one place that tadpoles wouldn't flourish is not mentioned. These cisterns would have been kept clean for healthy drinking water and so frog spawn and tadpoles wouldn't find them suitable habitats.

And so when the Lord directs the rod to be stretched out over the waters, the *miqveh* are left out of the description. Even the scholars and commentators that I read for this plague missed this, showing that it isn't something readily noticeable, but once it is seen, it is a sure sign of the truth of the account.

How can it be that people so quickly dismiss the word of God! It is an inexhaustible source of wisdom and a reliable witness to what it puts forth. And yet so many just ignore it without giving it due consideration.

The *miqveh* aside though, all of the naturally flowing waters of Egypt will now bring forth frogs. But the miracle isn't the frogs so much as the timing of their coming. The frogs are a natural result of the first plague and they were sure to come, but the timing of them coming is right as the word of the Lord directs Moses to have Aaron speak and act.

This is the marvel of what has come about. It is natural enough to further harden Pharaoh's heart, but it is also unusual enough to warn him that the Divine hand is certainly behind the occurrence. He will see enough to understand, but not understand enough in order to act.

⁶So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt,

As instructed, Aaron complied. The hand holds the rod, and the rod symbolizes the power of God with which to effect the miracle. At the stretching forth of the rod, the frogs heed the divine call and move to this inner urge instilled by their Creator. It beckons them to the great display of which they have been designed for and destined to participate in...

^{6 (con't)} and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt.

It's funny how people who don't believe the Bible never argue that the plagues didn't happen. Instead, they always try to find ways of explaining them from a natural rather than a divine perspective. By doing this, they show that they implicitly believe the story to be credible, at least from a historical perspective.

But even if there is someone who was to say this simply never occurred, all they need to do is look elsewhere in history to show that it very well could have. The Pulpit Commentary provides us with this record of the past –

“In Paeonia and Dardania,” says Phoenias, a disciple of Aristotle, “there appeared once suddenly such a number of frogs, that they filled the houses and the streets. Therefore – as killing them, or shutting the doors, was of no avail; as even the vessels were full of them, the water infected, and all food uneatable; as they could scarcely set their foot

upon the ground without treading on heaps of them, and as they were vexed by the smell of the great numbers which died – they fled from that region altogether.”

And so we have an extra-biblical account which shows us the same type of occurrence has happened in the past. The difference is that the biblical account presupposes that it is an act of God and that it is directed by Him to meet His purposes at the exact moment that He proclaims it will occur.

*I can't wait for dinner and for a moment these frogs to forget
I wonder what the wife has prepared for me to eat
Before I sit down, I'd better wash my hands
And then check that there aren't any frogs in my seat*

*What is that you cooked, my dear, it sure smells nice
How did you fare while cooking with all these frogs around
Mmmmm, that is yummy, just the right amount of spice
I just wish we could get some peace from that horrid croaking sound*

*These bones sure are little, but tasty is the meat
Wait, this can't be... did you cook us frog stew?
Now we will never get to heaven and paradise so sweet
My dear, what is this thing that to me you did do?*

*You have cooked our god
No heavenly streets will we trod!*

III. False Signs and Lying Wonders (verse 7)

⁷ And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs on the land of Egypt.

This verse actually tickles me because the full force of the plague hadn't yet arrived and Pharaoh didn't see all that was coming in the hours ahead. But in order to demonstrate that this wasn't beyond their capabilities, the magicians of Egypt brought up frogs as well, thus only exacerbating the scope of the dilemma they would face.

What they probably did was something similar to the rabbit in the hat trick of magicians today. They were able to make frogs appear supposedly at will and thus demonstrate

that they were effective workers on behalf of Egypt's gods. However, any decent magician can not only make rabbits appear, but they can also make them disappear.

But the magicians of Egypt couldn't undo the great plague of the Lord. Thus, even though they could supposedly replicate His miracle on some smaller scale, they had no ability to undo the work which He had wrought.

For a second time though, their actions are enough to get Pharaoh to consider that Yehovah was like his own false gods. For him, it will be a stinky and cumbersome lesson that he will have to endure for a season. But it will be a lesson that he will also fail to take to heart.

This second plague and its results are not unlike what is noted in Revelation. In the 16th chapter, we read this –

“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴ For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, *which* go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” Revelation 16:13-14

The frogs of the magicians of Egypt became a false sign and a lying wonder to Pharaoh. In the same way, there will be false signs and lying wonders which will be accomplished by unclean spirits that appear like frogs in the end times.

It should be noted here that this is the last sign or wonder accomplished by the Lord through Moses and Aaron which can be copied by the magicians of Pharaoh. There was the rod which became a serpent; there was the water which turned to blood; and there are the frogs which are brought forth.

Just as there were three unholy replicas of the Lord's work, there will also be three unclean spirits which come forth in the end times. Three were sufficient to harden Pharaoh just enough to keep him on his wayward course, and three will be sufficient to work their evil in bringing about the final great battle in the end times.

If you are like me, then you probably feel that those end times are just around the corner. All of the signs of the end are here. The world has turned from the true message of God, and even His church has gone far, far off course. The word is no longer held in high esteem and this world is a cesspool of that which is vile.

Jesus is probably coming soon. When He does, He will only be coming for those who have received Him as Savior. For those left behind, a terrible time of trial, pictured by these plagues of Egypt, will come on a global scale. It is my hope that you'll be on that heavenly train out of here.

In order to do so, let me tell you what you need to know...

Closing Verse: *"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. ² And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God: ... ⁵ "Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.*

-Deuteronomy 28:1, 2 & 5

Next Week: Exodus 8:8-15 (The Plague of Frogs, Part II)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Plague of Frogs

And the Lord spoke to Moses this word
"Go to Pharaoh and say to him with My authority
"Thus says the Lord:
"Let My people go, that they may serve Me

But if you refuse to let them go, behold
I will smite all your territory with frogs
Unless you do as I have to you told
So the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly
Which shall go up and come into your house, as you will see

Into your bedroom, on your bed
Yes, they will be there when you try to lay your head

Into the houses of your servants, as I have said
Even on your people, they won't stop

Into your ovens, where you bake your bread
And into your kneading bowls, they will hop

And the frogs shall come up on you
On your people, and on all your servants too

Then the Lord spoke to Moses this word
“Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your hand
With your rod over the streams, as you have heard
Over the rivers, and over the ponds throughout the land

And cause frogs to come up on Egypt the land
Do this now just as I command

So Aaron stretched out his hand
Over the waters of Egypt
And the frogs came up and covered Egypt the land

And the magicians did so with their enchantments
And brought up frogs on the land of Egypt
And it was through these accomplishments
And by these lying wonders that his heart was tripped

Surely God looks upon each heart
Knowing whether it will be soft or not
He knows which will desire a new start
And for that one a he has reserved a heavenly spot

The choice is up to each one of us
And God will lead the heart as it is so disposed
He will lead it toward life in Jesus
Or away from it, if that heart is hard and closed

So let your heart be open and tender to His call
Allow Him in and let Him work salvation in you
And upon you His grace and mercy shall fall
What a God! What a friend! Ever faithful and true

We praise You, O Lord our God
Our hearts sing joyous hallelujahs to You!

And they shall forever more as we trod
In Your glorious light when, behold, You make all things new
Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 8:8-15

(THE PLAGUE OF FROGS - PART II)

Throughout the Bible, promises are made. We call them prophecies. The Lord says He will do something, or that some unusual thing will come about, and sure enough, the Bible records those things when they actually happen. We call that “fulfilled prophecy.”

The Bible is so full of fulfilled prophecy that it simply can't be ignored. When God speaks of the future in certain terms, or when He speaks of the future as already accomplished, it means that He must be in control of what will happen.

It's not that He can merely see the logical outcome of a set of parameters, like a computer calculating what will occur based on known information. Rather, He knows the outcome because He is already there at the outcome. He is outside of time and in control of time.

Because of this, He knows the end from the beginning to the minutest detail. But of course, people will argue that much of the Bible was written *after* the prophecies were fulfilled, not before. Thus man has simply inserted God into his own manipulated writings.

But for every such argument, God is always there to vindicate His word once again. The Dead Sea scrolls took care of much of that speculation, at least concerning the coming of the Messiah. And sure enough, time has taken care of more.

The writings of many of the Old Testament prophets have come true in our lifetime with the return of Israel to the land of Israel, and with the return of Jerusalem to Israel's control. More prophecies are lining up before our eyes daily as well. It is an exciting age in which to live.

Text Verse: *“Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it,” says the Lord.” Ezekiel 37:14*

The Lord gives us prophecy so that when His words come true, we have a sure foundation for our faith in Him. Who cannot look at the hundreds of prophecies of Christ which were fulfilled in Him and not be amazed. The odds against them all being fulfilled in Jesus are so immense that there isn't enough space in the universe to hold them all if each were a copper penny.

And as more prophecies come true concerning Israel, the ending of the church age and what that entails, and the anticipated return of Christ for His church, we have all the more reason to be thankful for the age in which we live. Our hope in His word is rewarded with strengthened faith and even greater hope.

But there are those who see the word of the Lord performed and dismiss it for whatever crazy reason. Their hearts are hard and they harden a little bit more with each rejection of the obvious. Once again, we will see this happen today in the life of Pharaoh.

Let's not be like that guy! Instead, let's put our hope and trust in God's superior word. It is alive and active and sure; a source of hope. Pursuing it will certainly lead to great reward. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. There is None Like the Lord Our God (verses 8-11)

⁸ Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said,

Here in verse 8 will be the very first sign of Pharaoh's conceding to the fact that the plague of Egypt is both beyond his power and the power of one of the very gods worshipped in Egypt. They certainly petitioned their frog-god, Heqet, to relieve the burden of the plague, but their prayers, offerings, and sacrifices went unheeded.

The very thing that had been denied to Yehovah, which was the request for the people to go and sacrifice to Him in the wilderness, had certainly been offered to Heqet, but Yehovah proved stronger than this false god. The lack of offerings to Him provoked His anger while their offerings to her went unanswered.

Because of this, Pharaoh calls for Moses and Aaron to appear before him. Yehovah has now triumphed over the second false god of Egypt – first the Nile and now Heqet.

^{8 (con't)} "Entreat the Lord that He may take away the frogs from me and from my people;

Not only had their petitions to Heqet been unanswered, the crafts of the magicians had failed as well. They were able to make frogs appear, but they were impotent in making them disappear. And so now he is asking Moses and Aaron for relief.

In the plague of blood, there was no such appeal because it probably didn't affect him a great deal. He would have had abundant supplies of water in storage at his palace, he

could have stayed upwind of the stink of the dead fish, and the plague quickly subsided, it being only seven days in duration.

But, regardless of the length of this plague, he suffered equally with his own people. He would have been inundated with the frogs in his palace, the kneading troughs of his own bread would have been defiled, and he would have heard the constant croaking. Such an incessant noise would have driven him close to insanity.

In what he says to Moses and Aaron are words which showed that he had now learned something he once didn't know. In Exodus 5, we saw this exchange –

“Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.’
2 And Pharaoh said, ‘Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go.’” Exodus 5:1, 2

At that time, and in one combined statement, he made three distinct and arrogant proclamations – 1) Who is the Lord? 2) Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice? And, 3) Who is the Lord that I should let Israel go?

That has all changed as we see here, and as we will see in the rest of this verse. The change in his first proclamation is evident right now. At that meeting in chapter 5, He asked “Who is Yehovah?” After this, he then said, “I do not know Yehovah.”

He now knows of Him as is evidenced by the words, “Entreat Yehovah.” He has been introduced to Him and he has conceded that only He can help with the dire situation he faces. And so his entreaty is specific. It is that – “He may take away the frogs from me and from my people.”

His attitude is similar to what Job said after he had been introduced to the magnificence of the Lord. In Job 42, we read this –

“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear,
But now my eye sees You.” Job 42:5

The surpassing greatness of this second plague has brought Pharaoh to the point of desperation. But unlike Job who saw the majesty and had reverence in His heart for the Source of that majesty, Pharaoh has merely humbled himself out of a state of incompetence and of fear.

He is incompetent to undo what has been done and he is fearful that if it continued, he would face utter ruin. As the Geneva Bible says about this –

“Not love but fear causes the infidels to seek God.” Geneva Bible

This is true. But a fear of God, unless it leads to love of God, will once again be replaced with hardness of the heart toward God. We will see this as the record of this second plague continues.

In this, we can discern that preaching about the torments of hell can actually have the opposite effect of that for which it is intended unless it is followed up with an understanding of the sovereignty of God as well as the grace and mercy of God. These, when combined with a soft and yielding heart, will bring about change in the man.

⁸ (con't) **and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the Lord.”**

The second two of the arrogant proclamations are dealt with here. They were, “Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?” and “Who is the Lord that I should let Israel go?” He has now conceded to both of them as well.

Unfortunately, the vacillating condition of Pharaoh’s heart will only lead him to a further hardening and greater obstinacy in the time ahead. But this was not unknown to the Lord and He will use it to multiply His signs and wonders in the land of Egypt.

*Relief! This is what I beg of you
These frogs have me at my wits’ end
I will do as you ask of me to do
Please remove them from me, my Hebrew friend*

*I have had no sleep; the croaking is driving me nuts
I cannot take a bath, because the frogs jump in too
Not to be too graphic, but they now sicken my guts
What once was a god to me, I now know only belongs in a zoo*

*The Lord is greater than these horrifying frogs
He created them and this I now avow
And he created elephants and cats and dogs
I just missed this fact in the past somehow*

⁹ **And Moses said to Pharaoh, “Accept the honor**

His words to Pharaoh are *hitpaer alai* – “glory over me.” It’s a confusing phrase to scholars and the exact meaning is debated. It isn’t repeated in Scripture, but a near form of the same phrase is found in Judges 7:2 which says –

“And the Lord said to Gideon, ‘The people who *are* with you *are* too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel **claim glory** for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’” Judges 7:2

What it seems to mean first and foremost is, “I submit to you the honor of the decision.” First, I have gloried over you through the Lord’s display of power. Now I am offering you a chance to glory over me. I am returning the favor.”

“If I disappoint, I will be subject to you, just as you have to this point been subject to the Lord.” It could be viewed as someone speaking to another who supposedly feels superior, in the sense that the he is granted the decision to be made.

But at the same time, there is the implication that by accepting the honor which will be bestowed, it very well may be that the Lord will be further vindicated in His actions. It is then both a grant of favor, and yet a renewed challenge by the granter of the favor.

When Satan wanted to test Job, it was with the intent of proving that Job would yield to his attacks. The Lord granted him the opportunity and Satan failed. In a greater picture, Satan came to test Jesus with the intent of keeping for all eternity the earth that he possessed. The challenge was granted and Satan failed.

And Satan continues to attack mankind, sifting them as wheat, but those who are in Christ cannot be removed from His grasp. In the end, the Lord is always vindicated in His actions. Even when Satan is granted opportunity to determine an outcome in which he may prevail, he always ends as the loser.

^{9 (con’t)} **of saying when I shall intercede**

The word for “when” is *l’matay* – “**for** when.” It is a direct offer to Pharaoh concerning his preference of timing. This may seem like a matter of linguistic hair splitting, but Pharaoh’s answer in verse 10 will repeat the same preposition, for.

Moses' offer throws all of the honor of the decision on Pharaoh and all of the burden of the action on the Lord. The intent is to make a marked impression upon Pharaoh that nothing is impossible with God. It is a grant to attempt to undermine the Lord's capabilities, or a challenge to allow them to be exalted.

This is very similar to the offer made to Hezekiah, king of Israel. In 2 Kings 20, Hezekiah was sick and facing death, but the Lord promised to heal him and grant him 15 more years of life. After that promise, we see the following exchange –

“And Hezekiah said to Isaiah, ‘What *is* the sign that the Lord will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the Lord the third day?’

⁹ Then Isaiah said, ‘This is the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do the thing which He has spoken: *shall* the shadow go forward ten degrees or go backward ten degrees?’

¹⁰ And Hezekiah answered, ‘It is an easy thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees; no, but let the shadow go backward ten degrees.’

¹¹ So Isaiah the prophet cried out to the Lord, and He brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down on the sundial of Ahaz.”

-2 Kings 20:8-11

We are seeing the same type of grant and challenge now between Moses and Pharaoh. Thus, the intent of this offer is that it is to be a sign to Pharaoh. If it is a sign, then he is to pay heed to the sign. Signs, when given by the Lord, are meant for this purpose.

⁹ (con't) **for you, for your servants, and for your people, to destroy the frogs from you and your houses,**

The offer is all-inclusive. There will be complete relief from the plague, not only for Pharaoh, but for his servants and his people. It is to be noted again that these categories are placed in contradistinction to the Lord and the people of Israel.

Pharaoh was considered a god to his people. He had servants, and he had his people. Moses is showing that they were all equally affected because the request of the Lord, along with the plight of His servants and people, had been previously ignored. Because of the promise by Pharaoh to the Lord, and on behalf of his servants and his people, the action would be taken.

⁹ (con't) **that they may remain in the river only.”**

As an added grace, the frogs of the river would continue to live and not be affected by the hand of the Lord. The horrendous croaking sounds of the plague would be replaced with the sweet croaking sounds of natural order. The cycle would return to normalcy and river life would continue on with, hopefully, a new understanding of Who controlled it.

¹⁰ **So he said, “Tomorrow.”**

The word is *l'makhar* – It is not to-morrow, but “**for** to-morrow.” The wording is precise. Imagine the teacher saying, “Tomorrow there will be a test.” Although similar, it doesn't carry the same weight as, “Prepare yourselves **for** tomorrow, when there will be a test.” In Numbers 11, the same expression is used to pinpoint a specific time for an action to come about. There it says –

“Consecrate yourselves **for tomorrow**, and you shall eat meat...” Numbers 11:18

Moses wasn't asking the people to consecrate themselves the next day, but to consecrate themselves *for* the next day. The specificity matters because any misunderstanding could then be misinterpreted by Pharaoh or be used as an excuse to say that the Lord didn't act as stated.

So the question is, “With such a horrifying plague, why didn't he ask that it be ended on that same day rather than the next.” The specificity of the wording answers the question. If Pharaoh still thought that purely natural means were involved, he may have suspected that they had already started to die.

If this was true and Moses knew it, then they might all die naturally *before* tomorrow. If so, then he would have an argument against Yehovah by claiming that the end of the plague was actually natural and not divine.

However, if it was divine, he didn't want it carried on to the third day because it would be one more day of grief than he could bear. But we can still suppose that the frogs dying off is natural anyway, which is likely. There wasn't sufficient food for them and they were out of their natural habitat.

The inevitable truth is that they would eventually die. But the inescapable truth is that Moses granted Pharaoh the final decision for *any* day on which they were to die. Therefore, even if natural, the miraculous is still tied up in the story. The foreknowledge of the Lord, and His power over the entire situation, is perfectly displayed.

¹⁰ (con't) **And he said, “*Let it be according to your word,***

kidbarekha l'maan – “according to your word; to that intent.” He has been granted the right to choose and the choice of his words will be realized *as* he has spoken. And there is a reason for this...

¹⁰ (con't) **that you may know that *there is no one like the Lord our God.***

Moses speaks for the Hebrew people, the people of Israel. And this God, who is the God of this people, has a name – Yehovah. The purpose of fulfilling Pharaoh’s words exactly as they have been spoken is to exalt that name above all others.

This is exactly repeated in Isaiah 45. There he challenges the people to consider His words. When He speaks to them in advance of something happening, and then it happens, it is to prove that He alone is God and that there is none other. Here are His words which were spoken to a people who had forgotten this lesson –

“Tell and bring forth *your case*;
Yes, let them take counsel together.
Who has declared this from ancient time?
Who has told it from that time?
Have not I, the Lord?
And *there is* no other God besides Me,
A just God and a Savior;
There is none besides Me.” Isaiah 45:21

The Lord is a jealous God and what He does is to secure His place of honor among His creatures.

¹¹ **And the frogs shall depart from you, from your houses, from your servants, and from your people.**

The words here almost repeat the order of the words of verse 9, but with an unusual difference. Unlike verse 9, the houses are mentioned before the servants and the people. Verse 9 concerned the relief of the people and then how that relief would come about.

This verse shows the order of that relief, giving priority to Pharaoh first, and then the logical order of having them departing from the houses, and then from the servants,

and then the people. It makes sense when one looks at how the frogs would be disposed of after they died.

Pharaoh would be the first completely freed from the plague as his servants cleaned his area. Later, the people would finish the work as the entire Nile region would slowly be cleansed of the carcasses. This is a minute detail, but it is an exacting one.

¹¹ (con't) **They shall remain in the river only."**

Again, the grace of the frogs remaining in the river is mentioned. But there are a few things that this repetition could be hinting at. First, It was to show them that the Lord could again multiply the frogs if he so desired.

Secondly, the friendly sound of their croaks from the Nile would be a call to remembrance of the plague that had transpired. And third, that same croaking was a reminder that the Lord, not the frogs, was the true Deity to be worshipped.

*Tomorrow it will come about
Just you wait and you will see
The frogs will be gone, no doubt
As you have spoken, it shall surely be*

*They will be gone from your house
They will no longer afflict your servants too
They will be as scarce as the field mouse
Only in the river will they come into your view*

*The plague will end on the morrow
As surely as the word has been spoken
Soon from these frogs you will have no more sorrow
What has been said shall be to you a divine token*

II. And the Frogs Died (verses 12-14)

¹² **Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh.**

It is to be noted that before the action taken in the rest of the verse is given, we are told that Moses and Aaron first went out from Pharaoh. Pharaoh has been told that his

spoken word will come about, but it seems to be that this was granted without any prior approval or command by the Lord.

If so, Moses acted in *strong faith* by speaking as he did in such a bold promise. And to back up his faith, he will now act out that faith in petition...

¹² (con't) **And Moses cried out to the Lord concerning the frogs which He had brought against Pharaoh.**

The word here for “and cried out” is *v’yitssaq*. It is an especially strong phrase which shows a truly heartfelt intent. When Cain killed his brother, the Lord, using the same word, said “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood **cries out** to Me from the ground.”

The same expression was used when Esau realized Jacob had deceived his father and stolen his blessing. And when there was the great famine of Egypt during the life of Joseph, the people cried out to Pharaoh for food. These and other such examples show more than just a casual petition, but a truly heartfelt cry of anguish.

This cry was “concerning the frogs.” These words in Hebrew are *al davar ha’tsephardeim* – “over (the) word of the frogs.” The word of the Lord through Moses had brought the frogs upon the land, and Pharaoh had spoken the word as to when the frogs would be gone. Now the word needed to be fulfilled.

Moses’ cry then is in earnest expectation that the word would be fulfilled lest dishonor, rather than honor, come about. Should the word fail, it would be a triumph for Pharaoh and a disgrace to the name of Yehovah and to His messenger Moses.

Finally, this verse notes that the plague was “the frogs which He had brought against Pharaoh.” Verse 6 showed us that the frogs covered *all* the land of Egypt and yet it was only said to be against Pharaoh. This is another of the multitude of reminders that the Bible gives us concerning leadership of a nation or a people.

When a king is disobedient in the Bible, all of the people under his authority receive the judgment of the king’s actions. This is an inescapable truth which should leave those of us in this nation horrified at the judgment we deserve and which must surely be coming.

We have voluntarily elected a moral miniscule to lead our land. And he will lead it into uncharted waters of judgment and destruction through his vile actions. And how much worse will it be in the tribulation when the antichrist himself rises to power.

The people of the world will be led by the devil's representative and they will receive the devil's punishment for their choice of leader. I pray that you will escape this before it happens by calling on Jesus to keep you from that terrible time which is probably not too far off from now.

¹³ So the Lord did according to the word of Moses.

The Geneva Bible has an interesting take on these words. They say, "In things of this life God often hears the prayers of the just for the ungodly." This is true, and God does hear the prayer of a righteous man on behalf of the unrighteous.

But more appropriate to this verse is that the Lord heard Moses and defended both the integrity of His own name, and that of Moses, before Pharaoh. This was less of a petition for mercy on Pharaoh than it was for the glory of the Lord to be revealed and the honor of the Lord to be maintained.

In both, the Lord met those tenets at the spoken word of Moses. Thus His surpassing greatness is seen in the ending of this horrifying plague upon Pharaoh, and the land of Pharaoh.

^{13 (con't)} And the frogs died out of the houses, out of the courtyards, and out of the fields.

The death of the frogs furnished a clear and sure proof that these were real frogs, not just demons or apparitions appearing as frogs to afflict the people. It thus implicitly showed the Egyptians, with all certainty, that the Lord controlled nature.

It secondly proved that the supposed divine nature of the Frog, was not divine at all. Rather, it was subject to the word and direction of the Lord. The Frog may or may not have continued to be revered in Egypt or elsewhere, but its effectiveness as a deity was once and forever proven to be a false hope.

Thus, other than two references to this plague of frogs in the psalms, they will never be mentioned again. The Lord has proven the Frog a false god, and His judgment upon it is recorded for all succeeding generations to heed and to believe.

¹⁴ They gathered them together in heaps,

The Hebrew here is in the superlative form, *vayitsberu otam khomarim khomarim* – “and piled them heaps (upon) heaps.” This was no run of the mill infestation of frogs, but a truly immense quantity that is strikingly revealed in these words.

Considering the words here, and the fact that surely many frogs had already perished through being squished or scrunched, or having been eaten by predators or even adventurous Egyptians, those left behind on the last day were still more numerous than words could adequately describe without exceptional verbiage being employed.

The plague of frogs was a shockingly devastating plague upon both people and land.

¹⁴ (con’t) **and the land stank.**

Ellicott notes that, “God, who knew the heart of Pharaoh, and its insincerity, or at any rate its changefulness, took the plague of frogs away in a manner that made its removal almost as bad as its continuance.”

In other words, it was a nice ending touch for Pharaoh to consider. His heart was hard and it was not directed to the things of God. The loathsome stench of death would remain in his nose and in his memory even after the frogs were wholly cleared away.

But in the meantime, there was no place in all the land that he could go without being nauseatingly reminded of his recklessness before the Lord.

As an interesting parallel to consider, the last time the word *baash*, or “stink” was used was in Exodus 5. When the less-than-faithful Hebrew scribes were scathingly rebuked by Pharaoh, they met Moses and Aaron and said this to them –

“Let the Lord look on you and judge, because you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us.” Exodus 5:21

Those same faithless Hebrews could now look on the devastation of the Lord through this plague and know what it truly meant to stink in the sight of Pharaoh. It was a stench which would cause the face to scrunch, the eyes to water, and the stomach to wrench.

*Such a stench has come into my nose
Piles and piles, heaps and heaps*

*What we thought were gods were not, so it goes
All these dead frogs just give us the creeps*

*We can't wait till those Hebrews are gone
Won't that day be wonderfully nice?
Pharaoh has promised to let them go
The only thing worse than this would be a plague of lice*

*No need to worry about that now
All they have to do is pack up and head on out
We will get along fine without them somehow
In fact, when they leave, we'll give a happy shout*

*Surely Pharaoh's mind is made up this time
Really no need to even make this verse rhyme*

III. The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart (verse 15)

¹⁵ But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief,

In these words is a certain pun. The word for "relief" is *ha'revakhah* or literally "a taking of breath." We would say, "A breathing space." Once the frogs had been disposed of through burying, burning, or decay, the stink disappeared with them.

There would once again be deep breaths of the pleasantries of the land, and there would be a slow departing of the memory concerning the horrific stench which once permeated even the closed doors of Pharaoh's inner chamber. And with such relief came something else; something not unexpected...

¹⁵ (con't) he hardened his heart and did not heed them,

The plague of the frogs was bad, but to this point nothing had occurred which would change the inner workings of the man called Pharaoh. He was predisposed towards arrogance and willingly turned away from the things of God.

His already-hardening heart was no less dull or insensitive now than it was before. Rather, it was becoming more so. With the removal of the frogs and the clearing of the

air, he probably figured that the Lord had run his course in miracles and would afflict him no more. In order to test this theory, he refused to heed what he had experienced.

Isaiah speaks exactly of such a person. He is one who is wicked and stubborn and refuses to see when grace has been bestowed –

“Let grace be shown to the wicked,
Yet he will not learn righteousness;
In the land of uprightness he will deal unjustly,
And will not behold the majesty of the Lord.” Isaiah 26:10

¹⁵ (fin) **as the Lord had said.**

ka’asher dibber Yehovah – as spoke the Lord. These words are an exact repeat of Exodus 7:13 after Pharaoh had rejected the miracle of the rod being changed into a serpent. There is a difference in the overall verses though. In 7:13, the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart was ascribed to an action of the heart itself.

In this verse, it is ascribed to an action of Pharaoh. He has willingly hardened his heart through stubborn disobedience. Once again, we see that the heart is hardened by the active will of the possessor of that heart.

The Lord may have prompted Pharaoh to hardening, but the fault and the sentence for the action remains solely with Pharaoh. Paul shows us this truth in Romans chapter 2 –

“But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. ³ And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? ⁵ But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶ who ‘will render to each one according to his deeds.” Romans 2:2-6

God, knowing Pharaoh’s already arrogant attitude, used it against him in order to demonstrate His surpassing greatness. There are yet 8 more plagues to be seen, each which will build upon the next as the Lord prepares Israel for their great exodus from Egypt and to His holy mountain.

Let each of us surrender ourselves to the offered grace of God which is poured out upon us. Pharaoh was given grace and he turned from it. Matthew Henry astutely notes the state of the heart which rejects such grace from His hand –

“Till the heart is renewed by the grace of God, the thoughts made by affliction do not abide; the convictions wear off, and the promises that were given are forgotten. Till the state of the air is changed, what thaws in the sun will freeze again in the shade.” Henry

Though today we’ve viewed the end of only the second plague, the book is already complete and all ten plagues of Egypt are behind us in time. And they only picture the greater judgment by God upon sin and upon this sin-filled world. In the midst of this well-deserved hand of plague and misery, there is a Fount of grace.

It was opened on the tree of Calvary as the blood gushed from the dying Man on that cross. Three days later, He was resurrected by the power of God for all eternity. This proves that God was pleased with His sinless life. It proves that He was worthy of the resurrection, and it proves that the precious Fount is open for all people for all time.

All who call on the Lord will be saved. Please grant me a moment to explain how you can receive this wondrous gift of eternal life...

Closing Verse: *“Listen to Me, you stubborn-hearted, Who are far from righteousness.” Isaiah 46:12*

Next Week: Exodus 8:16-19 (The Plague of Lice)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

When Frogs Die, They Stink

Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said
“Entreat the Lord that He may take away
The frogs from me and from my people, and instead
I will let the people go, so to you I say

That they may sacrifice to the Lord
This is my spoken word

And Moses said to Pharaoh
“Accept the honor of saying
When I shall intercede for you, for your servants too
And for your people, for whom I shall then be praying
To destroy the frogs from you and your houses too
That they may remain in the river only, it’s what the Lord will do

So he said, “Tomorrow
And he said, “Let it be according to your word
That you may know
That there is no one like our God the Lord
And the frogs shall depart from you
From your houses, from your servants, so you will see
And from your people too
They shall remain in the river only

Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh
And Moses cried out to the Lord
Concerning the frogs which He had brought
Against Pharaoh by His spoken word

So the Lord did according to the word of Moses
And the frogs died out of the houses

Out of the courtyards and out of the fields too
They gathered them together in heaps
And the land stank, through and through

But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief
He hardened his heart
And did not heed them, for unbelief
As the Lord had said right from the start

Surely we know that the judgment of God
Is according to the truth
Against those who practice such things in life as they trod
Whether men of advanced age, or those still in their youth

And so let us not despise the riches of His goodness
Forbearance, and longsuffering also

Which is meant to lead us to repentance
And direct us on the path that we should go

Let us pursue Christ with every breath we take
And be obedient to the heavenly call
For Christ, and for Christ alone – all else forsake
For each of us, let Him be our all in all

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 8:16-19

(THE PLAGUE OF LICE)

The day before typing this sermon, a friend on Facebook named Taylor posted to me something that I'd missed during my sermon on Exodus 3. I'm not going back that way again, but I hate not sharing everything about a passage that I can. So I'm including his words in today's sermon because they fit with this sermon.

At the time that Moses stood before the burning bush, I gave several reasons for why the Lord asked Moses to take off his sandals. I then noted that the only other time this was seen in the Bible was in Joshua 5. I gave reasons for this and how the two accounts contrast and yet they confirm a message at the same time.

When Taylor watched that sermon, he thought about it and the Lord led Him to another picture, a prophetic picture, which I had completely missed. He noted that the first and second advents of Christ are pictured in these two accounts.

On His first advent, He came as the Giver of instruction (Torah) to redeem and separate his people from the world. The next time He comes it will be as the Lord of Hosts, to take His people into the Promised Land. And this is absolutely correct.

Moses was the human giver of instruction and redeemer of His people. Likewise, Joshua was the human commander of the armies of Israel who led them into the Promised Land. And so these two accounts provide a prophetic picture of Christ's two advents.

I thought this was a great insight and it also fits well with the ongoing theme of the plagues of Exodus. Each of the plagues is designed to build upon the next and to lead to the ultimate redemption of Israel. When they are redeemed, they'll go to Sinai to receive their instruction. And eventually they will head for the land of promise.

We as Christians have been redeemed. We have also received our instruction in the pages of the Bible. Eventually, we'll be brought into the land of promise. Until we get there though, we should be learning all we can about the precious book He has given us.

Text Verse: *"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Hebrews 4:12*

What a true statement this is! Pharaoh had been given the word of God verbally several times. He has also seen the proofs of it realized in plagues upon His land. Today, no word will be given to him in advance of the plague, but the plague will speak for itself, proving its divine source.

But it will also be a source of hardening, not softening, of Pharaoh's heart. I have to tell you, someone who can hear the word of the Lord, see it analyzed and reanalyzed and see something new come out of it every day, and still not have it change their heart is just asking for grief.

I missed those prophetic pictures of Christ in Exodus and Joshua, even though they were as evident as the nose on my face. Instead of hardening my heart, they make me want to believe the Lord even more. Pharaoh on the other hand, like so many people in the world today, takes just the opposite view. It is a view which can only lead to destruction.

Before that time comes, I would hope that many would open their eyes and see the glory of the Lord revealed in this precious superior word. Maybe somebody will today! And so let's head to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Stretch Out Your Rod (Verse 16)

¹⁶ So the Lord said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your rod,

This is now the third time that Aaron is instructed by the Lord through Moses to stretch out his rod. The first was over the waters of Egypt, over their streams, over their rivers, over their ponds, and over all their pools of water, that they may become blood. When he did, the waters became blood.

The next time was over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds. This caused frogs to come up on the land. Now something new will come about. As we saw concerning the frogs, they were a logical and natural outcropping of the waters having turned to blood. And yet, there was the miraculous involved as well.

This is especially so because the record shows that the frogs came when Aaron stretched out his rod and they departed at the time that Pharaoh had designated when requested by Moses. And so even if the plagues were natural, there is still the supernatural involved. Only the Lord could so minutely direct events such as these.

The next plague very well could be a natural result of the multiplication and then death of the frogs as well.

¹⁶ (con't) **and strike the dust of the land,**

Instead of merely stretching the rod out over the waters, a forceful action is instructed – “strike the dust of the land.” It is a demonstration of purpose and intent and it signifies that this third plague will come not from the waters, but from the land.

This then is to be an attack on the Egyptian god Set, the god of the desert, and another god of Egypt I’ll mention in a while. It is then to be a lesson that Yehovah is not merely God over the waters, but He is also God over the land. Among the ancients, there was often a misperception concerning the nature of God. He isn’t just a mere god over one thing and not another.

He isn’t just a god over one group of people, but over all people. And he isn’t only a god over one location, but over all places. He is absolutely sovereign over all things. It was a common misperception which is highlighted throughout the Old Testament.

In 1 Kings 20, Ben Hadad, king of Syria, came against Israel in battle. He was sorely defeated by them and returned home to Syria. Upon his return, and in preparation for another battle, his servants told him why they thought they were defeated the first time—

“Then the servants of the king of Syria said to him, ‘Their gods *are* gods of the hills. Therefore they were stronger than we; but if we fight against them in the plain, surely we will be stronger than they.’²⁴ So do this thing: Dismiss the kings, each from his position, and put captains in their places;²⁵ and you shall muster an army like the army that you have lost, horse for horse and chariot for chariot. Then we will fight against them in the plain; surely we will be stronger than they.’” 1 Kings 20:23-25

If you read the account, you’ll see that the Syrians found out that they were once again, incorrect. Rather, they suffered a second great defeat. Likewise, later in 2 Kings 20, after the exile of Israel from the land because of disobedience, the king of Assyria brought people into the land of Israel from other countries to settle there. However, when they were brought in, we read what occurred –

“And it was so, at the beginning of their dwelling there, *that* they did not fear the Lord; therefore the Lord sent lions among them, which killed *some* of them. ²⁶ So they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, ‘The nations whom you have removed and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the rituals of the God of the land; therefore He has sent lions among them, and indeed, they are killing them because they do not know the rituals of the God of the land.’ ²⁷ Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, ‘Send there one of the priests whom you brought from there; let him go and dwell there, and let him teach them the rituals of the God of the land.’ ²⁸ Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the Lord.” 2 Kings 17:25-28

In the first account, there was the misperception that Yehovah was the god of the hills and not of the plains. In the second, there was the misperception that the Lord was only the Lord of the Land of Israel.

Misunderstanding God’s nature can lead to all sorts of problems. However, no matter whether He is misunderstood or understood, He uses the matter to effect His purposes. One more exceptional case such as these comes from the books of Isaiah, Chronicles, and Ezra.

Isaiah, writing long before the exile of Israel to Babylon, made a prophecy concerning their return. In one of the most profound prophecies of the Old Testament, he twice mentioned King Cyrus of Persia by name, even saying that it would be Cyrus who would rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. That is recorded in Isaiah 44 –

“Who confirms the word of His servant,
And performs the counsel of His messengers;
Who says to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be inhabited,’
To the cities of Judah, ‘You shall be built,’
And I will raise up her waste places;
²⁷ Who says to the deep, ‘Be dry!
And I will dry up your rivers’;
²⁸ Who says of Cyrus, ‘*He is My shepherd,*
And he shall perform all My pleasure,
Saying to Jerusalem, “You shall be built,”
And to the temple, “Your foundation shall be laid.”’” Isaiah 44:26-28

In the next chapter, he continues with his words concerning Cyrus and ends with this thought –

I have raised him up in righteousness,
And I will direct all his ways;
He shall build My city
And let My exiles go free,
Not for price nor reward,”
Says the Lord of hosts. Isaiah 45:13

It is believed that Cyrus was informed of this prophecy which bore his own name and it so moved him that he agreed to its terms, thus fulfilling the prophecy about him *because* it was a prophecy about him. The words of fulfillment are so important that they close out the book of 2 Chronicles and they are repeated at the beginning of the book of Ezra –

“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also *put it* in writing, saying,

²³ Thus says Cyrus king of Persia:

All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah.

Who *is* among you of all His people? May the Lord his God *be* with him, and let him go up!” 2 Chronicles 36:22, 23

Cyrus realized that the Yehovah is the God of heaven. He rules not only over portions of the earth such as the water, the hills, the land of Israel, or the Middle East, but He also rules over all of the earth and the heavens too. And not only does He rule over them in time, but beyond time. He rules over the future as well as the present.

The prophecy which named him showed him these things. Unlike Cyrus, a different approach is taken towards Pharaoh. God could have named Pharaoh in advance by the mouth of Abraham and explained what he should do. But a different course is taken in Egypt because a different outcome is needed.

Every detail of history is being carefully guided for a specific outcome. In the case of Pharaoh, it is to harden his heart so that the mighty deeds of the Lord might be

magnified. And these deeds aren't just given to show us how the Lord worked in the past, but how He will work again in the future.

¹⁶ (con't) **so that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.”**

As simple as these words seem, the one word which defines the plague, *kinnim*, translated here as “lice,” cannot be definitively identified. It is used only six times in the Bible. Five of them are in these three verses, and the sixth is in Psalm 105, which is speaking of these verses.

Because of the word's difficult nature, it is viewed by scholars in a variety of ways – lice, gnats, mosquitoes, or ticks. Each view has its interesting possibilities. But to determine which, it would be good to look again at the natural order of how plagues occur.

The river turned to blood and frogs become prolific. If the frogs died out in an immense quantity, then there would be a logical outcropping from that. Again, this doesn't deny the miraculous nature of the event. Rather, it follows the natural progression of what God has instilled in nature.

At the same time, the fact that God designed nature means that He would know when the plagues would come about. His instructions to Moses and Aaron are given at the time when these would occur. Thus, just as will be seen with the parting of the Red Sea, there is still a miraculous element to the plague.

With the river having been turned to blood, which in turn would lead to all sorts of unsanitary conditions, and that being followed with a plague of frogs which would lead to even worse conditions, it is not unthinkable that such a plague would arise.

The question is, “Which is most likely.” Although there is strong evidence for it being mosquitoes, it is known that they breed in the water, not on the land. Therefore, although some very great scholars have chosen this, I would shy away from it. Aaron was told to strike the dust of the earth, not the waters.

Adam Clarke gives a good argument for it being ticks, but he is a lone voice on that and it doesn't seem like a natural outcropping of unsanitary conditions. Gnats do result from that though and so they seem like a good possibility. Unlike mosquitoes, their larvae are found on the land, particularly moist soils.

After they mature and begin to fly, they have been noted to appear as clouds of dust as they fly as well. Therefore, gnats are an acceptable possibility, but I do feel there is one

which is better. What seems most likely is that it is, in fact, lice – just as the NKJV renders it.

Lice are small, as if they themselves were dust. In fact, when you look at them on someone's head, they appear almost like sand or dandruff on the scalp, at least until you see them moving around. They are also extremely prolific. Adam Clarke notes that –

“In the space of twelve days a full-grown female lays one hundred eggs, from which, in the space of six days, about fifty males and as many females are produced. In eighteen days these young females are at their full growth, each of which may lay one hundred eggs, which will be all hatched in six days more. Thus, in the course of six weeks, the parent female may see 5,000 of its own descendants! So mightily does this scourge of indolence and filthiness increase!

Therefore, not only does their size appear as the dust, but their numbers can as well. A large plague of lice would appear as though the very dust itself had come alive. The 17th century Bible scholar Samuel Bochart gives several convincing reasons for the plague to have been just this, lice

“1. Because those in question sprang from the dust of the earth, and not from the waters. 2. Because they were both on men and cattle, which cannot be spoken of gnats. 3. Because their name comes from the radix בון kun, which signifies to make firm, fix, establish, which can never agree to gnats, flies, etc., which are ever changing their place, and are almost constantly on the wing. 4. Because כנה kinnah is the term by which the Talmudists express the louse, etc.” Samuel Bochart via Adam Clarke

His logic is certainly worthy of note and it will seem to be borne out by the wording of the coming two verses.

*Does God love me? This I want to know
Yes, He does, it is certain and true
But love is not all of who God is
There are things that He expects from me and you*

*There must be faith in Him and what He has done
In order for Him to reward us with His love
He asks us to trust in the work of Jesus, His only begotten Son
In order for us to walk with Him in the heavens above*

*If we refuse to receive this, and instead harden our heart
Should we expect Him to overlook such a thing?
His word teaches us such lessons, wisdom it does impart
And in following its words, happiness it will bring*

II. Lice on Man and Beast (verse 17)

¹⁷ And they did so.

In obedience to the word of the Lord, and without any seeming hesitation or worry that the plague may not actually occur, they are noted as having followed through with the command. And, unlike the previous two plagues, this one has occurred without any given warning.

It can therefore be considered a direct judgment on Pharaoh for having hardened his heart after the plague of frogs. As absolutely sure evidence that it was the Lord that directed the frogs, Pharaoh himself was given the honor of choosing the selected time of their demise.

When it occurred, exactly as spoken, he should have humbled himself, but instead, when there was relief, he took the other path and further hardened his heart. Thus, this plague is given without warning as a penalty for his arrogant, hard heart, and for his failure to submit to the will of the Lord.

As was seen in an earlier sermon, the first nine plagues are divided into three distinct groups. Advance warnings are given in the first two of the plagues of the specific group, but when the third plague comes, it is without previous notice.

That is the case with this plague, which is the third. It will also be the case with the sixth plague of boils and the ninth plague of darkness.

¹⁷ (con't) For Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod and struck the dust of the earth

Again it is noted that it is “the dust of the earth” which is struck. The specific details of this verse and the previous verse really seem to preclude the notion of mosquitoes.

Further, we were told that after the plague of frogs, the frogs of the river still remained

As this is so, there were plenty of natural predators to consume the mosquito larvae. Although mosquitoes are considered at times horrendous along the Nile, they are water born insects, not land-born. Aaron is said to have struck the dust and the result follows..

17 (con't) **and it became lice on man and beast**

As the Lord spoke, the plague occurs. Lice became so numerous that they literally covered both man and beast. Having read numerous articles on lice, it is evident that this is more than possible. There are various types of lice, and they are known to cover humans, clinging especially to any spot of hair on the body.

They also will cover household pets and outdoor animals such as horses, goats, and whatever other livestock they can cling to. They carry diseases and they can be a painful nuisance for any who are infected with them. What probably happened is that the millions of frogs ate whatever predators lice have and upset the life cycle, allowing them to bloom in great numbers

This plague would have been most unwelcome to the Egyptian people because they prided themselves on cleanliness. The writer Herodotus even notes that the “priests were wont to shave or scrape their whole bodies every third day, lest any lice should breed upon them.” (Benson)

Maybe they started this practice after the plagues we are seeing! To have these crawling all over them would be miserable. But it is not unlikely because of the immense lack of hygiene which would have resulted from the death of the frogs. Also, it is the wording of this verse which seems to indicate lice rather than gnats.

It says *ba'adam u-ba'behemah* – “**in** man and **in** beast.” The description is more readily identified with lice than it is with gnats. Lice cling and chewy chew. Gnats come and go and only stop to nibble. Regardless of which it truly is, they came in numbers beyond imagination, and they covered both people and animals.

17 (con't) **All the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.**

The term *kal aphar ha'aretz*, or “all the dust (of) the land” has to be taken as a form of hyperbole. This type of speech is more than common in the Bible. Both testaments, and in many varying contexts, use the term “all” to indicate a vast number, but not specifically meaning literally “all.”

When John the Baptist came, he baptized the people for repentance. In the Gospel of Mark, we are told this and it is noted in the hyperbolic form “all” –

“John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. ⁵ Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.”
Mark 1:4, 5

Twice, in one account, it says “all.” First, “all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem” and then “all” were baptized by him. If taken literally, then all of the people from those areas, meaning every one of them, were baptized. But in Luke 7, we read this –

“And when all the people heard *Him*, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John. ³⁰ But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.” Luke 7:29, 30

The Pharisees and the lawyers, though being inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem, were not baptized. Therefore, we always need to be careful to consider what words like “all” and “every” mean in their intended context. In the case of the ten plagues, it is not to be taken that literally all of the dust became lice. Rather, it is a superlative way of noting the immensity of the plague.

And there is a reason for this. The plague fell upon the earth which itself was considered a deity, even the father of the gods. They held sacred “the black fertile soil of the basin of the Nile, called Chemi, from which the ancient name of Egypt is supposed to be derived.” (Barnes)

Therefore, the Lord is exalting His name and power above this false god, Chemi, of the created order as well as Set, god of the desert, who I mentioned earlier. The Egyptians had come to worship the ground under their feet instead of raising their eyes to the Lord. Now that ground would appear to come alive with rage upon them for their spiritual harlotry.

Again, as I’ve said, I personally believe this plague is a natural outcropping of a logical sequence of events. It involves one plague leading to the next as nature unfolds in its normal way. And yet, there is still the note of the miraculous as well. Adam Clarke, based on the writing of an earlier scholar named Calmet, also discerned this process when he said –

“...it may be observed, that God never works a miracle when the end can be accomplished by merely natural means; and in the operations of Divine providence we always find that the greatest number of effects possible are accomplished by the fewest causes.” Adam Clarke

This is an important consideration because Pharaoh could perceive the natural and thus reject the supernatural. The same will be true in the plagues of the end times. Though they have been predicted in advance, they will probably come about by natural or man-made occurrences, radiation, chemicals, meteorites, and the like.

The miraculous is that God foresees the event and gives us advanced notice of it, just as He did with Cyrus, king of Persia. Cyrus could have said, “That is just four letters which could be speaking of anybody with a similar name!” Instead, he heard the word and he believed.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Many, like Pharaoh also hear, and yet they refuse to accept the truth presented to them. In the end, such will suffer both regret and torment.

*Once the dead frogs were gone and the stink faded away
We thought that things would again be pretty nice
But we sure thought wrong what we thought on that day
This is just disgusting! We're all covered in lice*

*We itch all over and our animals are all covered too
Our beds are inundated with them as well
I guess shaving man and beast is what we have to do
We'll all look a bit silly for a spell*

*But that sure is better than being covered with lice
It will be great when every one of them dies
We won't be itchy and life will be so nice
Ikh! The only thing worse than lice would be a plague of flies*

III. The Finger of God (verses 18 & 19)

¹⁸ Now the magicians so worked with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not.

The same expression is used here as was used in 7:22 – “and did so the magicians.” It doesn’t mean they actually were able to do so, but that they tried to do so. Saying something in a definite manner can mean “attempt to do this thing” as well as actually do it.

In Matthew 7:13, it says, “**Enter** by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.” But in Luke 13:24, the same words are rendered as, “**Strive to enter** through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.”

Jesus uses the definite term in Matthew to indicate that an attempt should be made. In the case of the Egyptians, they did so, “but they could not.” What it means is that they did what Aaron did, but they didn’t achieve the same results as he did.

This also more clearly explains the “all” of the previous verse, which said, “All the dust of the land became lice.” If all of it had, then they would have no dust to try the same miracle. It is beyond credibility to think that they couldn’t perform the sign because there was no dust for them to try. If that were the case, the Bible wouldn’t have noted them trying.

One scholar went so far as to say that they made dust first by taking moist earth, drying it out, and pounding it until it was dust. That is an immense amount of thought to insert into a verse which is plain on its surface. The superlative “all” is used even though it doesn’t literally mean “all.”

¹⁸ (con’t) **So there were lice on man and beast.**

There is more than not being able to reproduce the miracle. There is also the reality of the lice which came forth. They covered both man and beast and the magicians had no control over them. They could no more get rid of them than they could produce them. The plague had begun and it would run its course without their ability to bring it to an end.

¹⁹ **Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This *is* the finger of God.”**

With their inability to reproduce the miracle, they realized that they have been outmatched. In the past, they could reproduce the event that the Lord had originated, even if it was on a smaller level and even if they couldn’t end what He had begun. But now, they cannot even repeat the thing.

The tricks up their sleeves had come to an end. They may have assumed to this point that Moses and Aaron were just exceptionally good magicians, but now they see there is a difference in both magnitude and accomplishment. And so they proclaim to Pharaoh *etsbah elohim hi*.

Translations universally say “the finger of God,” but because these priests are polytheists, it doesn’t mean that they have yet accepted the premise of one God. Rather, they could be claiming Yehovah is merely “a” god, rather than “the” God. The word *elohim* allows either.

This God, Yehovah, who they have come to know is not one of their gods, but to them He may still be just another of many gods. All they know at this point is that what they have seen has come from a force greater than what they can conjure up on their own.

No matter what they were thinking though, the use of the word “finger” is notable for a few reasons. So far, 2500 years of human history have been recorded and yet this is the first time a finger is mentioned in the Bible. And even more, it is used in a metaphorical rather than a literal sense.

To us, the idea of a finger is that it accomplishes things, it points out things, and it indicates the source of power. The finger leads to the hand which is used for swearing. Swearing implies an oath and thus authority. It implies power, to both fend off and to hold.

The hand leads to the arm which is used to indicate strength – strength to destroy and strength to save. All of this, and much more is seen in the Bible concerning these body parts. The priests here acknowledge that the source of what has occurred is from another realm, represented by the finger.

This concept will be seen again in both testaments of the Bible, ascribing the sovereign and omnipotent power of God to the work of His fingers. In Psalm 8, we read this –

“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained.” Psalm 8:3

And in Luke 11:19, 20, we find these words of Jesus –

“And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁰ But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

When the Ten Commandments were written, it was with the finger of God. And when the leaders of Israel were about to stone a woman for adultery, it was the finger of the Lord writing in the sand which withheld their intent for her demise.

The power of the finger is not to be underestimated, especially the finger of God. But for some, there is a lack of understanding the full implication of the work which is wrought by that awesome appendage of Yehovah.

The finger of the Lord is attached to a strong hand, and that in turn is attached to an outstretched arm, ready to work even greater miracles in the midst of Egypt. Pharaoh just doesn't realize it yet. We see this as verse 19 continues...

19 (con't) But Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them,

The words of his magicians do not reflect the certainty of one God. There is no definite article in front of the word God and there is no other descriptor attached to Him other than that the deed was by *elohim's* finger.

Pharaoh has already seen two supposed demonstrations of the ability to replicate God's miracles. Just because one attempt has failed is not enough to convince him that He is superior in all ways. Rather, for all Pharaoh knows, He may be inferior in other ways.

For him, it has probably been an uncomfortable plague, but not one of sufficient magnitude to cause him the loss of an entire group of people under his authority. The Lord has successfully worked in the life of Pharaoh in a way which has caused him to harden his heart to the things of God. And we know this is so because of our final words of today...

19 (con't) just as the Lord had said.

ka'asher dibber Yehovah – “as spoke the Lord.” These words along with the ones just before them are an exact repeat of Exodus 7:13 –

“But Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, just as the Lord had said.”

The heart of Pharaoh has been passively hardened by the Lord, not actively. That is what is implied here. He has shown His glory in small steps rather than in one great act.

Because of this, Pharaoh has become more, not less, obstinate in his attitude toward Him.

It is true that the Lord may have prompted Pharaoh to hardening, but the fault and the sentence for the action remains solely with him. The magicians have acknowledged the finger of God in the matter, whatever that meant to them. And so, by rejecting what the plague has made plainly known, Pharaoh has now placed himself on the level of that same *elohim*.

This is what the antichrist will do in the future as he leads the world to inevitable destruction. And this is what many individuals willingly do every day of their lives. God has made himself known to His creatures through His creation. But we suppress that truth in our unrighteous minds.

Pharaoh only added to his guilt in this matter because he not only rejected natural evidence, but he has rejected three instances of supernatural evidence. And maybe there is someone like Pharaoh here today. We have been given not only the natural truths of God in the timing of the stars and in the intricacy of DNA, but we have been given the supernatural truths of God as well.

We have the evident truths of revealed prophecy. We have the Jew who, beyond all possibility, has survived and flourished, just as the Bible said they would. We have the evidence of God revealed in changed lives and restored families. And even more we have His sure word.

In every reasonable evidence for there being a God, there is only an unreasonable response by the unbeliever that there is no God. Let us not be like Pharaoh in this regard. Instead, let us soften our hearts and simply acknowledge His greatness.

Let us welcomingly receive the knowledge that He imparts to us. And let us bow our knee and receive His greatest Gift of all, the salvation of our souls through the work of His Son, our Lord Jesus. If you have never understood the need for Jesus in your life, please give me just another moment to explain it to you now...

Closing Verse: *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.”*

-Romans 1:18, 19

Next Week: Exodus 8:20-32 (The Plague of Flies) (24th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Not so Nice, It's a Plague of Lice

So the Lord said to Moses, as he had before spoken twice
"Say to Aaron 'Stretch out your rod
And strike the dust of the land, so that it may become lice
Throughout all the land of Egypt, wherever people trod

And they did so, for Aaron stretched out his hand
With his rod and struck the dust of the earth
And it became lice on man and beast throughout the land
Surely anguished cries replaced any sounds of mirth

All the dust of the land became lice
Throughout all the land of Egypt
Things had turned not so nice

Now the magicians so worked with their enchantments
To bring forth lice, but they could not
So there were lice on man and beast
In all of Egypt, yes, in every spot

Then the magicians said to Pharaoh
"This is the finger of God, not just a trick instead
But Pharaoh's heart grew hard as we know
And he did not heed them, just as the Lord had said

The plagues of Egypt were severe upon the land
But worse things are coming upon the earth
From the Bible, someday, we understand
That the world will be plunged into horrible dearth

There will be great plagues and famines too
War and death will be found everywhere

But to escape this terrifying time, I'll tell you what to do
Call on Jesus to save you, and He will, right then and there

His coming judgment is because of a world gone astray
We ignore Him, like a radio – tuning Him out
And things cannot forever go on this way
Instead of faith and trust, there is only uncaring and doubt

People, let us turn our hearts back to the Lord
Let us give Him the rightful glory that He is due
He has shown us what is proper in His word
And He even sent Jesus to save me and you

Let us hold fast to Him, cherishing Him all of our days
And let us never fail to give Him all of our praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 8:20-32

(THE PLAGUE OF THE SWARM)

My brother once told me, “Freedom is not congenital.” It has to be taught to each subsequent generation. And if we fail to do so, it will be lost. The American experiment is all but over because we have failed to wisely handle and transmit, untainted by corruption, the lessons of our own freedoms.

The same is true not only with freedom though, but with religion also. Nobody is born a Christian. The title does not transfer from parent to child automatically. Instead, we must tell the next generation of the works of the Lord again and again. The stories of the plagues upon Egypt and the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart are actually a part of this lesson.

In this self-willed, hardened individual, and the events which occur in relation to him, we can clearly see that the Lord calls, but the man must respond. The word is given, its rewards or consequences are provided, and a response is expected.

Unfortunately, this is not properly taught in many churches and people are left feeling secure in their eternal destiny when in fact, they haven’t followed through with the response part. This is seen, once again, in the life of Pharaoh to teach us this valuable lesson.

We are to tell the great works of the Lord to our children along with all that His work for us entails. Let us hide nothing in the process, but speak to them of both the rewards and consequences for failure to respond to the call.

Text Verse: *“We will not hide them from their children,
Telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord,
And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.” Psalm 78:4*

Even more specific than this text verse, Deuteronomy tells us to keep the Lord’s commands in our heart, to teach them diligently to our children, to talk of them when we sit in the house and when we walk by the way. We are to do so when we lie down, and when we again rise up.

They are to be so near to us that it is as if they are bound on our hands and placed between our eyes – metaphors meaning at all times and always to be remembered. He

asks us to write the words of the Lord even on the doorposts of our house and on our gates – again, signifying even as we come in and go out from our homes we should have the word with us.

Are you this prepared with the word of the Lord? Is it set firmly in your heart and retained in your memory? If not, make it so from this day and forevermore. Cherish the wondrous words that give joy, hope, and which even lead to eternal life. Cherish this wondrous superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. I Will Set Apart the Land of Goshen (verses 20-24)

²⁰ And the Lord said to Moses, “Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh as he comes out to the water.

This is an early morning announcement, just as was seen in Exodus 7:15. Moses is instructed to “rise early.” It is an indication that Pharaoh is going to the water at sunrise, probably to worship the god Ra, the sun-god. It could then be that he did this regularly, or at set times of the year, like a solstice.

Either way Moses was to be there ahead of Pharaoh and he is instructed *v'hityatsev liphne pharaoh* – “and stand in the face of Pharaoh.” The imagery is him standing between the water and Pharaoh, probably with the sun at his back, as if challenging the sun-god.

There, illumined by the splendor of the sun around him, Moses would make the same demand he has already made three times – “Let my people go.” And he again explains the reason for the demand...

²⁰ (con't) Then say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Let My people go, that they may serve Me.

With just a minor change in the Hebrew, dropping an accusative, it is an exact repeat of Exodus 8:1. The Lord's name, Yehovah, is declared; the people are identified as His people; and He desires their service of Him. It is the words of the God who has already proven Himself a competent adversary.

בְּיָמָיו אָמַר יְהוָה שְׁלַח אֶת־עַמִּי וְיַעֲבֹד
Exodus 8:1 with accusative

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה שְׁלַח עַמִּי וְיַעֲבֹדֵנִי
Exodus 8:20

However, to this point, Pharaoh has had his heart increasingly hardened as the plagues have become ever more troublesome. With the passing of each plague, it appears Pharaoh believes the Lord's arsenal is depleted and he continues his belligerent stance.

²¹ Or else, if you will not let My people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies

Another plague is announced, in advance, if Israel is not released for the service of Yehovah. The actual identity of this plague cannot be determined with certainty. In Hebrew it is *he'arov* – “the swarm.” The words “of flies” are inserted by the translators. Jewish commentators tie the word *arov* in with *erev* which means “mingled” or “mixed,” and they thus identify it as a variety of beasts, reptiles, insects, and the like.

However, the term *he'arov* is used in the singular throughout the plague and so it is one species, not many. The Greek translation of the Old Testament identifies it with the dog-fly. However, scholars have noted that the dog-fly isn't a pest in houses and it doesn't damage the land, both of which are noted in this plague.

However, there is a certain type of beetle which does fit the description by harming man, beast, and the land itself. If this is what is described here, it would certainly be another terrible plague, not only because of the great nuisance they made, but because the beetle was considered sacred in Egypt.

The beetle was tied to their god Kephri, the god of rebirth, the sunrise, and the scarab. Kephri was Ra's aspect in the morning, and thus it is a fitting possibility as Moses has come to encounter Pharaoh in the morning. Therefore, like the frog, the people would refrain from killing one of their little deities and thus they would be overrun all the more.

They apparently have been known to suddenly appear upon the Nile in immense numbers and according to Kalisch they “inflict very painful bites with their jaws; gnaw

and destroy clothes, household furniture, leather, and articles of every kind, and either consume or render unavailable all eatables” (Kalisch).

Another commentator notes that “They sometimes drive persons out of their houses; and they also devastate the fields” (Pulpit). It is a seemingly likely choice for the description of the swarm which was to come upon the land. Therefore, this is a challenge against the Egyptian gods Ra and Kephri.

21 (con’t) on you and your servants, on your people and into your houses.

In verse 21, four distinctions are made. It might seem curious that it is worded this way instead of saying that they would simply cover everyone and everything, but each distinction is calculated to give specific effect. He first notes “you” meaning Pharaoh.

It is Pharaoh who has denied Yehovah in the past, setting himself directly against Him. Therefore, he is specifically mentioned. He next notes “and your servants.” It is the noun form, *ebed*, of the verb *abad*, or “serve” which was used in the previous verse. If Israel may not serve the Lord, the servants of Pharaoh will suffer.

Next, he says “on your people.” It is the same word used in the previous verse concerning Israel – “My people.” If My people may not serve Me as their God, your people will suffer by one of your false-gods.”

And finally it notes “into your houses.” “If I, the great and awesome God, may not have the joy of open and personal fellowship with My people, you will suffer a private and most personal fellowship with your little biting gods.”

21 (con’t) The houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they stand.

“The infestation will permeate the dwelling places of the Egyptians, biting and nauseating the people, turning their hearts away from the little devils that you so worship.” The swarm will be everywhere they go, and will cover the ground on which they stand. In this may be a subtle play on the creation account.

The word for “ground” here is *adamah*, which is essentially the same as *adam*, or “man.” Adam was shaped and formed from the *adamah* and he is intricately tied to it. Rising from it, he walks upon it, he eats what comes from it, and he returns to it. The

very ground from which man came will be so covered with the swarm that he will loathe it.

But something new is specifically stated concerning this plague which has not been stated before...

²² And in that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there,

When the plague comes, in that day, the Lord promises to “set apart” the land. The term in Hebrew is *v’hiphleti*. It is the first of seven uses of the word *palah* in the Bible. It means to “set apart,” but the word also means “wonderfully” or “wondrously.”

Because of this, the Latin Vulgate says, “I will do a marvelous thing.” The Greek translation says, “I will render illustrious the land of Goshen.” It is the same word used by David when he said these most memorable of words –

“I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and wonderfully* made;
Marvelous are Your works,
And *that* my soul knows very well.” Psalm 139:14

The part of land which is so distinguished is Goshen, the residence of the Hebrews. This area called Goshen is mentioned only ten times in the Bible, eight in Genesis and two in Exodus. It means, “drawing near” or approaching.”

In the Genesis sermons, it was apparent that the name was given to show the coming tribulation period on earth pictured by the plagues on Egypt. Now that time has come and the distinction between the Hebrews and the Egyptians is seen explicitly for the first time.

Thus, it pictures the Jews of the tribulation period who will take Jesus’ advice in Matthew 24 to flee into the wilderness as the time of the Great Tribulation is to draw near. The patterns are beautifully represented in the use of individual words and names which appear at perfectly timed intervals.

It is more than likely that Israel was spared from one or more of the other plagues, but the introduction of the name “Goshen,” and its being separated from the plagues to come, highlights the future events of the end-time tribulation period perfectly.

It should be remembered now that at the end of the previous plague, the magicians said “This *is* the finger of God.” They used a general term for God which could mean “gods” or any “god.” They didn’t give specific credit to Yehovah, or to the “God of the Hebrews.”

Because of this, the special distinction is now being made to show that this is not just a god, but Israel’s God. And more poignantly, He will next make an even more specific claim...

22 (con’t) in order that you may know that I *am* the Lord in the midst of the land.

Yehovah isn’t just a god “over there” somewhere, looking for the service of an individual group of people. Nor does He sit upon one parcel of land. Rather, He is *Yehovah b’qerev ha’erets* – “Yehovah in the midst of the earth.” He is the Lord of the whole earth.

Just as a king is said to rule and reside from the midst of his kingdom in order to conveniently rule and guide his people, Yehovah rules in the midst of the earth and in the midst of the people of the earth. Thus He is the true and only sovereign.

23 I will make a difference between My people and your people.

Here comes another special note to Pharaoh, *v’shamti pedut*. The word translated here as “difference” is used only four times in the Bible and it means, more properly to “redeem.” The Lord is making a distinction by redeeming. His people will be redeemed from the plague which will fall on all others.

The same word is used in Isaiah 50 to show that He is fully capable of speaking His word and then fulfilling it –

“Why, when I came, *was there* no man?
Why, when I called, *was there* none to answer?
Is My hand shortened at all that it cannot **redeem**?
Or have I no power to deliver?
Indeed with My rebuke I dry up the sea,
I make the rivers a wilderness;
Their fish stink because *there is* no water,
And die of thirst.

³ I clothe the heavens with blackness,
And I make sackcloth their covering.” Isaiah 50:2, 3

²³ (con’t) **Tomorrow this sign shall be.”””**

In order to fully demonstrate that this is the work of the Lord, not only has it been shown in advance that Israel would be exempted from the plague to come, but that it would come at a specific time. There will be little time to prepare as it will be on the morrow. The timing is given and it is called a “sign.”

The word for sign is *owth*. It is generally used to indicate a sign of something else – one thing pointing to another. Thus, this “sign” is given to show both the omniscience and the omnipotence of the Lord. He sits in the midst of the earth and controls what occurs there, but He also sits in the midst of time and controls *when* things will occur. Thus, the sign is given to demonstrate this.

²⁴ **And the Lord did so. Thick swarms of flies came into the house of Pharaoh, into his servants’ houses, and into all the land of Egypt. The land was corrupted because of the swarms of flies.**

No record of the staff being stretched out like the commencement of the other plagues is mentioned. Rather, the word was spoken and the plague began because of it. Therefore, the magicians couldn’t claim that this was merely a magician’s trick.

Rather, by the mere word of an unseen power, the land would come alive with the swarm. And the swarm performed exactly as the word spoke. It covered everything, from the houses of Pharaoh and his servants, even to all of Egypt.

And it says that the land was “corrupted” because of the swarm. This word for “corrupted” more exactly means “destroyed.” The swarm, be it beetle, fly, or some other pest, devoured up everything in its path and brought calamity wherever it went.

The increasing severity of the plagues is seen most notably here. The first three plagues were certainly annoying, but they didn’t actually cause damage or injury to the people or to the land. But this one has caused harm to both. Step by step, the Lord is bringing His judgment upon Egypt and its gods while at the same time progressively hardening the already obstinate heart of Pharaoh.

*Another plague is coming unless you pay heed
Our request is made and an answer is expected
The plague will come soon and it will come with speed
Is there a note of defiance in your voice that I have detected?*

*Pharaoh, you are continuing to bring this evil upon yourself
By not heeding the Lord who makes this request of you
Take your pride, fold it up, and put it on the shelf
Pharaoh, this is what I recommend you do*

*Now the plague which you assumed wouldn't come is here
And it is frightful for you, *tee hee*. What? No, I did chuckle!
This is going to get worse for you I fear
Because of your raised fist; I can see the hair on every knuckle*

II. Intercede for Me (verses 25-28)

²⁵ Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, “Go, sacrifice to your God in the land.”

This is the second time that Pharaoh has now conceded to the judgments he has faced. The first was during the plague of frogs when he said, “Entreat the Lord that He may take away the frogs from me and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the Lord.” (8:8)

After that, when he saw there was relief, he hardened his heart and changed his mind. Now he again tells them that they may go, but he only gives in to what they requested this time, not what they had originally asked for. The original request was that they could go into the wilderness of a three-day journey.

Overlooking that, Pharaoh grants them to “sacrifice to your God in the land.” As an indication of the already hard heart of Pharaoh, we can read those words once again – “sacrifice to your God.” He has granted that Yehovah is “a” god, but not “the” God. To him, He is only “Israel’s” God. Further, rather than identifying Him by name, he only identifies him by his “otherness.”

²⁶ And Moses said, “It is not right to do so, for we would be sacrificing the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God.

This explains what was previously left unexplained. In Chapter 5, a three-day journey into the wilderness was requested, but the explanation for this wasn't given. Now it is being relayed to Pharaoh. The request wasn't unfounded, but he simply didn't care about the reason at the time and so he didn't bother asking why.

Now though, the explanation is rendered, "for we would be sacrificing the abomination of the Egyptians." It is improbable that the Israelites had not sacrificed to the Lord in small groups, like at weddings or funerals. Further, as shepherds, they would have been meat eaters.

However, this wouldn't have been done in an open way, just as it isn't done by them today. Rather, they would have prepared the animals in markets or shops. But what is being requested is on a wholly different level. An entire group of people would be offering public, open sacrifices to their God.

This would be right "in the face" of the Egyptians and a true affront to them. Today, with open media, the sacrifices of the Jews and other groups are coming under greater scrutiny once again. The world, especially the radical left, vegans, and animal-rights activists, and other nutjobs are working to get animal sacrifices stopped altogether.

These Hebrews were looking to offer animals considered sacred to the Egyptians in a public display of worship. It would in essence be equivalent to killing Egypt's god for the pleasure of Israel's God. It would be an all-out affront on the Egyptian society.

^{26 (con't)} If we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, then will they not stone us?

If they were to openly and publicly sacrifice a cow, which represented their god Isis, it would be beyond the pale. These and other animals were deified by the Egyptians and only catastrophe could result. Ellicott notes that later in Egyptian history, "On one occasion a Roman ambassador, who had accidentally killed a cat, was torn to pieces by the populace."

The request by the Lord was intended to honor Him while maintaining peace within the greater Egyptian society. The risk of conflict was not without reasonable basis. And Moses indicates what the result would be in the words "will they not stone us?"

It is the very first mention of stoning in the Bible or in any recorded history. Whether it was an accepted form of punishment in Egypt or elsewhere at this time isn't known, but it is an easy and obvious way to vent one's anger.

And it is still a common outrage levied against the people of Israel 3500 years later. The muslims living in the land of Israel frequently stone the Jews, their vehicles, their trains, and their homes and offices. And the first mention of this practice is right here in Exodus 8:26.

²⁷ We will go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God

Now with the explanation fully revealed for the original request, it is repeated as a statement of certainty for Pharaoh. What he ignored in the past is now made clear to him and it is spoken with implicit intent behind the words. "Now you know; now we will."

²⁷ (con't) **as He will command us."**

This indicates to Pharaoh that they had not been informed exactly what was entailed in the sacrifice and feast to be held. Rather, they had been instructed and they were simply attempting to be obedient to the calling.

It more poignantly shows the trouble they could be in with the Egyptians, because whatever mode and means of worship was requested wasn't known, and so it could be more than just sacrificing animals that could upset them. This also is another anticipatory statement which will be later explained in Exodus –

"Our livestock also shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind. For we must take some of them to serve the Lord our God, and even we do not know with what we must serve the Lord until we arrive there." Exodus 10:26

Like before, if Pharaoh asked now what they meant, he would understand the whole picture, but he doesn't. It shows a continued arrogance and simplicity of mind that will persist in leading him to more hardening of the heart and more trouble to come.

²⁸ So Pharaoh said, "I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away.

Pharaoh, again grants release, even with the condition of going into the wilderness, but it is to be inferred that he means still within the realm of Egyptian rule. Instead of agreeing to a three-day journey, he agrees with the unspecified "not...very far away."

He has now, for the first time, shown what his true opposition to the request is. If they go, they may never come back. They could easily continue on towards Canaan and

refuse to return. Rather than refuse the vague words of Pharaoh, Moses remains quiet. This is probably because he already knows the outcome of the matter.

Pharaoh will get relief and he will again harden his heart. Moses has already been made aware that the firstborn son is to be threatened in exchange for the release of Israel, and that has not yet occurred. Instead, Pharaoh has niggled over minutiae and Moses has remained silent. As the Geneva Bible evaluates this verse –

“So the wicked instruct God’s messengers how far they may go.” Geneva

It is like the increasing attacks of the government upon Christian pastors – “You can say this, but no more.” First, they silence them on politics in exchange for their obedience to the dollar. Next they silence them on moral issues in exchange for their freedom.

Soon, they will demand silence on the principle tenets of their faith in exchange for their lives. Each step brings the people of God closer to a final confrontation.

28 (con’t) **Intercede for me.”**

In verse 8, during the height of the plague of frogs, Pharaoh said, “Entreat the Lord that He may take away the frogs from me and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the Lord.”

Now, an abbreviated form of that long plea is given – *hatiru baadi*, “pray for me.” All of the rest of the words can be inserted by us. “Oh man, this swam is horrifying. I can’t stand it anymore and I will let you go sacrifice to the Lord. Let’s just get this plague ended. Intercede with the Lord for me.”

*This plague is horrifying, yes it is true
Please make it end and I will do as you say
I will let Israel go sacrifice in the land, this I will do
Just get rid of this swarm, as to you I now pray*

*It shall be done if a three day’s journey is granted
The plague will end and all will again be good
What was destroyed can again be planted
Now that the agreement is made and things are understood*

*But Pharaoh, don't make the same mistake you made before
Don't harden your heart and from the Lord turn away
Surely worse things will come as He plagues you some more
If you are unwilling to fulfill the words that you did say*

III. But Pharaoh Hardened His Heart (verses 29-32)

²⁹ Then Moses said, "Indeed I am going out from you, and I will entreat the Lord, that the swarms of flies may depart tomorrow from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people."

In agreement to the conditions, while leaving the vague words of Pharaoh for the Israelites to "not go very far away" left alone, He promises that he will, in fact, entreat the Lord for the plague to end. This time, rather than asking Pharaoh when the plague should end, he simply follows with the same time-frame as the ending of the plague of frogs, which is "tomorrow."

The relief would come, it would be soon, and it would be complete. The swarm would depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. However, the granting is conditioned upon allowing the worshipping of Yehovah through sacrifice by His servants and by His people.

The contrast is evident, though unstated at this time. The distinction is made between the people of God and the people who are not of God. So it will be at the rapture of the church, and so it will be in the end times, during the tribulation. There are spiritual separations which exist and the boundaries between them are known to, and closely watched by the Lord.

²⁹ (con't) But let Pharaoh not deal deceitfully anymore in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord."

In the closing words of the conversation, Moses rebukes Pharaoh for his conduct which was noted in verses 8-15. Pharaoh agreed to let Israel go, but in his agreement, he dealt deceitfully. The word used here is *hathal* and it means properly, "to mock."

His change of heart is equated with mockingly deceiving the Lord, and it is an evident trait in anyone who fears the true God only as long as His effects are felt in a negative way. There is no true love or caring for Him or His people.

Rather, there is a purposeful mocking attitude deep in the heart which comes forth like blooming flowers in the spring. They are evident, they are showy, and they fade just as quickly at the next time of deprivation or hardship arises.

In order to keep him from such an attitude, Moses makes the effort to remind him of his past transgression in hopes of it not turning into another one. As Ellicott notes –

“God’s servants must rebuke even kings when they openly break the moral law.” Ellicott

How few are willing to do this, but how important it is, especially in this world where the spirit of Pharaoh is growing almost exponentially as the days pass!

³⁰ So Moses went out from Pharaoh and entreated the Lord.

In accord with the request of Pharaoh, and even before the people have assembled to depart for their sacrifice in the wilderness Moses upholds his part of the bargain. This takes us right back to verses 12 & 13 where the same basic thing happened.

Although we could throw the old adage at Moses, “Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me,” he is willing to follow the preset plan of the Lord so that His signs and wonders might be multiplied. The Lord’s representative thus petitions Him on behalf of Pharaoh.

³¹ And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; He removed the swarms of *flies* from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. Not one remained.

Again as before, the Lord heard Moses and defended both the integrity of His own name, and that of Moses before Pharaoh. For a second time, the petition comes less for mercy on Pharaoh than it is made for the glory of the Lord to be revealed and the honor of the Lord to be maintained.

The removal of the plague is as remarkable as the initiation of it. The plague was everywhere, it was unstoppable by any known means, and yet it was ended in all places, completely, and at a specified time. Another victory over more false gods of Egypt!

Again as before, the surpassing greatness of the Lord is seen in the ending of the terrible plague upon Pharaoh and in the land of Pharaoh. The swarms departed exactly as promised. When the word is spoken, the word never fails. But the same is not true with the word of man.

It is a rare trait that a man can be known for the truth of the words he utters. Normally, something more certain than the breath out of one's mouth is required to ensure that the words will be followed up with deeds. And the reason is that all the way through human history, men have made promises and those promises have been broken.

From the desperate gambler looking to pay off his debts and never gamble again, to the great Pharaoh in Egypt who begged for the removal of the plagues, promising relief to his enslaved Hebrews, the words prove false and the actions of the heart are recorded in God's scroll of memory for future judgment...

³² But Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also; neither would he let the people go.

The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is so important that it has been mentioned continuously and meticulously by the Lord. It isn't an arbitrary side issue, but it is at the very core of biblical doctrine. We are being taught about the nature of God in relation to man, and the nature of man in the presence of God.

And yet, we as Christians will follow misguided presuppositions about what is occurring rather than pay heed to what the Lord is trying to tell us. The Lord is directing us with His actions towards us, but He is also leaving the final decision of how we relate to Him, and how we perceive Him, completely up to us.

Because of this, when we stand before Him, we will only have ourselves to blame in how we responded to Him and how we instructed others about His nature. The goodness of God cannot be on trial here because Pharaoh was given advanced warning of what would come about.

He was given time to reflect on that bad decision, and then he was granted the grace of being relieved of what he had brought upon himself. The Lord could have allowed the plague to go on forever, made the plague worse, or even added in another plague on top of this one. Instead, He ended it.

And yet, once again, the Bible tells us that "Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also." It was a volitional act of his free will. And it is recorded for us to read and to assimilate into our own minds. He has given us His word, He has told us what He expects, and He has shown the consequences of our disobedient hearts.

We can't blame God when we get syphilis or AIDS. He has told us how to conduct our lives from a moral standpoint. We can't blame God when a loved one dies, when He has

already shown us that all are destined to die and that He alone is the Decider of when that will occur.

We cannot say five minutes after the rapture, "It's not fair! I wasn't ready!" And we cannot stand before him at the judgment and say, the preacher told me that I was predestined to salvation and so I assumed that was true. Instead, we have to call to Him for healing, and we have to actively participate in His plan of salvation.

The span of our lives is unknown except to the One who gave us that life. When the final moment comes for you, will He say, "This one hardened his heart and would not yield to my call." Or will He be pleased with how you responded to His goodness in creation, in family, in blessings, and in the Gift of His Son, Jesus?

It is up to you. Choose wisely, and be sure to choose today. The Bible promises us no tomorrows. Let me tell you what you need to know so that you will stand approved when He comes for you...

Closing Verse: *"Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!" Psalm 46:10*

Next Week: Exodus 9:1-12 (The Plagues of Livestock and Boils)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Swarming Plague

And the Lord said to Moses
"Rise early in the morning
And stand before Pharaoh as he comes out to the water
There you shall give him my warning

Then say to him, 'Thus says the Lord plainly
"Let My people go, that they may serve Me

Or else, if you will not let My people go, behold
I will send swarms of flies on you

And your servants, on your people as you are told
And into your houses the swam will go too

The houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies
And also the ground on which they stand; Pay heed! Be wise!

And in that day I will set apart
The land of Goshen, in which My people dwell
That no swarms of flies shall be there
Pay attention to the words which I do now tell

In order that you may know and understand
That I am the Lord in the midst of the land

I will make a difference between
My people and your people
Tomorrow this sign shall be seen

And the Lord did so
Thick swarms of flies came into the house of Pharaoh
Into his servants' houses, they did go
And into all the land of Egypt, what an amazing show!

The land was corrupted because of the swarms of flies
The immensity of what was coming Pharaoh didn't realize

Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, we understand
And said, "Go, sacrifice to your God in the land."

And Moses said, "It is not right to do so
For we would be sacrificing the abomination
Of the Egyptians to the Lord our God, as you know
We cannot sacrifice inside Egypt the nation

If we sacrifice the abomination
Of the Egyptians before their eyes
Then will they not stone us?
Even until every Hebrew dies

We will go three days' journey, thus
Into the wilderness and sacrifice

To the Lord our God as He will command us
The removal of the plague demands this price

So Pharaoh said, "I will let you go
That you may sacrifice to the Lord your God
In the wilderness, even so
Only you shall not go very far away as you trod

Intercede for me
This plague is horrifying as you can see

Then Moses said, "Indeed I am going out from you, here I go!
And I will entreat the Lord
That the swarms of flies may depart tomorrow from Pharaoh
From his servants, and from his people, according to the word

But let Pharaoh not deal deceitfully anymore, making it twice
In not letting the people go, and to the Lord make sacrifice

So Moses went out from Pharaoh and entreated the Lord
And the Lord did according to Moses' spoken word
He removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh
From his servants, and from his people, not one remained
But Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also
Neither would he let the people go, but instead them he detained

A hard heart inside a man is a fearful thing
It will lead him down a path towards great loss
In the end only immense sorrow it will bring
Especially when that heart is hard towards Jesus' cross

God gives us every warning in advance to beware
He provides guidance for the path, as a lamp so bright
If we heed His word, reading it daily, we will find there
Life and healing and the most radiant light

It is given as a guide and a rule for our life
To lead us across the Jordan to the heavenly shore
Read it now, accept its words and end all your strife
Come to Jesus and be reconciled to God forevermore

He is reaching out nail-scarred hands, offering peace
Receive the gift, bow the knee, and let the enmity cease

Together with the saints of God we shall our mighty Lord praise
There in His majestic presence for innumerable, eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 9:1-12

(THE PLAGUES OF LIVESTOCK AND BOILS)

Today we will zip right through two more plagues upon Pharaoh and the land of Egypt... well maybe not zip. But be it a zip or something a bit less than that, one of the plagues we'll look at is a plague upon the livestock of Egypt... all of the livestock. And for me, it's a good time to consider the position of animals in relation to man.

The Lord created the animals and, just like man, He is sovereign over them. But there are times when we don't act as if we believe it any more than we act as if we believe God has a right to our own souls. When someone close to us dies, we may find ourselves questioning God's goodness, struggling with our faith, and unable to continue to praise Him.

But there is a fact that we need to consider – we are all going to die and we have no control over that. It is inevitable. And the same is true with animals, including our precious pets. It hurts to lose a pet and unfortunately, we may allow ourselves to get caught up in the same confused thinking about a pet as we do with a human.

However, if we simply consider the world around us, we can hopefully evaluate these things differently. How many of us like to have a burger or a steak? How about a nice chicken parmesan? Can we honestly say that the Lord loves our favorite pet more or less than one of these animals?

But suppose you don't eat meat? Tigers do. Do we kill the tigers to spare the deer? The world around us is filled with life and all of that life belongs to the Lord. Some animals eat others, some bugs need to be swatted, and sometimes entire herds of animals will die in a plague.

We don't question God's goodness in these instances. We accept that the world around us works in a certain way. As we read today's account, think of the innumerable cute little goats that died. Think of the donkeys and horses that were struck by the plague.

God created and God is sovereign over His creation. Remember this when your favorite pet dies. Instead of being angry at God for taking the pet that was inevitably going to die, remember to thank God for the pet that He allowed into your life for a special season and for the joy of your heart.

Keep all things in perspective and know that God is good and He is good all the time.

Text Verse: *“How the animals groan!
The herds of cattle are restless,
Because they have no pasture;
Even the flocks of sheep suffer punishment.” Joel 1:18*

Ecclesiastes tells us that there is a season for everything under heaven, including a time to die. Until all things are made new, this is what we can expect to continue with regularity and often with great sorrow for any one of us. In our sorrow, let us remember that God remains good, despite the painful tear in our hearts.

For those who belong to the Lord, let’s just keep our eyes on the Prize; let us fix them on Jesus. Yes, weeping may come for a night, but joy comes in the morning. As we see the destruction upon innumerable animals, and then the terrible plague of boils upon man and beast, let us remember that such things are according to a much greater plan than we could ever conceive or imagine.

This great plan centers on the work of the Lord for His people, the flock of His pasture. This is a truth which is found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Let My People Go (verses 1-5)

¹Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh

Towards the end of the previous chapter, the plague of flies ended because of a promise by Pharaoh to let the people go sacrifice to the Lord in the wilderness. The last words of the chapter revealed a broken promise though. Here are those concluding words of chapter 8 –

“So Moses went out from Pharaoh and entreated the Lord. ³¹ And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; He removed the swarms *of flies* from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. Not one remained. ³² But Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also; neither would he let the people go.” Exodus 8:30-32

It is with this thought in mind, that we begin chapter 9 with the Lord once again instructing Moses to go in and speak to Pharaoh...

¹ (con't) **and tell him, 'Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews:**

koh amar Yehovah – “Thus says Yehovah.” He once again declares His name. “I am the Existent One, full of all power. I control my creation and I see the future before it comes to pass. And I also see the heart of man.”

However, unlike the beginning of chapter 8, an additional distinction is made. Not only is He Yehovah, but He is *elohe ha'ivrim* – “God of the Hebrews.” This is the first time that this term has been spoken directly to Pharaoh. The term “Hebrews” was known to the Egyptians, but it was a name, like that of a clan. The meaning was disconnected from its use.

Now though, the name “Hebrew” is being reconnected to the use of the name. We may call someone “Tom Carpenter” and think of that as his name – “Oh, there goes Tom Carpenter.” However, a “carpenter” *is* something. If we reattach the *use* of the word to the name of the person, we can deduce that at some point in his history, one of his forefathers was probably a carpenter.

If we pay attention to names, we can do this with many people we know. There is Alex Goldsmith; his father worked in gold. There is Andy Miller; his father worked with grains. There goes Mark Holiday; his family never did a thing. In the case of the title “Lord, God of the Hebrews,” the use is being reconnected to the name.

In essence, “I, Yehovah, am *'elohe ha'ivrim.*” The term “Hebrew” means “to cross over.” In His words, we can see what that means. “I am the Defender and Protector of those who have crossed over to Me. They are my people and I have made a distinction between them and you by placing My name upon them and by separating them for Myself.”

This is now the 17th time that the term “Hebrew” is mentioned in Scripture and the 11th in Exodus. In all, it will be used about 50 times in the Bible, and many of those will be speaking of the language and not necessarily the people. Each time the word is used, it has significance.

Its introduction here is to further distinguish the Lord's people from all others. As those who have crossed over to be His servants have not yet been set free, the demand of Exodus which has become so common is made once again...

¹ (con't) **“Let My people go, that they may serve Me.**

The Hebrew people are the Lord's people, not Pharaoh's people. And to the Lord, their service is demanded. They have been in bondage to Pharaoh and He is expecting this to change. It isn't coincidence that the book of Hebrews follows directly after Paul's epistles.

This pictures the transition from the church age back to a focus on the Hebrew people. Those who have long been in bondage to the power of sin and the devil are being asked to return to the Lord and understand that He had always been there for them.

The demand upon the world of the antichrist will be parallel to the demand upon Pharaoh in Exodus. If he continues to afflict them, consequences will be suffered, just as they are upon Egypt now. We see this as we continue...

² **For if you refuse to let *them* go, and still hold them,**

These words are only a portion of a thought, and yet they are offset as a single verse. It is as if they are being highlighted with a pause off of the lips of the Lord for Pharaoh's strained and expectant ears.

They are spoken as a “more definite assumption, in view of past experience, that Pharaoh may defiantly harden himself.” (Lange) In other words, they are showing that Pharaoh was heaping up guilt by his continued obstinate attitude against the word of the Lord.

The words “if” and “still” show, with all of the exactitude that the Bible can give, that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart has, and continues to be, the fault of Pharaoh alone. Yehovah has, and will continue to emphatically declare his will, and yet Pharaoh has willfully chosen to reject that will by exercising his own.

Matthew Henry gives a clear and concise evaluation of this attitude of Pharaoh and expands it to all people who strive against the word of the Lord –

“Sinners have none to blame but themselves, for that pride and ungodliness which abuse the bounty and patience of God. For, however the Lord hardens the hearts of men, it is always as a punishment of former sins.” Matthew Henry

Pharaoh has been sinful and his sins continue. And with his sin comes the judgment of the Lord...

³ behold, the hand of the Lord will be on your cattle in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the oxen, and on the sheep—a very severe pestilence.

The fifth plague is announced. It will be against the beasts of the field, some of which were deified by the Egyptians. If they were gods, they can now demonstrate their godness by resisting Yehovah. But if Yehovah is the One, true God, then they will suffer by His hand.

This then is an attack on the false gods of Hathor, the goddess with a cow head, and Apis, the bull god – symbol of fertility. These false gods will be proven exactly that, false. The “hand of the Lord” was promised in Exodus 6:1. There it said –

“Then the LORD said to Moses, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country.” Exodus 6:1 (NIV)

The hand represents strength, power, and ability to perform. He formed these animals on the sixth day of creation and gave man dominion over them. However, He is sovereign over all things, even the life of all animals. This is reflected in the 50th Psalm –

“For every beast of the forest *is* Mine,
And the cattle on a thousand hills.
¹¹ I know all the birds of the mountains,
And the wild beasts of the field *are* Mine.” Psalm 50:10, 11

Now, working out His sovereign will, he calls down the sentence upon Pharaoh and his kingdom. The pestilence, or *deber* in Hebrew, will come upon a notable list of valuable property. This word, *deber*, is usually used when speaking of pestilence among people, but it also covers animals as we see here in Exodus.

And it isn't just a normal pestilence that occurred from time to time as the waters of the Nile rose and fell, or as the seasons changed bringing in pests carrying disease. Instead, the Lord says that it will be *kaved*, or literally “heavy” upon the land.

The imagery is that of the hand of the Lord coming down in a crushing blow against the animals which comprised much wealth in Egypt. It will be upon the “cattle in the field,” a term used to describe any of the animals of the flock or the herd, some of which will be named specifically after this.

It will also come upon “the horses.” Horses would have been used for the chariots of Egypt and possibly as beasts of burden in the field as well. Their main use at this time would have been for warfare. Having a chariot implies having horses for the chariot.

And chariots were used both for royal transport and for military use. They were first mentioned in Scripture all the way back at the time of Joseph, over 200 years earlier, and so they would probably have been very abundant in the land.

The plague would also be on the donkeys. Again, donkeys would have been very common in Egypt. They were first mentioned in Genesis 12 at the time when Abraham was in Egypt, noting that Abraham had many as a part of his great wealth.

The plague would also be on the camels. In the same verse that donkeys were first mentioned, Genesis 12:16, camels were first noted in Scripture as well. According to the liberal scholars at Cambridge –

“Camels were not used, or bred, in ancient Egypt, nor do they appear ‘in any inscription or painting before the Greek period.’” (Erman, p. 493; cf. W. Max Müller, EB. i. 634; Sayce, EHH. 169). Cambridge

Because of this, they see the inclusion of camels as an anachronism, unless it is a reference to camels owned by traders. However, the Bible itself is a witness to history, and therefore this statement is no anachronism.

If Abraham had camels and other wealth when he was in Egypt, then it implies that there were camels in Egypt at that time. A little thought clarifies what liberal scholars can’t seem to grasp. Egypt was an integral part of the trade route from the Middle East to Africa.

Just because they didn’t deify camels doesn’t mean that there weren’t jillions of them hanging around the pyramids waiting for tourists to hop on and take a ride. In addition to these animals, oxen and sheep are also noted. The standard and common animals of the herd and flock were to be affected by this heavy pestilence.

⁴ And the Lord will make a difference between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt.

In the previous chapter during the fourth plague, the Lord said –

“And in that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms *of flies* shall be there, in order that you may know that I *am* the Lord in the midst of the land.” Exodus 8:22

The Land of Goshen was set apart from the rest of Pharaoh’s domain, but it was only noted that it was where Israel dwelt. Nothing was said, one way or the other, concerning any Egyptians who also dwelt there, which later we will see that they did.

However, this plague adds in an entirely new dimension. Not only will the Lord make a distinction between the land where Israel dwelt and the rest of Egypt, but He will now make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and of Egypt, much of which would have been collocated.

The very livestock of one group would die next to the livestock of another group. It would be a marvelous display of the Lord’s grace upon Israel while at the same time judging Egypt. It is somewhat of a precursor to the final plague on the firstborn in this respect. The word for “and make a difference” in Hebrew is *v’hiphlah*.

It is the second of seven uses of the word *palah*, in the Bible. It means to “set apart,” but the word also means “wonderfully” or “wondrously.” Surely we can see the wondrous work of the Lord in his ability to judge even between the livestock of one group and another.

⁴ (con’t) **So nothing shall die of all *that* belongs to the children of Israel.””**

The Hebrew is emphatic and could be more literally rendered, “There shall not die of all that is the children’s of Israel a thing.” (Pulpit) The Lord gives life and the Lord controls death. It is a note of His absolute sovereignty over all things.

⁵ **Then the Lord appointed a set time, saying, “Tomorrow the Lord will do this thing in the land.”**

Like the previous plague, it is announced by the Lord and it will come about. There will be no stretching forth of Aaron’s rod, or any other visible display to initiate the action. Rather, the word alone has spoken and it will come about by that same word.

There are a few reasons why this plague may have been announced in advance as it was. One is to show the Lord’s sovereignty over the plague and the timing of it. Plagues

of this type surely came from time to time, but this one is warned of in advance. The second is to show His control, in advance, over which animals would be affected by it.

And the third would be as a point of grace. In verse three, it said that all the cattle in the field would die. If they were brought in from the field, it is possible some could be saved, although this wasn't stated either way.

*Every beast of the forest is Mine
And the cattle on a thousand hills also belong to Me
I know all the birds of the mountains
And the wild beasts of the field I watch over tenderly*

*The life of all the creatures is in My hand
I created them and direct their life's span
But somehow man has failed to understand
They are not gods, but a portion of My earthly plan*

*And as I wish I give life, and I take it away
Directing all things so that man will hopefully see
That as God to Me alone they should exalt and obey
And with their hearts they should worship only Me*

II. The Heart of Pharaoh (verses 6, 7)

⁶So the Lord did this thing on the next day, and all the livestock of Egypt died; but of the livestock of the children of Israel, not one died.

It is certain here, as it is throughout Scripture, that context needs to be considered when making absolute claims concerning words such as "all" and "every." In this verse, it says that "all the livestock of Egypt died." However, in the coming plagues, it is noted that they will come upon the animals of the Egyptians.

Therefore, this verse now does not mean all in the absolute sense, but in the general use of the word which is found throughout Scripture. The great number is being considered in opposition to the exclusive description given for the animals of the Israelites, which was "not one." A literal translation from the Hebrew is *lo met ekhad* – "not died one."

This contradistinction between the two is all the more poignant when considering its ramifications concerning the superstitions of the Egyptians. Whether they actually deified the animals, or whether they deified what the animals represented, the fact that their animals died and the Israelite's didn't shows that Yehovah was sovereign over all.

What would seem the cruelest part of this wasn't the loss of money and accumulated wealth, but the knowledge that He was capable of this act at will. Thus, He was capable of it in the past, but took no action against their misguided beliefs.

Further, He was also capable of accomplishing the same feat at any time in the future if He so chose. Their livelihood and the animal's lives were subject to His sovereign will. Thus as Job says –

“Who among all these does not know
That the hand of the Lord has done this,
¹⁰ In whose hand *is* the life of every living thing.” Job 12:9, 10

⁷ Then Pharaoh sent, and indeed, not even one of the livestock of the Israelites was dead.

It is obvious from this verse that Pharaoh saw the immense destruction of life around him and thought that it was impossible that none of Israel's animals would have shared in the same fate.

In comparable terms for us, it would be like a nuclear bomb going off in a city full of Christians and Muslims while all of the Muslims died, but none of the Christians did. How could it be possible? But in fact, not even one of their animals died. However, the perverse nature of Pharaoh is revealed once again in this remarkable plague as we see in the finishing of verse seven...

⁷ (con't) But the heart of Pharaoh became hard, and he did not let the people go.

Whatever he was thinking, it didn't include releasing captive Israel. Perhaps he figured they were better at tending to their flocks than the Egyptians. Maybe he figured he would simply take the animals of Israel for himself.

Whatever he thought, he showed that he cared nothing for the animals he had lost, and neither did he care for his subjects who fared very poorly under the heavy hand of the

Lord. Instead, it says that “the heart of Pharaoh became hard.” But the Hebrew reads differently. It says his heart became *kavad* – heavy.

It is a verb comparable to the adjective used to describe the hand of the Lord in verse 3 – *kaved*. Despite the heavy hand of the Lord, the heart of Pharaoh only increased in heaviness. The contrast is given to show us, once again, the utterly obstinate nature of the man and how these judgments came upon him because of his own willful disregard of the Lord.

*A hard heart is terrible thing to keep inside
It can only lead down a path of woe and sorrow
With every moment and with each step and stride
It will lead to a more painful tomorrow*

*If a plague on the livestock won't change the heart of Pharaoh
I will bring yet another plague upon the land
One that will lead him to more calamity and woe
This will continue until he learns to understand*

*Now I will afflict him in a most painful way
Boils will well up on him and all of Egypt the land
The magicians will have had their final say
Another plague is ahead, coming from My heavy hand*

III. The Plague of Boils (verses 8-12)

⁸So the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Take for yourselves handfuls of ashes

Because no positive change in heart arose from the previous plague, a sixth plague is now directed by the Lord. It is to be an object lesson for Pharaoh to consider. Like the third plague, it comes without notice and it is inflicted directly on people.

To initiate this plague, they are told to take *melo ha'penekhem* – “that which fills the hollow of the hand.” In this action they are directed to use *piakh*. This is not “ashes,” but rather “soot.” To figure out exactly what is occurring here, I did a study on this word, which is only used two times in the Bible and both are in this plague – in verses 8 & 10.

This word *piakh*, comes from the word *puakh* which means to breathe or blow. Thus soot far better fits the imagery. This word, *puakh* is used “in the negative sense of ‘to utter’ lies” (HAW). If one thinks of Pharaoh when reading the following proverbs, you can see the similarity –

“A true witness delivers souls,
But a deceitful *witness* **speaks lies.**” Proverbs 14:25

Pharaoh has previously promised to let Israel go, but he has rather spoken lies. Likewise, the consequences of this are noted –

“A false witness will not go unpunished,
And *he who* **speaks lies** shall perish.” Proverbs 19:9

The soot which will blow throughout the land is set in contrast to the lies which have issued from Pharaoh’s scoffing mouth as he has sneered at the word of the Lord. And the object lesson continues...

8 (con’t) **from a furnace,**

The word here is *kibshan*. It is only used four times in the Bible and refers to something used for firing materials. The word comes from another word, *kabash*, which means to subdue or bring into bondage and “to make serve, by force if necessary” (HAW).

Therefore, there is a contrast being made between what Pharaoh has done to Israel and what will happen to him with the soot of the furnace. Goshen, and much of Egypt had been converted into fields of brick-making, and it was the Israelites who had been subjected to the forced labor of making them.

As Ellicott notes, “When ashes from one of these kilns were made the germs of a disease that was a sore infliction, their own wrongdoing became to the Egyptians a whip wherewith God scourged them.”

It is then a just retribution for the ill-treatment of Israel that they should receive this plague from the Hebrew hands of Moses and Aaron, and from the kilns which brought so much suffering. Later in Deuteronomy 4, the Lord will describe to the Israelites their ill treatment and His deliverance –

“But the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be His people, an inheritance, as you are this day.” (4:20)

8 (con't) and let Moses scatter it toward the heavens in the sight of Pharaoh.

Finally, the object lesson is revealed in what they do with the handfuls of soot from the furnaces. They are to “scatter it toward the heavens.” As fine dust permeates everything and everywhere, so this plague would permeate the land.

And as the dust would settle upon the people from the heavens, it was indicative of God’s judgment alighting upon the people from the heavens. As this was done “in the sight of Pharaoh,” it was a clear indication that the object lesson was intended for him to see the contrast between the ruthless, forced service of Israel and the soot; between the bondage of Israel and the furnace; and between the God of Israel and the kingdom of Pharaoh.

9 And it will become fine dust in all the land of Egypt,

The word for “dust” is *abaaq*. It indicates very small particles, which carry on the wind. It is the noun form of the verb *abaaq*, which means “to wrestle.” The idea is that when men wrestle, dust is thrown up from the ground.

There is a divine wrestling match which is occurring as the dust is being thrown up into the skies of Egypt. The question for Pharaoh is, “What will be the outcome of the match?” It won’t be pleasant –

9 (con't) and it will cause boils that break out in sores on man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt.”

This horrible plague is an attack on the Egyptian goddess Sekhmet, the goddess with power over diseases. It is also an attack against Sunu, the pestilence god, and Isis, the goddess of healing. Again, the Lord is demonstrating the futility of polytheism as He works his plagues against the Egyptians.

In Deuteronomy 28, this affliction will be called “the boils of Egypt.” The Lord warned Israel that if they would not heed His commandments, this same affliction would come upon them that had come upon Egypt. Here is that verse –

“The Lord will strike you with the boils of Egypt, with tumors, with the scab, and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed.” Deuteronomy 28:27

Because it is identified *with* Egypt, it is something that was considered unique *to* Egypt at that time. However, it would become a tool of the Lord for correction of Israel as well as for the punishment of Egypt.

But the New Testament also gives a similar description of this plague in the bowl judgments coming upon the earth during the tribulation period. In the first of the bowl judgments, we see this –

“So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.” Revelation 16:2

The Lord is consistent in His measures for judgment and correction, and He is sovereign over time, place, and type concerning His choice of those measures. In this action against Pharaoh and Egypt, Adam Clarke notes that there is –

“...a congruity between the crime and the punishment. The furnaces, in the labor of which they oppressed the Hebrews, now yielded the instruments of their punishment; for every particle of those ashes, formed by unjust and oppressive labor, seemed to be a boil or a blain on the tyrannical king and his cruel and hard-hearted people.” Clarke

¹⁰ Then they took ashes from the furnace and stood before Pharaoh, and Moses scattered *them* toward heaven. And *they* caused boils that break out in sores on man and beast.

Just as the Lord has spoken, they performed as commanded in the presence of Pharaoh. And just as the Lord had said, the boils that break out in sores came upon both man and beast. And so bad were these boils that they were completely debilitating to those afflicted by them...

¹¹ And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the magicians and on all the Egyptians.

The magicians, or *khartummim*, are singled out in this verse and it is the last time that these *khartummim* will be mentioned in Exodus. Up to this point, they had accompanied

Pharaoh and were there at his side for the expressed intent of standing against the signs and wonders of the Lord which were accomplished through Moses.

However, since the first plague, they could do nothing about matching the scope of any plague, nor could they do anything about ending any of them. By the third plague, they could not even replicate what had been done.

Now, not only are they afflicted by the plague, but they can no longer even stand before Moses because of it. In this last mention of them, they have formally conceded the match and have acknowledged their defeat before the Lord. There will be no more support from them, or resistance offered by them.

This is what Paul refers to in his second letter to Timothy –

“Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; ⁹ but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.”

-2 Timothy 3:8, 9

The folly of the magicians became manifest to all and they have become a sign to the people of the world who attempt to perform magical signs in opposition to the Lord. How unfortunate that so many have continued down this path, even to this day. And even more are those who supposedly do so in the name of the Lord.

In the end, their folly will be manifest to all.

¹² But the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh; and he did not heed them,

In Exodus 4:21, the Lord said he would harden Pharaoh’s heart, using the word *khazaq*. Since then, four times it has been said that Pharaoh’s heart was hardened using this same word. But this is the first time it is ascribed directly to the Lord – “But the Lord hardened.”

Up until this point, the hardening has been a volitional act of Pharaoh’s will, even if it was passively accomplished by the Lord. The Lord gave signs and wonders which could have been responded to favorably or negatively based on the predispositions of the individual.

In the case of Pharaoh, he was predisposed to arrogance and an obdurate behavior. Now, with there being no remedy to his arrogance, we see what Paul describes in Romans 1 –

“And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting.” Romans 1:28

This verse then signals a judicial hardening of the heart because of his previous volitional acts of obstinacy. With no remedy, there is no point in wooing; only punishing. Pharaoh has gone from forsaking the right way to hating correction. There can only be one end for such a person and it is explained in the book of Proverbs –

“Harsh discipline *is* for him who forsakes the way,
And he who hates correction will die.” Proverbs 15:10

^{12 (fin)} **just as the Lord had spoken to Moses.**

ka’asher dibber Yehovah el Mosheh – “as spoke the Lord to Moses.” The heart of Pharaoh was passively hardened by the Lord in the past; now it is an active punishment for rejecting the right path. And the purpose behind this progressive action is exactly as stated at the beginning –

“And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. ⁴ But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies *and* My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. ⁵ And the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them.” Exodus 7:3-5

The Lord was not honored among the Egyptians, but they would learn to know Him. The children of Israel were bound by the Egyptians, but the Lord would bring them out from that bondage. And in His acts, Israel would learn that He was their God, the only God, and that He was faithful to His covenant promises.

As we have seen time and again already, there is a lot we can learn about obstinate Pharaoh. He has willfully turned from the Lord, even after abundant evidences that His word is true and reliable. Of course, we all know many who have followed this same avenue.

They have seen changed lives, they have been made aware of the nature of God, and have then realized that the God of creation matches the God of the Bible. And yet, they harden themselves to the truth that they know is there in front of them.

For those of us who are saved, we shake our head in disbelief, we pray for those like this that we love, and we even secretly feel smug over those we think deserve God's judgment... "How stupid can they be? They'll get it in the end."

But in reality, many of us who are saved already by the blood of Christ are actually in an even more deplorable state. We are saved, we have acknowledged Him, received Him, and been granted the assurance of eternal life because of what He did.

And yet, we haven't placed Him as Lord of our lives. We ignore the commands and exhortations of Paul when they don't suit our personal mores, and we lie to ourselves that the Lord doesn't care. Is our disobedience worth the loss of eternal rewards? Is that the case? Are we merely satisfied with being on the heavenly highway and letting it go with that?

Today, I would ask each person here who has called out to Christ to soberly consider their walk. Are you reading His word, going to Bible Studies, walking in obedience, and continuously redirecting yourselves to the right path when you stray?

If not, today I challenge you to do these things. Make the Savior of your soul the Lord of your life. You will fall... we all do, but better to attempt obedience, than to ignore it. Today, ask Christ to strengthen you in who you are as a valued child of God through His gracious adoption. May it be so! Amen.

Closing Verse *"To whom shall I speak and give warning,
That they may hear?
Indeed their ear is uncircumcised,
And they cannot give heed.
Behold, the word of the Lord is a reproach to them;
They have no delight in it." Jeremiah 6:10*

Next Week: Exodus 9:13-35 (The Plague of Hail) (26th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it

on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Plagues Upon Beast and Man

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh
And tell him, 'Thus says the Lord
God of the Hebrews: "Let My people go
That they may serve Me; listen to my word

For if you refuse to let them go
And still hold them, and will not yield
Behold, the hand of the Lord even so
Will be on your cattle in the field

On the horses and on the donkeys that you keep
And there's more, as I continue the sentence
On the camels, on the oxen, and on the sheep—
A very severe pestilence

And the Lord will make a difference
Between the livestock of Israel
And the livestock of Egypt
You will see it's true as I do now tell

So nothing shall die of all, as I am relaying
That belongs to the children of Israel, please understand
Then the Lord appointed a set time, saying
"Tomorrow the Lord will do this thing in the land

So the Lord did this thing on the next day
And all the livestock of Egypt died
But of the livestock of the children of Israel... hooray!
Not one died, and so the Lord was glorified

Then Pharaoh sent, and indeed
Not even one of the livestock of the Israelites was dead
But the heart of Pharaoh became hard
And he did not let the people go, just as the Lord had said

So the Lord said to Moses and Aaron
"Take for yourselves handfuls of ashes from a furnace
And let Moses scatter it toward the heavens
In the sight of Pharaoh, so he knows the source of the menace

And it will become fine dust no doubt
In all of Egypt the land
And it will cause boils that break out
In sores on man and beast, from head to toe and hand to hand

Throughout all of Egypt the land
Let it be so as I command

Then they took ashes from the furnace
And stood before Pharaoh
And Moses scattered them toward heaven
And everywhere it did go

And they caused boils that break out
In sores on man and beast
A painful, disgusting plague now doubt

And the magicians could not stand before Moses
Because of the boils, a plague so grand
For the boils were on the magicians
And on all the Egyptians throughout the land

But the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh
And then he did not heed
Just as the Lord had spoken to Moses
An obstinate fellow indeed

In due time, the Lord will hand us over
To our own wills; a hardening of the heart
Unless we yield ourselves to Him
And make a fresh start

His offer is made and heaven we may choose
We can accept this marvelous gift of grace

Or we can turn away and so refuse
But that will lead to a different place

In the end our destiny remains our choice
If we have heard of the Gift of His Son Jesus
And so let us open our mouth and use our voice
Receiving what He has offered to us

Let our hearts not be hard, but soft and open today
And in receiving Jesus, let us eternally say...

Great glorious and awesome God, hear our eternal praise
You are worthy of it; glorious and perfect in all Your ways

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 9:13-21

(THE PLAGUE OF HAIL, PART I)

From time to time, someone will bring up the old tale about the guy who was questioned by his pastor why he stopped coming to church. The guy's response was that he didn't see any point in it because by Monday he didn't remember a thing about the sermon.

"Hey Brian, I missed church Sunday. What did the pastor speak about?" He'd think and couldn't remember, so he knew it wasn't really of any value to him. So, he stopped going. The pastor then asked, "Brian, what did you have for dinner last Tuesday night?"

Brian's answer, "I have no idea. Why?" The pastor's response, "You've been eating three meals a day for your entire life and you might remember a handful of them. But every one of them nourished you until the next. Without them, you would waste away, and yet you can't remember them! Sometimes, remembering isn't the point. Instead, it is the nourishment you get."

I think about that from time to time, but I would like to go a bit further. In a meal, there are all kinds of things you might eat. Normally, we don't eat just a bowl full of potatoes, or even a bowlful of different foods pureed together.

Instead, we generally have some meat, some vegetables, some bread, a good dessert, a nice drink that we like, and so on. And if there is something in the meal that we really like, we'll savor each bite of it. Suppose you love asparagus... you will eat each stalk slowly and with delight.

And even more, the things that are really good for you are the things that your mom or wife will try to get you to eat... at least my wife and mom do! Those are the things that will make you strong, mentally competent, and so on. And yet, by Tuesday you probably won't remember any of it.

The sermons at the superior word are not made only of potatoes. Nor are they a lot of food pureed together. Instead, they are made of the most delightful of food from the word of God because they are based solely on the word of God. Line by line, bite by bite, we consume each tasty morsel.

Do not be disappointed if you don't remember what you ate here on Sunday morning when you get to Monday afternoon. What you are consuming is my special meal,

prepared for you with ingredients provided by the Lord in the honest hope and intent of having you grow to be healthy, wise, and competent in your faith, in your Bible knowledge, and in your relationship with Christ.

If the details seem overwhelming, they aren't. The meal is prepared, it is just the right portion, and the table is set. And so pay attention because this Tuesday I will be calling to see if you remember any of it...

Text Verse: *"I have not departed from the commandment of His lips;
I have treasured the words of His mouth
More than my necessary food." Job 23:12*

Job said that he treasured the words of the Lord more than his necessary food. Do you feel this way? Can you honestly say that your time in church is spent to feed your hungry soul? If so, I rejoice in you with my deepest heart. And if I do, how much the Lord who gave us this wondrous, superior word!

Let us rejoice in it now and all the days of our lives. May it be so! And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. That My Name May be Declared in All the Earth (verses 13-17)

We are about to enter into the details of the seventh plague to come on Pharaoh and Egypt. The sixth plague came and went with no recorded effect on Pharaoh at all, except the continued hardening of his heart. There was no petition for the plague to end and there was no hint of any release as during some of the other plagues.

The suffering of his subjects, even up to the magicians who stood before him, had no effect on him. And so now the seventh plague will be added to what has already come about. However, there are differences in this plague than the others so far.

This one is introduced with an exceptionally long and fearful warning which is directed specifically at the heart of Pharaoh. Because his heart had been so hardened in the past, it would be directly attacked in this manner.

There is the claim that Pharaoh will realize the uniqueness of Yehovah. There is a note that up to this point that the Lord had withheld His power and actually shown mercy rather than coming at him with all the weight and force that He could have.

But there is also an explanation from the Lord as to why He had followed this path, which is that He may show His power through the plagues in order that His name would be declared in all the earth. Pharaoh is being told explicitly now of the reason why things had happened, and yet it will still not change him.

He will have to suffer through the final plagues before it does. This shows an immense dullness and obstinacy in the man. Think of when one person pushes another around simply to get them angry. Everyone around him can tell him, “He’s doing this just to get you riled up. Don’t let him do it.”

And yet, the instigator prevails because he understands the weak spot of the individual. That is something akin to what Pharaoh is going through. Even with advanced notice, he still follows the very path which he has been told about.

This seventh plague will be the first which actually brings destruction on human life. Unlike the others which merely afflicted them, this is one which is life-threatening and life-consuming. This plague will also be far more destructive because it will not only come against livestock, but against crops as well.

It will literally be able to ravage the country in a much greater way. Further, it will be a plague which has more than one means of destruction. It will have a combined arsenal of weapons united for greater effect. Additionally, though it is explained in advance like the other plagues, it will be a plague which can be avoided.

Thus it is a text of belief in the word of the Lord as much as anything else. Those who hear and comply with the warning will be safe from its consequences. Those who either don’t hear or fail to comply will not be safe. Several of the false gods of Egypt will come under attack during this plague.

The first will be Nut, the sky goddess. The next will be Osiris, the god of crops and fertility. And the third will be Set, the god of storms. The Lord, Yehovah, is teaching the Egyptians and He is teaching Israel. He is more powerful than these gods because He is the One, only, and true God. Let us pay heed to this truth as well.

¹³ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh,

Before the beginning of the plagues, we looked at the patterns which run through them. One of them was that there were three groupings of them. This is now the third and final group. Each of the three groups, as this one does, begins with the command to Moses to rise early in the morning to meet Pharaoh.

However, there is a difference in this one. In both the first plague and the fourth plague, not only was Moses told to rise early to go meet Pharaoh, but he was told to do so as he went out to the water. For example, here is how it reads at the beginning of the fourth plague –

“And the Lord said to Moses, “Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh as he comes out to the water. Then say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Let My people go, that they may serve Me.”” Exodus 8:20

In this seventh plague, the portion about going out to the water has been left off. In this meeting there is a sense of more urgency and the demand seems more of a fearful threat than a petition for reasonable understanding.

It is also true that Plagues 1 and 4 were announced by the Nile because they dealt with Nile’s waters. However, the location at the announcement of plague 7 isn’t given because it comes from heaven. Thus it will cover all locations.

13 (con’t) and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews:

This is the 18th time the term “Hebrew” has been used in the Bible and 12th in Exodus. We are again reminded that Yehovah is in fact the God of the Hebrew people. Five times in Exodus, the term “God of the Hebrews” has been used and this is the 4th time that the entire title *Yehovah elohe ha’ivrim* or “Yehovah, God of the Hebrews” has been used.

Considering that the term “Hebrew” is only used 38 times in the Old Testament and only about 50 total in the Bible, it’s important to remember how often it is used in Exodus. God has called out this people for Himself and has identified Himself with them.

This foundational principle is necessary to remember because He shows the same care for them in the book of Revelation which precedes the millennial reign of Christ where He will reign among them after bringing them out of the control of the world once again. When the church age is over, Israel will be the focus.

Those Gentiles, who see this and receive it, aligning with them, will fall under His care. Those who don’t will face a different end.

13 (con’t) “Let My people go, that they may serve Me,

This is the exact same wording that has been used on several occasions already. Pharaoh has His people in servitude and the Lord demands that they now be released to serve Him. They are not Pharaoh's and therefore the demand is valid. If it is favorably responded to, all will go well. If it is not, there will be consequences...

¹⁴ for at this time I will send all My plagues to your very heart,

This is an emphatic announcement. The previous six plagues were brought against an already stubborn man with an already hard heart. The first five of them only made Pharaoh harden his heart by voluntary action. The sixth initiated a penal hardening of his heart by the Lord.

However, this one is intended to work on his heart in a new way. It is to begin to alert him to the power of the Lord and the immense consequences of continued obstinacy. In other words, even if his heart continues to harden, it is intended to ultimately bring it to the breaking point where he will voluntarily release the Hebrews.

Whereas several of the previous plagues only afflicted the external part of the man, these next three are intended to afflict his very heart. The words "at this time" are certainly speaking of all of the coming plagues. They would arrive in rapid succession as if blows in a boxing match.

In this verse, the term for "plagues" is unique to the book of Exodus. It is the noun form of the verb which is more commonly used. The word is *maggephah* and it indicates pestilence which leads to a slaughter, like a striking blow. Human death is associated with it.

It is the same word that is used three times in Zechariah 14, a passage which is speaking of the end times during the tribulation period of which the plagues on Egypt picture. Those three times read as follows –

"And this shall be the **plague** with which the Lord will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem:

Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet,

Their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets,

And their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths." Zechariah 14:12

"Such also shall be the **plague**

On the horse *and* the mule,

On the camel and the donkey,
And on all the cattle that will be in those camps.
So *shall* this **plague be.**” Zechariah 14:15

So great will the coming plagues upon Pharaoh be that he will eventually have to admit defeat and let the people of Israel go. As John Calvin says about this verse –

“It announces that they will be plagues that will not only strike the head and arms, but penetrate the very heart, and inflict a mortal wound” (Calvin).

14 (con’t) **and on your servants**

Like previously, the plague will come upon the servants of Pharaoh. Because he fails to allow the Hebrews to serve the Lord, his own servants will suffer from the hand of the Lord.

14 (con’t) **and on your people,**

In the previous verse, the Lord said, “Let my people go.” If he fails to release the Lord’s people, his own people will suffer. If he complies, his people will be safe. And the reason for this is made explicitly clear...

14 (con’t) **that you may know that *there is none like Me in all the earth.***

The Lord is God and beside Him there is no god. He is unique and He is sovereign. This 14th verse of Exodus 9 is tied directly to the opening statement and the first two of the Ten Commandments given in chapter 20. Here are those words –

“I *am* the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

³ “You shall have no other gods before Me.

⁴ “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of *anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the

water under the earth; ⁵ you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.”

-Exodus 20:2-4

And this prohibition in the Second Commandment is explained in detail in Deuteronomy 4 –

“Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, ¹⁶ lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, ¹⁷ the likeness of any animal that *is* on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, ¹⁸ the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that *is* in the water beneath the earth. ¹⁹ And *take heed*, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and *when* you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the Lord your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage. ²⁰ But the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be His people, an inheritance, as you are this day.” Deuteronomy 4:15-20

The lesson of verse 14 is a lesson we are to never forget. We are to learn and remember that there is no god like the Lord because there is no god, but the Lord.

¹⁵ Now if I had stretched out My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, then you would have been cut off from the earth.

This is actually a very difficult verse in the Hebrew. It is in the past tense, as noted by the NKJV, but their wording still is lacking in the force of the Hebrew. The KJV completely botched the translation, putting it in the future tense which sets up a contradiction with the account. They translate it as –

“For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth.”

Young’s Literal Translation says it as it is written in the Hebrew –

“...for now I have put forth My hand, and I smite thee, and thy people, with pestilence, and thou art hidden from the earth.”

The words are past tense and yet they show the entire scope of what the Lord is capable of doing, what He has done, and what He will do. It is an announcement of the whole process; beginning to end. He will strike Pharaoh, He will strike Pharaoh’s people, and pestilence will be a part of it, but not the whole of it. And the whole process will include their being cut off from the earth.

He could have already done this, but thus far it had not fully come to pass. And the reason for this is given in the next verse...

¹⁶ But indeed for this *purpose* I have raised you up,

The word translated as “I have raised you up” is a single word based on the verb *amad* – “to stand” or in essence “to keep alive.” The Lord kept Pharaoh standing through this entire process thus far instead of striking him down for a reason.

This is set in contrast, for example, with the magicians who in verse 11 were described as not being able stand before Moses. There the same word, *amad*, was used. Where they could no longer stand, Pharaoh could because the Lord caused him to stand. There is purpose and intent in this which is explained as we continue...

¹⁶ (con’t) that I may show My power *in* you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.

This entire 16th verse is quoted by Paul in Romans 9:17 to reveal and demonstrate the absolute sovereignty of God. There he uses a different word for “raise up” than the Greek translation of the Old Testament. After citing this, he continues with the words, “Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.” (Romans 9:18)

Paul’s choice of wording is used to demonstrate to the Jews of his time that their national rights and privileges under the Lord were not inalienable. God was neither unjust nor arbitrary in His rejection of them. Rather, He is sovereign in His dealings with man, even man who bears His name, even Israel.

What God wills is what will happen, and at times He even explains the purposes for it, but He owes us no explanation at all. He is God and we are man. Pharaoh has been given an explanation for the events which have come to pass, and others which will transpire. Israel has likewise been given an explanation for their rejection.

What is most notable is that despite being told the reason, both Pharaoh and Israel continued to act exactly as the Lord intended. There is no outwitting God, even with all of His cards laid out on the table. Likewise, the antichrist who is coming already has the details of what will happen and how it will happen, and yet, it will still happen.

There is nothing he can do to change it, even if he tried. His attempts to subvert the Bible would only turn out to be a portion of the fulfillment of it. Pharaoh of the past, Israel of today, and the antichrist of the future were marked for ruin. Unlike Pharaoh and the antichrist, Israel's ruin will end and they will again be exalted. Such is the nature of the sovereignty of God.

¹⁷ As yet you exalt yourself against My people in that you will not let them go.

Owdkha misto-el b'ammi – “As yet you exalt yourself against my people.” The word “exalt” is *salal*. It means to “cast up” or “lift up” as a dam or a rampart. It is connected to the word meaning “highway,” which carries the same connotation. A highway is built up higher than the surrounding terrain.

There is, in the Bible, a contrast between the correct highway and the incorrect one. Like Pharaoh here, in the book of Jeremiah, and to their detriment, the people of Israel had left the proper one –

“Because My people have forgotten Me,
They have burned incense to worthless idols.
And they have caused themselves to stumble in their ways,
From the ancient paths,
To walk in pathways and not on a highway.” Jeremiah 18:15

But Isaiah foresaw a time when they would take the correct one once again –

“Go through,
Go through the gates!
Prepare the way for the people;
Build up,
Build up the highway!
Take out the stones,
Lift up a banner for the peoples!” Isaiah 62:10

It might seem like a roundabout way of explaining Pharaoh's actions, but his exalting himself is simply a pattern which is followed by others, be they Israel, or be they one of us. But whether it is casting up a rampart against the Lord's people or even the Lord Himself, sometimes we just keep doing what makes no sense.

In this verse, the words are a statement, not a question, but in them may be a sense of incredulity. “Aren’t you tired of this yet? Aren’t you tired of heaping up a rampart which only hinders you, not Me? Stop opposing Me, stop exalting yourself, and let My people go!”

A point we can see from this verse, and which is plainly evident, is that if Pharaoh had already yielded to the word of the Lord, the plagues would have ended. If he were to yield to them now, there would be no further destruction. In other words, we cannot read into this that God created Pharaoh for destruction.

Rather, Pharaoh’s free will has acted against the Lord and his free will has brought him calamity. And it will continue to bring it on him until he is destroyed. God’s pre-knowledge of Pharaoh’s decisions does not mean that Pharaoh didn’t make them. He did and the consequences for them belong to him as well.

*You’re a terribly stubborn soul there Pharaoh
Aren’t you ready yet to yield to Me?
You’re obstinate right down to your bone’s marrow
This will end badly for you, but you just can’t see*

*Your water has turned to blood
And zillions of frogs haven’t made you wise
You’ve seen the land filled with lice
And everything around you was corrupted with flies*

*Your livestock has died from pestilence
And your bodies have been covered with festering boils
Your hard heart just makes no sense
Now it’s time for you to end My people’s toils*

II. Advanced Warning (verses 18, 19)

¹⁸ Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause very heavy hail to rain down, such as has not been in Egypt since its founding until now.

In past plagues, the day of the plague has been announced, “tomorrow.” However, with this plague, even the timing of the day is given. This is meant to demonstrate that Yehovah is the Lord of every aspect of what will occur, even of time itself.

Every element of the plague is under His control, the region of the plague is within His control, and the very timing of it is as well. The Lord is demonstrating absolute sovereignty over all aspects of creation. Further, the wording in the Hebrew of this verse is given as a confirmation of His words in verse 14.

There He said, *ba'abur teda ki en kamoni* – “that you may know (there is) none like Me.” In this verse He says, *asher lo hayah kamohu* – “such as not has been like.” There is none *like* Yehovah and none can *do* like Yehovah. What He does is beyond the ability of any other because it comes from the One who *is*, and there is no other.

What the Egyptians would experience on the morrow would be unlike any other such event in the entire history of the nation. The stories from years past of great storms or unique weather events would pale in comparison to what lies ahead, just a few hours hence. The event is referred to in both Psalm 78 and Psalm 105.

In fact, *barad*, or “hail” is mentioned only 29 times in the Old Testament and 20 of them are either in Exodus or are referring to the account in exodus. But despite the unique nature of the coming plague upon Egypt, there are other plagues of hail recorded in the Bible.

One notable one is found in Joshua. In a battle where the enemy was defeated and had gone into full retreat, the Lord handled those who fled –

“And it happened, as they fled before Israel *and* were on the descent of Beth Horon, that the Lord cast down large hailstones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. *There were* more who died from the hailstones than the children of Israel killed with the sword.” Joshua 10:11

And two more such displays are promised to come during the tribulation period. One is seen in the first trumpet judgment –

“The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.” Revelation 8:7

And the other is seen in the final bowl judgment –

“And great hail from heaven fell upon men, *each hailstone* about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.” Revelation 16:21

Egypt will receive a good resounding pounding during their plague, but unlike the coming tribulation period, at least the Lord granted them terms of mercy. He gave them the time of the plague, the nature of the plague, and what to do about it. It is to be a test of individual trust concerning the word of the Lord...

¹⁹ Therefore send now *and* gather your livestock and all that you have in the field, for the hail shall come down on every man and every animal which is found in the field and is not brought home; and they shall die.””

It is noted that in Egypt the livestock was left in the open country from about January to April. This was the time when the grass was most abundant. At other times, the Nile would overflow its banks and the livestock would be brought into shelters in the villages.

Now with the Nile having been dammed, this is no longer a problem, but the timing of this event is believed to be around February because of the wording concerning the flocks. This then aligns with the coming final plague being at the time of the Passover.

It is during this early part of the year that the announcement is made and the warning is given. Those who pay heed will be saved, those who don't will die. It is the first time that the loss of human life is explicitly mentioned as a result of a coming plague.

The Lord has raised the stakes and yet has granted mercy at the same time through the warning. It is an exacting parallel to what is coming in the tribulation period. God has given a warning, in advance, for those who must suffer through that time.

Chapter 13 of Revelation says that in order to function in the coming post-rapture society one will need to take the mark of the beast –

“He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, ¹⁷ and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” Revelation 13:16, 17

However, chapter 14 shows what the consequences of taking the mark will be –

“If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” Revelation 14:9-11

A warning has been given to those who dwell in Egypt, Pharaoh’s domain, and a warning has been given to the world of the tribulation period, the domain of the antichrist. The question is, “Who will pay heed?”

*In Your wrath, remember mercy O God
Remember that we are but flesh and wither as grass
Short is the time that on this earth we trod
And O, how quickly away do our days pass*

*Who could stand if You were to fairly judge our sin
Who could say, “Yes, I here today am free of guilt.”
No, our lives testify that we are done in
And with our deeds only condemnation we have built*

*But You, O God are rich in mercy to us
You have cut through the bars of iron and chains of brass
You have sent Your Son, Your beloved Jesus
For fallen man, this marvel has come to pass*

III. Who Will Pay Heed? (verses 20 & 21)

We just noted at the end of section 2 the thought that a warning was given to those who dwell in Egypt, Pharaoh’s domain, and a warning has been given to the world of the tribulation period, the domain of the antichrist. The pertinent question in both of these circumstances is, “Who will pay heed?” And the answer is...

²⁰ He who feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his livestock flee to the houses.

Of those Egyptians who realized that Yehovah is worthy of fear, there was a display of wisdom. As the proverb says –

“The fear of the Lord *is* the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One *is* understanding.” Proverbs 9:10

These servants of Pharaoh began to display wisdom because they began to fear the Lord. They paid heed to His words and they readied themselves for what they were certain was coming. Those in the tribulation period, those who missed the call of the Lord and the catching away, will have to decide what they will do.

Will they ignore the word, take the mark, and be lost, or will they take the narrow path? Only time will tell who is who, but the book of Revelation does say that there will be a great multitude that will finally learn to fear the word of the Lord and to pay heed.

Here are the words of their notable deeds of faith which will be rewarded with life –

“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” Revelation 20:4

It should be noted that in this verse, it never mentions Pharaoh’s people as it did in the previous verses. It says “the servants of Pharaoh” and then their servants after them. If I were to look for a reason why, it is because Pharaoh is a picture of the antichrist.

Everyone who enters the tribulation will be, by default, servants of the devil and thus servants of his representative, the antichrist. This then is a picture of those who realized that the Lord is the Lord, and they have eventually acknowledged that fact.

They may be the crummy preachers who never believed the Bible, which the world is full of at this time. Now, they are the devil’s servants and do his bidding. Not only that, they are also leading their flocks down that same crummy path to destruction.

However, when they realize their error after the rapture, they will finally learn to protect their own servants and the flocks under them. This then gives a reasonable explanation for the great multitude that will refuse the mark of the beast.

A simple word like “servant” give us clues to pay attention to in order to see the pictures of what lies ahead when the world heads into the great calamities it is destined to endure.

²¹ But he who did not regard the word of the Lord left his servants and his livestock in the field.

Of course, there are those who had already endured six plagues and yet still refused to acknowledge the word of the Lord. They did not regard the word and they left their flocks out for destruction. Solomon beautifully describes this type of reprobate in the Proverbs as well, and he gives a contrast to him also –

“He who disdains instruction despises his own soul,
But he who heeds rebuke gets understanding.

³³ The fear of the Lord *is* the instruction of wisdom,
And before honor *is* humility.” Proverbs 10:32, 33

In order to be honored, one must show humility. Bowing to the Lord as the greater is a sign of humility. Fearing the word of the Lord and His instruction is also a sign of humility. When one fears the word, they will heed the word and carefully apply it to life.

Some will take this path and they will be saved, but there will be an immense number that will put their temporary desires for life and food above any eternal reward they could be granted. They will care nothing for their flocks and they will leave them for destruction. As Matthew Henry says about such folks –

“Obstinate unbelief is deaf to the fairest warnings and the wisest counsels, which leaves the blood of those that perish upon their own heads.” Henry

Only time will tell which are which. At the rapture, everyone left behind will be in the same position. However, the Lord is merciful and He will grant life to those who put Him above all else. Great is our God who grants us the freedom to accept Him or reject Him.

These stories have been recorded to show us what really happened in the past and to show us the story of redemptive history as it has slowly unfolded. In individual bites, they give us glimpses of what the Lord disdains and of the things He rejoices in.

In the larger picture, we see the whole scope of what God has done, is doing, and what He will do all the way through until the end of time. Many generations have come and

gone and the vast majority of people have not had the enormous blessings that we have today.

We have the whole record of God's word, we have churches everywhere, and Christian TV and radio in abundance. And yet, it may be that we have still not made peace with God. If the people of the past were swept away for not heeding the word of the Lord, how much more do we deserve it!

But the Lord is there, calling out to us and waiting on us to act. Time is fleeting though, and all things must come to an end. Before that day comes for you, and it very well may be today, I would hope and pray that you would make your peace and get right with God. The way to do that is through Jesus. So please let me tell you what you need to know...

Closing Verse: *"He who heeds the word wisely will find good, And whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he." Proverbs 16:20*

Next Week: Exodus 9:22-35 (The Plague of Hail, Part II) (27th Exodus Sermon)

Wasn't that a nice closing verse! He who heeds the word wisely will find good. And whoever trusts in the Lord, happy *is* he. What a Rock of refuge in a most unstable world! What a fixed and firm anchor in a sea of turmoil and chaos! Thank God for Jesus Christ who has bound us to Him for eternity! And thank God for the Bible which lights our path and gives us joy and comfort every time we pick it up and read it! What a great God!

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Raining Down from Above

Then the Lord said to Moses as we know

"Rise early in the morning

And stand before Pharaoh

And say to him this as a warning

"Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews, plainly

"Let My people go, that they may serve Me

For at this time I will send all My plagues, even so
To your very heart, and on your servants too
And on your people, that you may know
That there is none like Me in all the earth, so I warn you

Now if I had stretched out My hand
And struck you and your people with pestilence
Then you would have been cut off from the land
A just and right display of my magnificence

But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up
In withholding from you destruction or dearth
That I may show My power in you, as I pour My cup
And that My name may be declared in all the earth

As yet you exalt yourself, yes even so
Against My people in that you will not let them go

Behold, tomorrow about this time
I will cause very heavy hail to rain down, and how!
Such as has not been in Egypt with its clime
Since its founding until now

Therefore send now and gather your livestock
And all that you have in the field
For the hail shall come down on every man
Any who to My word will not yield

And every animal which in the field is found
And is not brought home, shall die on that piece of ground

He who feared the word of the Lord, we will see
There, among Pharaoh's servants
Made his servants and his livestock flee
To the houses, showing wise observance

But he who did not regard the word of the Lord
Left his servants and his livestock in the field
Shunning that kind and merciful word
Their hearts to Him they did not yield

How many times, I would like to know
Does the Lord have to prove His word is true?
What more could you ask, some great heavenly show?
Is it this that which is required by you?

His word is splendid, holy and pure
It is filled with proofs if you will but open your eyes
It is faithful, reliable, and sure
And it is sufficient to make you wise

Rain down, you heavens from above
And let the skies pour down righteousness
O God, Thou who art abundant in love
It is You alone our souls shall bless

Help us to receive and apply to our lives Your superior word
As we wait on the return of Jesus, our precious Lord

And then in that day, O great, glorious, and awesome God
In Your magnificent presence we shall trod

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 9:22-35 (THE PLAGUE OF HAIL, PART II)

Today we will finish the seventh plague which fell upon the land of Egypt. It is the first plague which explicitly mentions that men will die because of it, but it is also a plague which came with advanced warning so that the word of the Lord could be heeded.

At the time of the Babylonian invasion, Habakkuk asked the Lord to remember mercy in the midst of His wrath, and maybe he was thinking of how the Lord dealt with Egypt so many years earlier. As we think on these plagues, we have to remember that the Lord had purposed to multiply His wonders in Egypt before Pharaoh would relent and let Israel go.

Everything He has done has been orchestrated to meet this goal. But for what purpose is He doing this? Is it a perverse sense of vindictive joy that He is getting from this continual pummeling of land and people? The answer is, "No!" There is a specific goal which we have been seeing and will continue to see.

And not only is it a lesson from ancient times for us to remember, but it is a lesson for the future for those who don't remember. The reason for the plagues is explicitly noted in Numbers 33 and it is our text verse for today...

Text Verse: *"For the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the Lord had killed among them. Also on their gods the Lord had executed judgments." Numbers 33:4*

It was only about 860 years since the Flood of Noah and yet Egypt had completely forgotten the true God and had devolved into idol worship. They had gods for this and gods for that. They worshipped the created rather than the Creator. And so the Lord brought judgment upon those false gods.

The same has occurred time and again throughout history, including upon wayward Israel. When we turn from the Lord, He will execute judgment to correct the problem. It's an especially important lesson for the world now. A time of tribulation will come upon it because we have rejected the greatest evidence of all, the life and work of Jesus Christ.

Soon enough, He will come for those who are His faithful and the world will be plunged into judgment. It will be on all of the false gods we worship – sex, perversion, money,

technology, allah, krishna, buddha, fame, fortune, personal glory, global warming... the list goes on and on.

We're given these stories of the past to show us what lies ahead. Let us pay heed to them and humble our hearts before the Lord who is revealed in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Destruction in Egypt; Safety in Goshen (verses 22-26)

²² Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven,

In the previous verses, the Lord gave Pharaoh the exact time that he would accomplish the miracle of the plague of hail. In both the warning and the delay, He granted mercy on those who would choose to heed His word. Now that time had arrived and there would be no more delay.

This is very similar then to the terminology coming in the end times. In Revelation 10, we read this concerning the judgment which would ensue at the sounding of the seventh trumpet –

“The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven ⁶ and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer...” Revelation 10:5, 6

Like this angel of the future, Moses of the past is told to stretch out his hand toward heaven. However, in the next verse, we will see that Moses stretches out his rod, meaning the rod of God, toward heaven. The hand here is being used as the principle cause, whereas the rod is used as the instrumental cause.

Thus there is no contradiction. Rather, it is an acknowledgment of the power of the Lord in the hand of Moses. And the action of stretching out toward heaven is fitting because this is where the plague will issue from.

In the first two plagues, Aaron stretched out the rod over the waters from where the blood and frogs came. In the third plague it was on the dust of the ground from whence the lice came. The action is suited to the plague which is precipitated by the action.

^{22 (cont')} **that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt—on man, on beast, and on every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.”**

In verse 19 last week it said, “Therefore send now *and* gather your livestock and all that you have in the field, for the hail shall come down on every man and every animal which is found in the field and is not brought home; and they shall die.”

What was obvious, but which was unstated at that time was that the “herb of the field” would be struck as well. This is now added into what is said. The word translated as “herb” is *esev*. It means properly “grass.” From this, the idea of any fresh springy herbs or pasturage is implied.

Other plants are mentioned in the coming verses which will further describe the devastation which lies ahead. However, this word is being used to describe everything in a general sense. This word, *esev*, was first mentioned in Genesis 1:11.

After this, it was mentioned 5 more times in the early Genesis account, but it hasn't been used again until now. The last time it was used was in Genesis 3:18 where it said

“Cursed *is* the ground for your sake;

In toil you shall eat *of* it

All the days of your life.

¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,

And you shall eat the **herb** of the field.

¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread

Till you return to the ground,

For out of it you were taken;

For dust you *are*,

And to dust you shall return.” Genesis 3:17-19

For about 2500 years of history, nothing is mentioned concerning general plant life in this way, and yet now, the very plant life given to man after the fall will be involved in the plague upon Egypt. Therefore, we can see the Lord's attack on three more of the false gods of Egypt in this one verse –

Nut, the sky goddess, will be shown as false; Osiris, the god of crops and fertility, will be shown as false; and Set, the god of storms, will be shown as false. It is the Lord who

created, and it is the Lord who controls how these things are used, wielded, and destroyed.

Whereas the Egyptians worshipped the created, Yehovah now shows them that He is the Creator. We should note that He will do this in a marvelous way. Hail storms normally cover smaller areas, such as a mile in distance or so. This storm, however, would cover everything throughout the land of Egypt.

²³ And Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven;

In compliance with the word of the Lord it is Moses again, like the previous plague of boils, who acts. He apparently has lost the timidity he once had and, instead of working through Aaron, has now assumed the responsibility for the actions himself.

^{23 (con't)} and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire darted to the ground.

The word for “thunder” here is *qolot* – it literally means “voices.” When a person speaks, they use their voice, when a trumpet blows, that is its voice, and when a lion roars, the roar is his voice. In this verse, the voices are thunder, but the symbolism is clear. The voices are being used as a demonstration of the work of the Lord. This is beautifully represented in the 18th Psalm –

“The Lord thundered from heaven,
And the Most High uttered His voice,
Hailstones and coals of fire.” Psalm 18:13

Along with the majestic display of voices came more terror. It says, *va'tihalekh esh aretsah* – literally, “and the fire walked upon the earth.” Scholars look at these words with several possible meanings. One is that it means ball lightning, a phenomena where lightning literally rolls upon the ground.

Although possible because a storm of this magnitude would be heavily charged with electricity, this is probably not the intent. The meaning is explained in Psalm 78 which I will quote in a couple verses. Another view is that it is lightning descending from heaven to the earth, thus “fire darted to the ground.” Adam Clarke seems to analyze it best when he says –

“It was not a sudden flash of lightning, but a devouring fire, walking through every part, destroying both animals and vegetables; and its progress was irresistible.” Adam Clarke

In other words, the “walking upon the ground” is the movement of the lightening along with the movement of the storm. It isn’t ball lightening rolling around on the ground, but rather lightening descending as if it were literally legs walking in the storm. The effect would have been extreme and extremely terrifying.

²³ (con’t) **And the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt.**

There is an emphasis in these words by repeating the thought of the hail once again. It is noted that thunderstorms aren’t frequent in the lower and central parts of Egypt, but they do happen from time to time. If there is hail associated with them, it is normally not in any considerable amount.

The emphasis is given to show that this storm was unique, it was everywhere, and it was hugely destructive as we continue to see...

²⁴ **So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail,**

The words here, if translated directly, wouldn’t make sense to us. It literally reads, “There was hail, and in the midst of the hail a fire infolding itself.” (Pulpit) To understand this verse better, the same terminology is used in Ezekiel 1:4 when speaking of the whirlwind which accompanied the presence of the Lord. There it says –

“Then I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness *was* all around it and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire.”

-Ezekiel 1:4

What is probably being described in this storm over Egypt is an absolute chaos of lightening flashing everywhere and in all directions. It would have been an unqualified marvel to behold, especially considering its uniqueness....

²⁴ (con’t) **so very heavy that there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.**

This implies a natural plague, even though its timing was predicted in advance, and despite it being greater than any other such occurrence which had ever come before. The Lord was working through the elements in a majestic way in order to demonstrate His surpassing greatness in comparison to the false gods of Egypt.

In regard to the plague, there “was none like it” ever. This then is being tied to the claim made in Exodus 9:14, which said –

“...at this time I will send all My plagues to your very heart, and on your servants and on your people, that you may know that *there is* none like Me in all the earth.” Exodus 9:14

The Lord has sent a plague of hail like none other to show that there is none other like Him.

²⁵ And the hail struck throughout the whole land of Egypt, all that *was* in the field, both man and beast; and the hail struck every herb of the field and broke every tree of the field.

It must be noted again that not every “every” in the Bible means every, and that not all “alls” mean all. There is a hyperbole being used here to show the immense magnitude of what occurred. We can know this with absolute assurance because of what it says in the next chapter –

“Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land—all that the hail has left.”
-Exodus 10:12

The land was crushed in an extraordinary way by the plague of hail and therefore the superlative words “all” and “every” are used to highlight this. The devastation is described in Psalm 78 –

“He destroyed their vines with hail,
And their sycamore trees with frost.
⁴⁸ He also gave up their cattle to the hail,
And their flocks to fiery lightning.” Psalm 78:47, 48

²⁶ Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel *were*, there was no hail.

Even if the storm was natural, the supernatural elements of advanced notice, time, and locality are all highlighted. The storm was everywhere in Egypt with one exception, Goshen. This is the last time that this location will be used by name in the Bible. It means “drawing near” or “approaching.” Based on Pharaoh’s response to the

horrendous plague, it is apparent that the name Goshen is being used specifically to show that the end of Israel's time of bondage is truly approaching.

A noted distinction has been made from where the Israelites were and with the rest of Egypt. Even though Pharaoh will again change his mind, there is a marked difference in how he now responds to the events which have unfolded before his eyes and the understood distinction between Egypt and Israel.

*Woe to the land whose king won't heed the Lord
Who walks contrary to what is just and right
Woe to him who rejects His sacred word
And who harasses God's people day and night*

*Upon him shall come terror – fire and hail
Upon him will come the wrath of the Almighty God
He and his subjects will mourn and wail
For the destruction will be in every place they tread*

*But mercy is found in the Lord as well
When the leader of a nation will repent and turn
He will save himself from the clutches of hell
Where the terrifying eternal fire does burn*

II. I Have Sinned This Time (verses 27-30)

27 And Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "I have sinned this time.

In these words, there is attrition, but still not contrition. Pharaoh has had pressure steadily applied on him and his kingdom by the Lord and now he has reached a breaking point. Thus he acknowledges that he has been at fault with the words, "I have sinned." This is the point of attrition.

But the repentance is only skin deep at this point and there is no true contrition, thus the words "this time." He has been terrified by the majestic display, death has been involved, and extensive harm has come to his kingdom. But he can only go so far as to acknowledge limited guilt. The translators of the Geneva Bible state his condition well –

“The wicked confess their sins to their condemnation, but they cannot believe to obtain remission.” Geneva

²⁷ (con’t) **The Lord *is* righteous,**

In these words is finally found a direct answer to Pharaoh’s questions of Exodus 5 –

“Who *is* the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go.” Exodus 5:2

With his own mouth, he answers his own question – *Yehovah ha’tsadiq*, “Yehovah (is) the Righteous (One). The word contains a definite article, making it emphatic. And in contrast to this...

²⁷ (con’t) **and my people and I *are* wicked.**

v’ani v’ammi ha’reshaim – “and I and my people (are) the wicked ones. It is again emphatic. The words though cannot be separated from the previous verse which said, “Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel *were*, there was no hail.” The plague was terrifying, but it is not only the plague that has convinced Pharaoh. It is the separation between Egypt and Goshen which has prompted his pronouncement. Yehovah is contrasted to Pharaoh, and the Israelites are contrasted to Pharaoh’s people. Where he previously accused them of being idle and looking for excuses to get out of their work, he now acknowledges that their requests were valid and their words were true. This is the force and intent of the words he now utters. Israel is the people of the Lord and the Lord is righteous.

²⁸ **Entreat the Lord, that there may be no *more* mighty thundering and hail, for *it is* enough.**

There is a lot to consider here. First, Pharaoh has now recognized the LORD as God. He now acknowledges that Moses is the Lord’s designated mediator by asking him to entreat the Lord. Secondly, Pharaoh implies that he is exceedingly fearful of the Lord because he places the thunder before the hail in his request.

The term is *qolot elohim* – literally “voices of God.” In other words, he has tied the Lord, the voices, and Deity into one thought. This is similar to the words found in Revelation 10 where the words “thunder” and “voice” are used to describe the same thing –

“He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and *his* left *foot* on the land,³ and cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices.⁴ Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them.’” Revelation 10:3, 4

Pharaoh was so fearful of the raging thunder that he could only see it as comparable to the very voice of God. Only after recognizing this does he note the hail which was to be the main substance of the plague. But to Pharaoh, the place where the hail came from was also the place from whence the voices issued.

²⁸ (con’t) I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer.”

The word is pronounced. The fear of God finally forced Pharaoh to state release without any conditions. The fact that he changes his mind later doesn’t negate the absolute fear that he now displays at the events which he has beheld. However, it does show a common trait among people. When things get better, we quickly forget the promises made when they were bad.

²⁹ So Moses said to him, “As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the Lord; the thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, that you may know that the earth *is* the Lord’s.

It has to be noted that Moses was both called to, and left from, Pharaoh’s palace during the plague of hail. Pharaoh is the one who cowered inside and sent out for his relief rather than going out to Moses to beg for it. However, Moses came through the storm unharmed. As Matthew Henry notes –

“Peace with God makes men thunder-proof.” Henry

Moses not only goes out from the palace to end the plague, but all the way out of the city. Only then does he promise to spread out his hands to the Lord. This then shows his complete confidence in his own safety. It is an implied rebuke to Pharaoh. In essence, “You cower in your palace and yet I am safe throughout the land.”

And as a curiosity that shouldn’t be missed, he uses a different word here for “spread,” *paras*, than what was used to initiate the plague, which was *natah*, translated as “stretch.” This is the first time *paras* is used in the Bible.

To stretch out then is implying the initiation of the action under divine authority. However, the spreading out is an appeal or petition for it to end. Another point is that Moses says he will spread out his “palm,” not his “hand.”

In Scripture, this word *paras* is used with the word “palm” 13 times and with the word “hand” 5 times. How the verb is used always indicates whether the word “palm” or “hand” will be used, with one exception in the Bible. That is in Isaiah 1:15 –

“When you spread out your hands,
I will hide My eyes from you;
Even though you make many prayers,
I will not hear.
Your hands are full of blood.” Isaiah 1:15

In this verse in Isaiah, it says the people spread out their palms, but then it says that their hands are full of blood. What we can learn from this word, *paras*, when used in conjunction with prayer is that the unfolding of the hand for prayer is to be pure and that when we pray, our palms are to be open and undefiled.

In other words, the open hand before the Lord is metaphorically a symbol of earnestness, purity, honest petition, and submission. This is what Moses will now offer to the Lord, open palms of petition. This action will have two specific purposes.

The first is to petition for the ending of the plague as he has promised. This will reflect on the Lord because he is the Lord’s messenger. It also has the purpose of making Pharaoh realize “that the earth is the Lord’s.”

This pronouncement is in direct contrast to Egyptian belief where each of their gods cared for a particular thing, like the weather, the crops, the waters, the sun, and so on. Instead, Moses is showing that everything belongs to the Lord.

He is not “a” god, but “the” God. His power is one and it is universal. To demonstrate this, the plague came by Yehovah’s hand and it will end at His hand as well. However, there will still be a void in Pharaoh’s theology...

³⁰ But as for you and your servants, I know that you will not yet fear the Lord God.”

Pharaoh and his servants have the kind of fear that is noted in James. The demons are said to believe that there is one God and this makes them tremble, but there is no

reverence for Him. Only when such fear is united with reverence and love can the true fear of the Lord be understood. This is still lacking in them.

To enhance what he means Moses uses the term *Yehovah elohim*. It is the same term used at the very beginning in the creation account. It is Yehovah elohim who created the heavens and the earth. As this is so, He alone is God and He alone is to be feared.

*The Lord is the First, and the Last also is He
He is the Creator and there is no other god
When we acknowledge Him alone, pleased will He be
Let our hearts be pure and let our feet on the holy path trod*

*He was there when the pillars of the earth found their place
It was He who into Adam breathed the breath of life
And when Adam fell, He covered Him in an act of grace
Yes, with garments of skin He covered Adam and his wife*

*And He remains watchful over the sons of men
Those who fear Him, He will reward with tender care
Someday He promises He will come to us again
And take us to Himself; forever we shall be there*

III. He Sinned Yet More (verses 31-35)

³¹ Now the flax and the barley were struck, for the barley *was* in the head and the flax *was* in bud.

Interestingly, it notes the flax and then the barley and yet it then notes the characteristics of the barley and then the flax. There is a reversing of the order in the objects as they are described. This same pattern will be seen again in just a few verses.

This verse has certainly been provided for us to know not just the devastation of the plague, but to know the timing of it. First, in the devastation is that the crops of flax and barley were ruined. This tells us that the time is somewhere from the end of January to the beginning of March. Most likely it was during February.

Flax is grown in order to make linen garments. The people wore them, the priests had the purest of linen garments, and even the mummies were swathed in linen. To lose the annual crop of flax would be comparable to the south losing its entire crop of cotton.

The word for flax is *pishtah*. It is used only four times in the Bible, twice here and twice in Isaiah where it is also translated as “wick.” *Pishtah* comes from *pishteh* which means “linen.” In this you can see how the flax makes the linen which also is used as a wick. Barley or *seorah* is the other crop which was destroyed. It was grown for the same purposes that it is still grown for today – as food for animals, as a part of the Egyptian beer making process, and also as a source of making lower quality bread.

There is also another reason why these crops are highlighted. It is to give us a look into a picture of the state of Egypt. Barley is known as the crop of hairy ears because of its hairy appearance. The root of this word is *sear* or “hair.” Hair in the Bible indicates an awareness of things.

The goat for example is used in Leviticus for the sin offering and it is known as *sair*. We have an awareness of sin in the hairy goat sin offering. In Numbers there is a type of person known as a Nazirite. This is someone who made a vow or was consecrated to the Lord.

During the time of the vow, they were not to cut the hair. Samson was a Nazirite from birth as were Samuel and John the Baptist. Paul may have taken a Nazirite vow in Acts. The hair on their head was a reminder of their state, just as the hairy goat reminds of sin.

The destruction of the barley then is being tied to Pharaoh’s awareness and acknowledgement of the sin he has committed and yet his soon-to-commit yet more sin. His awareness of sin is destroyed. The flax, which is used to make garments, represents the people’s nakedness in their sin before the Lord.

This can be seen, for example, in Revelation 3:18 where Jesus says for the people to “...buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.”

He has both stripped away their awareness and he has stripped away their ability to cover themselves. Finally, the word for “bud” concerning the flax is used only this once

in the Bible. It is the word *gibol* which comes from the word *gabia*, or “cup.” Thus the term “bud” or “bloom” is understood from its shape like a cup.

³² But the wheat and the spelt were not struck, for they *are* late crops.

The two unharmed grains are wheat and spelt. The KJV has “rye” instead of spelt. That is wrong. Rye is a grain that has never been grown in Egypt. The word for wheat, *khittah*, comes from *khanat* which means to make spicy or to embalm. Wheat is considered the finest and most valuable of the grains in the Bible.

Jesus used wheat to represent Himself in John 12:24. And it is also the wheat harvest which pictures the church age. The word *kussemeth* for “spelt” comes from *kasam* to trim. That word is used only twice in the Bible, both in Ezekiel speaking of the trimmed hair of the priests during the millennial reign.

The spelt is a crop very similar to wheat and closely resembles it. Finally, the word for “late” is *aphil*. This comes from a word indicating “dark” or “hidden” and so it can be conjectured that these crops had been planted, but not yet sprouted. In other words, they were hidden from the plague.

Because these crops are mentioned here and not again in the coming plagues, it is asking us to think on why they were mentioned. If I were to surmise they, like the two other grains, are given as pictures. The wheat and the spelt picture those in Revelation who are saved from the plagues by rapture or protection and enter into the millennium.

There are those who are a part of the first resurrection noted in Revelation 20:5. There are also those who survive through the tribulation. Of the first it is explicitly noted that –

“...they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” Revelation 20:5

The four grains are specifically mentioned and there is a purpose for it. The pattern fits and it is in line with the other uses of these grains in the Bible. I do believe these pictures are why they are noted now here in the Exodus account.

³³ So Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh and spread out his hands to the Lord; then the thunder and the hail ceased, and the rain was not poured on the earth.

Without fear of being pummeled by the hail, being zapped by the lightening, or catching a sniffle from the rain, which has not been mentioned until this point, Moses went out

from Pharaoh and out from the city before spreading his hands to the Lord. But when he did, the land became calm once again.

The rain wasn't mentioned before because it wasn't a direct part of the event which was considered the plague. The hail, the noise, and the fire from the sky were the plague. The rain was only an associated part of what occurred.

But noting it now is an added proof of the first-hand nature of the eyewitness of the account. It is also the first time in the Bible that "rain" is mentioned in the noun form. Up to this point, it has only been used in the verb form.

³⁴ And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart, he and his servants.

In the previous verse, it mentioned the thunder, the hail, and then the rain. Now it turns around and highlights what was said by noting the rain, the hail, and then the thunder. It is an often repeated pattern in the Bible where reverse repetition is used. In this, Pharaoh is mentioned smack dab in the middle of the series.

thunder/hail/rain – Pharaoh – rain/hail/thunder

Immediately following this, it says that he sinned yet more by hardening his heart. This is a theme which will run throughout the Bible. The Lord prevails in the challenge either directly or through His mediator, and yet there is no change in the foe.

Moses acted and heaven was opened and then it was shut. Elijah prayed and the heavens were shut and then they were open. And the Two Witnesses of Revelation will have the power to do the same. But time and again, like Pharaoh, there are those who reject what the Lord does and further harden their hearts to Him.

In fact, Clarke notes that the conjunctions used here "often signify a bare permission, from which it is plain that the words should have been read, God suffered the heart of Pharaoh to be hardened." He has continued to passively work on this most obstinate fellow in order to meet his purposes.

And yet there is more than just hardening the heart which is mentioned. It says that this, in itself, is sin because the hardening leads to a refusal to fulfill what his mouth had spoken. In this, he not only lies to Moses, but to the Lord whom Moses represents. And the result of this is our final verse of the day...

³⁵ So the heart of Pharaoh was hard; neither would he let the children of Israel go, as the Lord had spoken by Moses.

The hardening of Pharaoh's heart was greater this time because he was more moved by this plague than any before. The more movement to submit and allow the release of Israel required a greater swing in the pendulum to once again deny their release.

But because sin is involved in this decision, it cannot be that the Lord caused it. Anyone who ascribes these hardening actions of Pharaoh to the direct work of the Lord would then have to ascribe Pharaoh's sin to the hand of the Lord as well. Rather, the Lord has prompted, the Lord has allowed, but Pharaoh is responsible.

What the Lord had said would happen at the beginning has come about exactly as He spoke. Pharaoh has seen the judgments and has likewise been granted the mercies which accompanied them. And yet, he has continued to stubbornly fight against what has happened. As Matthew Henry says about this –

“Those that are not bettered by judgments and mercies, commonly become worse.”
-Henry

And so it is with Pharaoh. The children of Israel will have to wait a little longer for their deliverance from Egypt. However, this to them is probably a vacation. With Egypt being destroyed by the plagues, they surely haven't had time to worry about forcing greater burdens on the Israelites.

Instead, Israel has been safe and secure in the land of Goshen, waiting as the time draws near when they will see their release from the bondage of Egypt. Time and again so far, the false gods of Egypt have been shown for what they truly are. The Lord has magnified Himself and has brought Egypt to its knees.

But all of this could have been avoided. Rather than being forced to our knees, the Lord would ask us to willingly submit to Him. Either way, it will happen. The Bible tells us –

“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

-Philippians 2:9-11

Be wise and discerning, bow the knee willingly to the Lord who created you and who loves you enough to have sent his own Son to die for you that you might be reconciled to Him. Let me tell you what you need to know for this to happen...

Closing Verse: *Righteous are You, O Lord,
And upright are Your judgments. Psalm 119:137*

Next Week: Exodus 10:1-11 (The Plague of Locusts, Part I)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Lord is Righteous

Then the Lord said to Moses

So we understand

“Stretch out toward heaven your hand

That there may be hail in all of Egypt the land

On man, on beast, and on every herb of the field

Throughout the land of Egypt in order to make Pharaoh yield

And Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven

And the Lord sent thunder and hail and fire darted to the ground

And the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt

It must have been a terrifying sight and a horrifying sound

So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail

So very heavy that there was none like it

In all the land of Egypt since it became a nation

This time you would think surely Pharaoh would submit

And the hail struck throughout the whole land of Egypt

All that was in the field, both man and beast

And the hail struck every herb of the field

And broke every tree of the field, from the greatest to the least

Only in the land of Goshen, there was no travail
Where the children of Israel were, there was no hail

And Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron
And said to them, "I have sinned this time
The Lord is righteous, and my people and I are wicked
I now understand the scope of my crime

Entreat the Lord, that there may be
No more mighty thundering and hail in the land
For it is enough; I will let you go willingly
And you shall stay no longer, please understand

So Moses said to him, "As soon as I have gone out of the city
I will spread out my hands to the Lord
The thunder will cease, and there will no more hail be
Be assured of the truth of this word

That you may know that to the Lord belongs the earth
Everywhere where man may trod
But as for you and your servants
I know that you will not yet fear the Lord God

Now the flax and the barley were struck
For the barley was in the head and in bud was the flax
But the wheat and the spelt were not struck
For they are late crops, they were immune to the attacks

So Moses went out of the city
From Pharaoh and spread out his hands to the Lord
Then the thunder and the hail ceased
And the rain was not poured on the earth, according to his word

And when Pharaoh saw that the rain
The hail, and the thunder had ceased
He sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart again
He and his servants; his sin only increased

So the heart of Pharaoh was hard
Neither would he let the children of Israel go

As the Lord had spoken by Moses
This is what transpired as we now know

The Lord has dealt fairly with Pharaoh
Whose heart was hard and obstinate
He would not let Israel go
And so the Lord brought plagues to make Pharaoh submit

And the Lord will deal in like manner with us
When we put up false gods there in our heart
Instead of acknowledging His Son, the Lord Jesus
Instead of putting away sin and making a new start

So let us call out to the Lord, each one of us
Softening our hearts to Him and bowing the knee
Let us acknowledge Christ, the Lord – who is Jesus!
Let our faith be so strong that the whole world can see

And yes, we praise You, O glorious Jesus
We praise You and to You alone we will give honor and glory
For it is You who have done such wondrous things for us
Thank You for the cross and the resurrection, Your gospel story

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 10:1-11

(THE PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS, PART I)

At the time of Pharaoh, he was the leader of the greatest nation on earth. He had complete control over the nation, something he had inherited from a previous Pharaoh who listened to a wise young Hebrew man concerning a devastating famine which was coming upon his land.

Since then, the Hebrew people had been a part of the population and their efforts had continued to make the nation great, having built store cities for it and having remained productive members of the society, even if they remained apart from them culturally.

However, the dynasty of this Pharaoh has become an enemy of the Hebrews instead of their ally. He has continually made decisions which have been harmful to them. In turn, he has only brought hardship on himself. Little by little, his power has been slipping away because of the devastations which the Lord has brought on him.

Today, we will see him continue down this stubborn path and eventually he will come to complete ruin. He has set himself against the Lord and against the Lord's people, banging his head against an unyielding wall. It is the mark of a true dolt, but it isn't uncommon in history and it is no different than what is happening in the world today.

Text Verse: *"For the Lord's portion is His people;*

Jacob is the place of His inheritance.

¹⁰ He found him in a desert land

And in the wasteland, a howling wilderness;

He encircled him, He instructed him,

He kept him as the apple of His eye." Deuteronomy 32:9, 10

Pharaoh is stubborn and each time he sets himself against the word of the Lord, he only hurts himself and his people more. If that doesn't sound like a perfect parallel of our nation today, you probably aren't paying attention.

How we treat the Lord, how we treat the Lord's people, and how we respond to His judgments are all gauges of what the future holds for us. This is especially true with the leaders of a nation. They represent that nation and therefore that nation will collectively suffer because of the leader's decision.

Is it too late for our own land? Only time will tell, but we've been warned several times in the past 15 years. How many more warnings do we need? And when the tribulation period comes, it will only be worse. Locusts are coming upon Egypt and they will be coming upon the world of the end times.

This is what the Bible proclaims and this then is exactly what has happened and what will happen. It's as sure as His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Locusts to Cover the Face of the Earth (verses 1-6)

¹ Now the Lord said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart

Chapter 10 begins with the order for Moses to go in once again and confront Pharaoh. In this, He notes that "I have hardened his heart." There are a few points of interest here. The first is that the "I" is emphatic. Everything thus far has been orchestrated to harden Pharaoh's heart and so the Lord can be said to harden Pharaoh, even though it has been done passively.

And it's certain that it is a passive rather than an active hardening because a different word was used than just one verse before. In the final two verses of chapter 9, after the plague of hail was complete, it said –

"And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart, he and his servants. ³⁵ So the heart of Pharaoh was hard; neither would he let the children of Israel go, as the Lord had spoken by Moses." Exodus 9:34, 35

The order of the words for "harden" in these three verses is *kaved*, *khazaq*, and then *kaved* again. Verse 34 said that Pharaoh is the one who sinned and hardened his heart and it used *kaved*. Then it said his heart was hard using *khazaq*. Now it says that the Lord has hardened his heart and *kaved* is used again.

This may sound unimportant, but it is foundational in understanding what is happening and why these events have come about. We cannot impute wrongdoing to the Lord. It is Pharaoh who sinned. However, He sinned because of his own stubborn heart which the Lord knew would harden through His promptings.

There is both a willful and intentional hardening of Pharaoh through arrogance and yet the behind-the-scenes hardening of the man by the Lord through the steadfast operation of His moral and just nature which increasingly dulls him as well. As this increases, the natural result is that more and greater punishment will be inflicted with each occurrence.

The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is a reflection of the state of man as he either yields to, or willingly hardens against, the prompting of God, be it through nature or through His word. If we can cling to this when things go bad, we can still proclaim with our lips, "Despite the trial, He is the Lord. I *will* be obedient and I *will not* withhold His praise from my lips."

A close walk with the Lord and a good grounding in His word will keep us from all sorts of unnecessary trials, tribulations, and temptations as we face the troubles that are sure to come our way.

¹ (con't) **and the hearts of his servants,**

I just read you verse 9:34. Let me read it again –

"And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart, he and his servants."

It noted the servants in that verse specifically. And now, because of their self-willed hardening, attention is again being brought on them in this first verse of chapter 10. In this case, the word is the same for both instances – *kaved*. The action of the servants in verse 34 is ascribed to them; the action here in verse 1 is ascribed to the Lord, but the same word is used.

The active actions of the Lord through the plagues have been used to harden the servants' hearts. And it worked. They actively hardened against the Lord. But even though the plagues were an act of the Lord, they were a passive action in relation to the servants. It seems like hair-splitting, but it isn't.

Time and time again these words are being introduced to teach us fundamental truths concerning our relationship to our Creator and our responses to His active hand in the world around us. And so, in order to get a clearer picture, let's remove ourselves from the plagues on Egypt for a second and pretend that it is Florida which gets hit by a catastrophic tsunami.

A staunch believer in the Lord will understand that God is sovereign. He will know he isn't immune from the catastrophes of nature. If he survives but his entire family is lost, he will naturally be filled with grief. But he will not impute wrongdoing to the Lord. Mournful questions may arise, but they will be from the soft heart of faith.

However, another affected person may have been a nominal Christian or someone who never really considered himself in relation to the Creator. He also loses his entire family and his heart becomes hard towards God, rebellious and angry – even defiant.

And let's introduce one more person; we'll call him Al. Al also loses his family, but he sees the destruction as a way that he can profit off of it. And so he willfully denies that there is any God at all through his actions. He begins a crusade to convince the world that the tsunami was the result of man-made global warming which caused the waters to get so hot that they hiccupped.

Each of these three has experienced the same calamity and yet each has responded differently to it. As the Lord is ultimately in control of all events, the catastrophe was allowed by the Lord, and yet the response to Him has had measurably different effects on those who were afflicted by it.

Back to Pharaoh and Egypt – the Lord now once again explains the reason for what He is doing...

¹ (con't) that I may show these signs of Mine before him,

The Lord is sovereign. He has an end purpose for every action He takes, or for every event that He allows to proceed unimpeded. There is no wrongdoing which can be imputed to Him for these things. In the case of the plagues upon Egypt, it is so that He may show his signs before Pharaoh.

The word "signs" is *owtot*. A sign is given to show something else. They are miracles, but they also serve the purposes of revealing the glory of God, destroying the false objects of worship in Egypt, and showing pictures of future events in redemptive history. All of this and more is tied up in the signs of the Lord.

² and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and your son's son the mighty things I have done in Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them, that you may know that I *am* the Lord."

Even more than what we have already noted is found here in verse 2. The signs have been given for the benefit of future generations to hear, recall, and remember the work of the Lord so that they will know that He is, in fact, Yehovah – the existent One.

The word for “tell” here is *saphar*. It indicates to count, recount, or relate. The recounting of what occurred in Egypt became a standard among Israel and it has been recounted, year by year, at the Passover, for over 3500 years. The plagues are recounted in the Psalms as well; specifically Psalms 78 & 105, among others.

As Adam Clarke comments on this verse – “It was not to crush the poor worm, Pharaoh, that he wrought such mighty wonders, but to convince his enemies, to the end of the world, that no cunning or power can prevail against him; and to show his followers that whosoever trusted in him should never be confounded.”

The words “I have done” in this verse are based on the verb *alal*. It is the first of 19 times that it will be used in Scripture and its specific meaning is to “abuse.” This is why some versions more poignantly translate this as “dealt harshly” or “made a mockery” toward those in Egypt.

And this is the intent of the word “Egypt.” It isn’t speaking of the land, but the people in the land. This is evident from the plural pronoun “them” which is used. Further, the intended recipients of the knowledge which is being passed on concerning what occurs in Egypt are obscured in this translation.

It says, “...that you may know that I *am* the Lord.” This makes it sound like the Lord is speaking to Moses, but the pronoun in Hebrew is plural. All of Israel will see the events. The events will also be recorded by Moses who is the representative of all of Israel. And all of Israel of the future will receive the law through Moses. Thus Israel of all generations is who is being spoken to.

And because the full revelation of God’s word is included in the Christian Bible, the Lord is speaking directly to us as well. Any person, believer or not, who hears or reads the word is expected to assimilate what is said and to respond by acknowledging Him.

³ So Moses and Aaron came in to Pharaoh and said to him, “Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews:

This is now the 19th time that the term “Hebrew” has been used in Scripture. It is also the 6th time that the Lord has been identified with the term in relation to them being

His people. And finally, it is the last time that the term “Hebrew” will be used until after the exodus of the people from Egypt.

The Lord has identified Himself with them and He is now speaking once again on their behalf for their release.

³ (con’t) **‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me.**

In verse 9:27, there was a brief moment where Pharaoh had clarity of thought. There he proclaimed, “I have sinned this time. The Lord *is* righteous, and my people and I *are* wicked.” Now, just 11 verses later, he is being prepared for further chastening because of his refusal to truly submit and humble himself before the Lord.

Though hardening of Pharaoh has been the intent in the events so far, the ultimate intent of the plagues is to humble, not harden him. The word for “to humble yourself” is *l’anot*. It means to abase oneself or to submit to another.

Pharaoh has purposely refused to do this, thus the hardening is shown to be a purposeful response to the work of the Lord. If you wonder why someone you know refuses to call out to Jesus for salvation, the same truth applies to them as that which applies to Pharaoh here.

They have willingly refused His calling. So much for the perverse doctrine of “limited atonement” which is espoused by Calvinists! They say that Jesus only died for a certain group of people, the elect, and not for all people. That is false.

The only limit in atonement is what actually occurs among those who believe, not what is potentially offered to all people. Jesus Christ died for all, but not all have received His offer. As the Geneva Bible notes –

“The purpose of affliction is that we humble ourselves with true repentance under the hand of God.” Geneva

Pharaoh has thus far failed to humble himself before the afflictions upon his kingdom, and many obdurate souls walking around the world today have likewise failed to humble themselves before the splendid majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ **Or else, if you refuse to let My people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your territory.**

Plague 8 is announced. Like plagues 3 and 4, insects are being used to meet the Lord's purposes. Also, like plague 7, it is a direct attack against the Egyptian gods Nut, the sky goddess, and Osiris, god of crops and fertility. The gods will be shown false and the captors of Israel will be punished once again.

In addition to this, the coming plague is a precursor to the fifth trumpet judgment upon the earth in the end times. Here is what Revelation 9 says –

Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. ² And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. ³ Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. ⁴ They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ⁵ And they were not given *authority* to kill them, but to torment them *for* five months. Their torment *was* like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. ⁶ In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.

⁷ The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces *were* like the faces of men. ⁸ They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' *teeth*. ⁹ And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings *was* like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. ¹⁰ They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power *was* to hurt men five months. ¹¹ And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew *is* Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon. Revelation 9:1-11

Locusts are noted throughout the Old Testament as well and they are especially highlighted in the book of Joel. Their Hebrew name is *arbeh*. But the root of that word is what gives substance to their name. It is *ravah* and means "multiply."

Thus, the very name, "locust" implies astonishing numbers. In fact, in Joel 2:25, the Lord calls them "My great army." They are chosen now as an instrument of destruction from the heavens. And there is a reason for this, which is because the previous plague of hail, which was also from the heavens, left some standing vegetation.

The locusts are ordered to come and take care of all that is left. They are a consuming army which literally destroys the earth as they march forward in their ranks. They are used metaphorically for the armies which come against Israel in Joel 2 because, like real armies, they destroy everything in their path. In Joel, the destruction is described poetically –

“A fire devours before them,
And behind them a flame burns;
The land *is* like the Garden of Eden before them,
And behind them a desolate wilderness;
Surely nothing shall escape them.” Joel 2:3

Anything alive and green at their coming is left completely consumed as they depart. This is how they operate and this is what is now promised to Pharaoh...

⁵And they shall cover the face of the earth, so that no one will be able to see the earth; and they shall eat the residue of what is left, which remains to you from the hail, and they shall eat every tree which grows up for you out of the field.

Grace was given in the previous verse. In essence, if you will humble yourself and let my people go, no further harm will come upon you. Further grace was given by announcing that he had until the next day to comply. And grace is even given in the announcement of the type of plague that will come.

Knowing in advance what would afflict Egypt was not necessary, but as with each previous plagues, it is announced so that Pharaoh could consider and amend his ways. If he chose to not do so, the extent of the plague is minutely described. Thus it is one final note of grace before judgment comes.

The antithesis is therefore given. Release my people who have built your land, or I will send my destroyers to destroy your land. And here is what it will be like... “They shall cover the face of the earth.” The Hebrew here literally says, “*the eye* of the earth.” It is a phrase used only three times in the Bible, once here and twice speaking of the immense number of Israelites who were preparing to enter the Promised Land. The plague of locusts would be so thick that the “eye” of the land would be darkened by them.

The term is explained by the next words, “no one will be able to see the earth.” This is not an exaggeration either. Plagues of locusts have been noted many times in history

with so many of them that they are literally 5 or 6 inches deep and they cover a distance of a thousand square miles or more.

Egypt would be so inundated that Pharaoh is told that every green thing left alive would be completely consumed by them. One writer, Stuart Poole, notes that –

“...locusts suddenly appear in the cultivated land, coming from the desert in a column of great length. They fly across the country, darkening the air with their compact ranks, which are undisturbed by the constant attacks of kites, crows, and vultures, and making a strange whizzing sound, like that of fire, or many distant wheels. Where they alight they devour every green thing, even stripping the trees of their leaves. Rewards are offered for their destruction; but no labour can seriously reduce their numbers” Stuart Poole

⁶They shall fill your houses, the houses of all your servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians—

I read several eyewitness accounts of plagues of locusts and some of them were almost horrifying. They not only would get into houses, but they would be so thick that they would fly into the mouth of anyone taking a breath. It would be so dark out that even with candles or torches it would still be dark.

People wrote of the locusts being so hungry that they would eat leather and wood in the houses. Nothing is safe from their onslaught and no matter how many one killed, it wouldn't be a tiny dent in those left behind. Joel 2:9 describes such a locust plague –

“They run to and fro in the city,
They run on the wall;
They climb into the houses,
They enter at the windows like a thief.” Joel 2:9

^{6 (con't)} which neither your fathers nor your fathers' fathers have seen, since the day that they were on the earth to this day.” And he turned and went out from Pharaoh.

Locusts are not indigenous to Egypt, but they have been known to afflict them many times. As the wind blows, it brings them in from other areas. Pharaoh would probably have been familiar with a swarm of locusts, but now he is told more. The plague coming upon Egypt will be unlike any plague ever seen in the land.

From the time of the first man upon earth until the rising of the sun on the next day, there will have been nothing like it. Whatever Pharaoh imagined would be less than what would come about. The weight of the plague would be utterly immense. And with that final note, Moses stepped out of Pharaoh's palace, leaving him to consider what he had been told.

*You're a stubborn one, Pharaoh, but you will yield
I will continue to come against you until you do
Next up is locusts to cover Egypt, including every field
And they will be so thick, they'll come into your houses too*

*Nothing green will be left unless you humble your heart
And let My people go to serve Me
This advanced warning I do to you impart
But I'm sure that you haven't yet begun to see*

*You're a stubborn one, Pharaoh, but you will yield
Eventually, I know that you will let Israel go
My word has been spoken and it is sealed
What I have said will come about, even so*

II. Let the Men Go! (verses 7 & 8)

⁷ Then Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long shall this man be a snare to us?"

Verse 7 now initiates a new phase in the events of the plagues. Up until now, nobody has been recorded as giving Pharaoh advice, but that now changes. In Exodus 8:19, the magicians acknowledged the plague of lice as "the finger of God." In Exodus 9:20, it says that certain people "feared the word of the Lord" and acted upon it.

Now, Pharaoh's own servants have accepted that the words of Moses are, in fact, true. They fully believe that what he says will come about. Thus, they have acknowledged the Power behind the words, Yehovah.

The question in Hebrew is different than it reads in English. It says *ad matay yiyeh zeh lanu l'moqesh* – "until when shall *this* be unto us a snare?" There is no noun for "man" here, and so it could be talking about Moses, it could be talking about the situation of

the plagues, the reason for the plagues – which is keeping Israel, or the entire scenario as one giant catastrophe.

I would prefer the last option – it is referring to the whole sh’bang. This is the first of 27 times that the word *moqesh* or “snare” is used in the Bible. The word literally means a snare, such as for catching animals, but it is as often as not used figuratively to indicate something that will lead to destruction.

The next time it is used will be in Exodus 23 when describing the inhabitants of the Promised Land. There it says –

“For I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. ³² You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. ³³ They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me. For *if* you serve their gods, it will surely be a **snare** to you.” Exodus 23:31-33

The snare at that time is referring to the inhabitants of the land, making a covenant with them and/or their gods, and serving their gods. This is exactly how Israel is now perceived to the Egyptians. Everything about them is a snare that will end in their destruction.

7 (con’t) **Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God.**

From time to time, it needs to be repeated that the words “the Lord” mean literally, Yehovah. It is a pronoun indicating His name, not a title. The force of what the servants of Pharaoh say here is lost without understanding this. They actually say, “Let the men go, that they may serve Yehovah, their God.

They are acknowledging now that Yehovah *is* the God of the Hebrews and that He *is* to be served just as Pharaoh would serve his own gods. And so they make a recommendation, “Let the *men* go.” It does not say, “Let the people go.”

A different word is used here than in verse 11 for “man” and so some scholars try to say that the term “men” is inclusive of all of the people. However, there are 2006 uses of this word for “man” in the Old Testament and I went through most of them. Not one that I found was translated any other way than “man.”

The servants are merely asking for the men to leave to serve Yehovah. It then implies that they would be returning after their time of worship was complete. This is certain because otherwise, the rest of the account makes no true sense.

7 (con't) Do you not yet know that Egypt is destroyed?"

The words are in the past tense, "Egypt is destroyed." And yet it isn't yet destroyed. There is then a sense of fear in the servants concerning the finality of the coming plague for their land and their fortunes. They are not so much guided by their love of Israel as they are by the horror that continued resistance will bring about.

8 So Moses and Aaron were brought again to Pharaoh, and he said to them, "Go, serve the Lord your God. Who *are* the ones that are going?"

Obviously, the consultation had a partial effect on Pharaoh because Moses and Aaron were brought again into his presence with the grant that they may in fact go to serve Yehovah their God. But even before acceptance can be made, an implied qualification is added into the mix.

The Hebrew provides a wonderfully poetic translation into English. It says *mi vami haholekem* – "who and who will go with you?" The repetition is a way of asking for a complete description of who is intended to join in the trip into the wilderness.

The counselors had gone so far as to recommend the men leave and so Pharaoh asks his question implying that not everyone will actually be allowed to go. He knew from the plague of frogs that "the people" were to go, but he now wants the ambiguity of that statement removed and a firm answer of who is entailed in the term "the people." And so Moses now tells him...

9 And Moses said, "We will go with our young and our old; with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds we will go, for we must hold a feast to the Lord."

The designations given by Moses are all-encompassing. There is no more ambiguity in what is demanded. The first designation is "our young and our old." These are males. The elders would be in superintendence over the affairs of the feast and the younger would be instructed in the method of the feast for the future.

The “sons and daughters” means that the entire household would be included – obviously if the children went, their mothers would be with them. The “flocks and the herds” meant that not an animal would be left because they were to be the offering to the Lord. Whatever was determined would be offered. To leave any behind would also mean they would be susceptible to theft. All would go.

The entire company of Israel was to participate without exception. But according to the ancient writer Herodotus, this was the custom of the Egyptians as well. The entire family was included in their six annual feasts. Because of this, Moses wasn’t asking for anything that was beyond what Egypt already understood.

It needs to be noted that in just a short time, Israel will observe the Passover. In the instructions for it, there was to be a lamb per household for the Passover meal. Considering that there are 603,550 fighting aged men who will depart, that would be an immense number of lambs.

And at the exodus, a large number of flocks and herds of the people are mentioned as they depart. Thus, there would have been millions of animals ready to head out of Egypt and from under his grasp. He will not be pleased with this thought.

*I’m not keen on seeing Egypt ruined even more
And so I will now consider letting you go
You may leave to serve Yehovah, that’s for sure
But who and who will go with you, this I want to know*

*I’m a generous guy and I’m sure we can agree
You’ll get your request granted and off you’ll go
I hope it’s a grand time, a super festive par-ty
But who and who will go with you, this I need to know*

*Everyone will go, this you must know, dear Pharaoh
The whole group of people known as Israel
And all of our flocks will go too, that is who and who will go, so you know
You have asked and now my words do tell*

III. It Looks Like Tomorrow Will be a Bad Day for Egypt (verses 10 & 11)

¹⁰ Then he said to them, “The Lord had better be with you when I let you and your little ones go!

All of verse 10 is debatable in its intended meaning. This first portion is obscure. Some look at it as a curse, some look at it as a statement of mockery. Either way, because he has already credited Yehovah with the preceding plagues, he is now blaspheming Him.

The same God who has wrought all of this destruction is being challenged in His demand for service and who the participants of that service will be. His words now all but call out for the plague of locusts to come.

¹⁰ (con't) **Beware, for evil is ahead of you.**

This second half of the verse is also difficult to interpret. It says *ki raah neged penekhem* – “indeed evil is before your faces.” It is either a threat – “If you try to leave as you have demanded you will certainly find evil in the punishment you receive.” Or it is an indictment on their character – “I can tell that your heart is bent on evil because your face reflects it quite clearly.”

Either way, Albert Barnes sums up the thought quite nicely –

“Great as the possible infliction might be, Pharaoh held it to be a less evil than the loss of so large a population.” Albert Barnes

In other words, “If letting all of you go is the price of not being plagued, then bring on the plague, because you all aren’t going!”

¹¹ **Not so! Go now, you *who are* men, and serve the Lord, for that is what you desired.”**

His words drip with irony because he knows that Moses won’t flinch, and his mind is made up as well. The war of ego is all he can think about at this point. Instead, he tells them that the men can go, but he uses a different word for man. It is *geber* which implies an adult male. It comes from the verb *gabar* which means “mighty.”

It is being used by him as an antithesis to the word for “men” mentioned in verse 7. Further, he is inserting it into Moses’ mouth because this word has never been used during the entire dialog. Regardless of what he may have *thought* Moses meant, it is not *what* Moses meant.

Along with all of this, there is one more point of irony which is the words “go now.” He is falsely implying that the mighty men may go, but he actually means that these two

heroes standing in front of him were to be excused as we see in the final portion of the verse...

11 (con't) And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

This is an indignity that they had not yet suffered. The increasing anger and hardening of Pharaoh has become almost a torrent of rage. He is a troubled man who desperately wants to control the events around him and yet he has no power to do so.

And so he uses his anger to vent his frustrations and to subject his opponents to whatever disgrace is available to him. He had just told them that evil was before their *faces*, and now the final words say that they have been “driven from the *face* of Pharaoh.” With this act, He has sealed the fate of Egypt to yet another plague.

It is a hard, painful road he has chosen, but we too have made similar choices of our own. As a people we elect leaders who we intuitively know will bring us temporary relief and long term pain.

As individuals, we may choose a sinful divorce for momentary pleasure in place of staying married and enduring through times of difficulty, which will normally in the end with times of great joy and blessing.

As students we may cheat instead of putting forth the effort to study. As employees, we may find ways of hiding our laziness in order to make our day a little smoother. Whatever it is that is self-centered in our decision-making process, it is almost always the worst possible avenue to pursue.

Pharaoh hasn't learned this and it has cost him. It will continue to cost him until his kingdom is ruined, his firstborn son is dead, and until he finally perishes beneath the waters of the Red Sea. Following the word of the Lord, being obedient to His commands, and honoring Him with our life and our actions is always the very best course for us to follow.

And there is no greater truth than that which says we must belong to Him in order to be able to please Him. And the only way that can come about is by calling out to Him for forgiveness of sin and reconciliation between the warring parties. If you have never called out to Jesus, please let me tell you what you need to know...

Closing Verse: *A wicked man hardens his face,
But as for the upright, he establishes his way. Proverbs 21:29*

Next Week: Exodus 10:12-20 (The Plague of Locusts, Part II)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Release or Locusts, Take Your Pick

Now the Lord said to Moses
“Go in to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart
And the hearts of his servants
That I may before him these signs of Mine impart

And that you may tell in the hearing of your son
And your son’s son the mighty things I have in Egypt done

And My signs which I have done among them by My word
That you may know that I am the Lord.”

So Moses and Aaron came in to Pharaoh
And said to him, “Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews
‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me?
Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the manner I choose

Or else, if you refuse to let My people go
Behold, I will bring locusts into your territory tomorrow

And they shall cover the earth’s face
So that no one will be able to see the earth
And they shall eat the residue of what is left in this place
Which remains to you from the hail, anything of worth

And they shall eat every tree which grows
Up for you out of the field, anything that shows

They shall fill your houses
The houses of all your servants, all looking for what’s green
And the houses of all the Egyptians
Which neither your fathers nor your fathers’ fathers have seen,

Since the day that they were on the earth to this day
And he turned and out from Pharaoh he went away

Then Pharaoh's servants said to him
"How long shall this man be a snare to us?
Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God
Do you not yet know that Egypt is destroyed from all this fuss?"

So Moses and Aaron were brought again to Pharaoh
And he said to them, in a manner unknowing
"Go, serve the Lord your God, even so
Who are the ones that are going?"

And Moses said, "We will go
With our young and our old
With our sons and our daughters
With our flocks and our herds we will go, now you have been told

For we must hold a feast to the Lord
This is the command of His spoken word

Then he said to them as we now know
"The Lord had better be with you
When I let you and your little ones go!
Beware, for evil is ahead of you, it's true

Not so! Go now, you who are men
And serve the Lord, for that is what you desired
And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence, there and then
These are the things which have transpired

Pharaoh is a tough nut to crack as we see
He is stubborn to the point of foolishness and ruin
But how often is the same true with you and me
When we let our emotions become our own undoin'

Let's choose a better path and be obedient to the Lord
Let's willingly follow Jesus in this life we live
Together let us follow the precepts laid out in His word
And all of our praise and worship, to Him let us give

May peace reign in our hearts, each of us
May our lives be suitable offerings to God
Every moment let us pursue the Lord Jesus
And find contentment on the hallowed path we trod

All our praise we offer to You. O Lord Jesus
You are our Rock, our Light, and the Guide for each of us

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 10:12-20 (THE PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS, PART II)

In 2013, the most recent major plague of locusts filled the Middle East. It wasn't by any stretch comparable to the plague described in the Bible or some other plagues which have come about in recorded history, but photos from it still showed an impressive amount of locusts suddenly showing up in various places.

Over Egypt, they estimated an infestation of about 30 million locusts. Just before the Passover in Israel, a portion of them flew over the border and covered about 2000 acres in the south of the land. With modern pest control, the infestation quickly died out, but it made for great new stories, especially because it occurred so close to Passover.

In our ongoing look into the plagues on Egypt, we're also getting closer and closer to the first Passover. Seven plagues are behind us and the eighth is just about to start. And despite it being the greatest plague of locusts ever to come upon the earth, it will still not have a permanent effect on Pharaoh.

When reading Exodus, he sounds like a nut job because he keeps refusing to yield to the Lord. When you read it, it almost seems impossible that someone could act this way. And yet, Pharaoh is simply a picture of any one of us or any group of people at any given time.

We can laugh at the stupid man because we see the whole story in front of us, but he was really no different than Israel. They got many of the same punishments as Pharaoh and they still wouldn't yield to the Lord. And really, how much worse was this when they were the Lord's people and had the Lord's word right there in front of them!

Text Verse: *"I blasted you with blight and mildew.*

When your gardens increased,

Your vineyards,

Your fig trees,

And your olive trees,

The locust devoured them;

Yet you have not returned to Me,'

Says the Lord." Amos 4:9

The words of Amos go on citing the measures the Lord took to get Israel to repent. And yet time and again, they wouldn't listen. Eventually, the sobering words of the Lord show the utter frustration He had at their continued rebellion as He cried out, "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" (4:12)

I can't think of a more terrifying thought, and yet every person on earth will eventually hear the same words. Some will be ready and some won't, but we will all be meeting our God someday. The terms on which we meet Him depend solely on our relationship with Jesus Christ.

For Pharaoh, the Lord will continue to demonstrate that He alone is God and that the gods of Egypt are merely false gods. And for us, He has proven this so powerfully through His word that we are simply left without excuse if we ignore it and turn our hearts away from Him.

And so let's not do that. Instead, pay heed to His superior word. In order to do that, we need to know it. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The East Winds Brings Destruction (verses 12-15)

¹² Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts,

In the previous verse from last week, Moses and Aaron had suffered the disgrace of being driven from Pharaoh's presence. Because they are the representatives of the Lord, it was an act against Him. This is no different than treating an ambassador from another country with disgrace.

The treatment of the representative reflects upon the people or authority that the person represents. To expel an ambassador is thus intended as an action against the one whom the ambassador represents. To expel Moses and Aaron can only be viewed as a defiant action against the Lord.

Therefore, the Lord will now act once again, multiplying His wonders in the land of Egypt. And so He instructs Moses to "Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts." Mentally, we can picture what this would entail.

Moses would raise his arms to the heavens and draw them out in the direction of all four quarters as if beckoning the great army which God has prepared for the moment. It will be, as Pharaoh was already told, locusts.

To repeat so you remember, locusts are seen throughout the Old Testament and they are especially highlighted in the book of Joel. Their Hebrew name is *arbeh*. But the root of *arbeh* is what gives substance to their name. It is *ravah* and means “multiply.” Thus, the very name, “locust” implies astonishing numbers. As we saw, in Joel the Lord calls them “My great army.” The great army of the Lord will now rain destruction from the heavens. Their devastating power will come heavily upon the land with the sole purpose of consuming everything they encounter.

^{12 (con't)} **that they may come upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land—**

Last week, in verse 5 it mentioned that the locusts “shall eat the residue of what is left” and it specifically mentioned the trees. Now it uses a general word to describe every green thing – *esev*. It is the same word which was used in the plague of hail. There it said—

“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt—on man, on beast, and on every **herb** of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.’ ²³ And Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven; and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire darted to the ground. And the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt. ²⁴ So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, so very heavy that there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. ²⁵ And the hail struck throughout the whole land of Egypt, all that *was* in the field, both man and beast; and the hail struck every **herb** of the field and broke every tree of the field.” Exodus 9:22-25

The plague of hail wrought its damage on the trees and herbs, and now these words are used again to show that although the hail did great damage, some plants survived. These will now be consumed by the grand plague of locusts.

The Hebrew word for “come upon” is *alah*. Here it gives the general idea of rising like clouds as they are carried in by the wind. From a distance, one would only see a great black cloud coming upon the land. If you didn’t know what it was, it would be a most terrifying sensation.

One might think some type of supernatural hostile force was coming upon the land or that the earth itself was rising like a black dust cloud to consume whatever was in its path. Even someone who knew what the cloud was would surely feel panic in the moment before it arrived. The cloud would come and the damage will be immense...

¹² (con't) **all that the hail has left.”**

The stretching out of the hands over Egypt was symbolic. It meant that there would be complete coverage of the country, just as there was with the hail. Whatever was spared in that plague will again be susceptible to further destruction. But because there was so much damage already from the hail, the locusts would have less to eat than they otherwise would have.

Because of this, what was left would be at even greater risk than by a normal plague, and Pharaoh has already been told that this will be greater than any other known plague up to that point. He should have heeded, but the hardened heart is like an iron wall. And Pharaoh's heart was very hard.

*Pharaoh's heart is hard and his mind is fixed
And many pains he has brought on himself and his land
First he relents and then hardens, his actions are mixed
And so again and again he receives a punishing hand*

*First it was blood, then frogs, and then the lice
Those didn't work, nor did the flies or the death of the livestock
And the boils and the hail could not have been nice
Now maybe the locusts will his heart finally unlock*

*They are coming and they will cover the land
What hasn't been destroyed will now be chewed away
Another plague from God's powerful hand
Another plague which for an end Pharaoh will pray*

¹³ **So Moses stretched out his rod over the land of Egypt,**

As instructed, so Moses does. Like the plague of hail, Aaron isn't mentioned. Instead it says that Moses took the action. There has been a marked shift in the initiation of the

plagues, as least from how the Bible records them. Moses, whose name means “He who draws out,” will once again draw out a terrifying plague upon the land of Egypt.

13 (con’t) and the Lord brought an east wind on the land all that day and all *that* night.

Moses is very careful to describe the details of how the Lord worked this great miracle. Because locusts plagues are not entirely uncommon, this one is again natural enough to be dismissed as chance timing by a hardened heart, but it is supernatural enough to be seen as a true miracle by one who understands God’s foreknowledge of such events when they occur.

The true miracle is just that – the event was foretold by the Lord and it will come about exactly when He directs it to occur. The Pulpit Commentary notes that –

“Locusts generally come with a wind; and, indeed, cannot fly far without one. An east wind would in this case have brought them from northern Arabia, which is a tract where they are often bred in large numbers. Denon, the French traveller, notes that an enormous cloud of locusts which invaded Egypt during his stay, came from the east.”

Because the verse tells us that the wind blew all that day and all that night, it is telling us that the locusts could easily have been carried a very great distance without any trouble at all. There was a devastating date with destiny for these destructive demons and there was no delay in their duly-timed arrival...

13 (con’t) When it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts.

While speaking to Pharaoh through Moses, the Lord said this in verse 4 – “...if you refuse to let My people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your territory.” Exactly as prophesied, so it occurred. Only a truly hardened heart could continue to fight against such precise warnings with such devastating results.

Before we go on, I want to read you this entire verse again and then read you Exodus 14:21. There you will see the similarities in how God performs the miracles –

“So Moses stretched out his rod over the land of Egypt, and the Lord brought an east wind on the land all that day and all *that* night. When it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts.” (10:12)

“Then 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 into dry *land*, and the waters were divided.” Exodus 14:21

Both times an east wind is used to produce the miracle. God’s use of the east wind in the first instance was to destroy Pharaoh’s land of Egypt while continuing to work towards securing Israel’s freedom. His use of this same east wind later was to actually secure freedom for Israel and at the same time to destroy Pharaoh and the Egyptian people.

There are both similarities and contrasts, but in both the glory of the Lord is revealed.

¹⁴ And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt and rested on all the territory of Egypt.

The same word for “territory” which was used to describe the coverage of the plague of frogs is used again here. It is *gebul* and it means “borders.” In other words, the land within the borders is what was infested. Wherever anything green was within the borders it was plagued with locusts.

After their long flight, they are said to have rested there. This is the same word for “rest” as was used for example, after the flood of Noah. As the flood ended, the ark *rested* on the mountains of Ararat. In the same way, the locusts have been on a long, divinely-directed journey, and they too will now rest and reinvigorate themselves.

¹⁴ (con’t) They were very severe; previously there had been no such locusts as they,

In verse 6, Moses told Pharaoh this –

“They shall fill your houses, the houses of all your servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians—which neither your fathers nor your fathers’ fathers have seen, since the day that they were on the earth to this day.”

Exactly as had been prophesied, so it came about. In fact, the words used to describe the coming of the locusts are *kaved meod* – “very heavy.” The sheer numbers of them would have been such a weight and a burden on the already devastated land that it would simply *groan* from the arrival of this new plague.

But there is more than just a plague which had never been seen before. The Bible describes it as a plague which is unique for all time...

¹⁴ (con't) **nor shall there be such after them.**

There is no reason to not take these words literally. The Bible says that this plague was immense and that there would never be such a plague like it again. It doesn't specify only Egypt. It simply says that this is the big one for all time.

In Joel 2:2, it uses similar words, but the locusts referred to in Joel are metaphorically being used of men. The army of the end times prophesied in Joel will be comparable to the locusts of the book of Exodus. As often happens in the Bible, things from nature are used both literally and in metaphor for us to see how the Lord's hand works in redemptive history.

As this is the greatest plague of locusts ever, then in order to understand how immense it must have been, we can read Benson's comments on other plagues which have been documented in history –

“In the year 1527 great troops of locusts were brought by a strong wind out of Turkey into Poland, which country they wasted; and in 1536 a wind from the Euxine Sea brought such vast numbers into Podolia, that, for many miles round, they destroyed every thing. And “in the year 1650, a cloud of locusts was seen to enter Russia in three different places; and from thence they spread themselves over Poland and Lithuania, in such astonishing multitudes that the air was darkened, and the earth covered with their numbers. In some places they were seen lying dead, heaped upon each other to the depth of four feet; in others they covered the surface like a black cloth; the trees bent with their weight, and the damage which the country sustained exceeded computation.”

-Benson

If this plague upon Egypt is truly the greatest ever seen, imagine the horror of the devastation which must have been wrought.

¹⁵ **For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened;**

This verse could actually mean one of two things. It either means that as they arrived the entire earth was darkened by their blotting out the sun, or that when they arrived, the entire earth was covered with them. Actually though, both would be the case. Albert Barnes notes one example from history of the first case –

“Travelers mention a cloud of locusts extending over 500 miles, and so compact while on the wing that it completely hid the sun. This passage describes a swarm unprecedented in extent.”

Charles Ellicott notes one example from history of the second –

“The steppes were literally covered with the bodies of these insects. . . . The whole face of nature seemed to be concealed as by a living veil.”

The locusts over Egypt were numerous enough to blacken out the sun as they flew and they were numerous enough to cover the land completely as they rested. And the word used for “cover” in the Hebrew shows that either is possible.

When the flood of Noah covered the earth, the same word was used. Likewise, in the 147th psalm the word is used to indicate clouds which cover the earth. Therefore, this is certainly speaking of the entire cycle of the visit of the locusts, both *over* and *on* the land.

15 (con't) and they ate every herb of the land and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left.

The Pulpit commentary notes that –

“...if these terrible columns stop half an hour on a spot, for everything growing on it, vines, olive-trees, and corn, to be entirely destroyed. After they have passed, nothing remains but the large branches and the roots, which, being underground, have escaped their voracity.”

The locusts in Egypt were certainly famished from the long flight and were thus ready to devour everything that they came to. I don't suppose that unless we actually saw such a sight, that we could even imagine how utter the devastation must have been.

And as we think about it, we have to keep reminding ourselves that 1) this was purposed by God to show His power over Egypt and Egypt's false gods, 2) that it was His intent through this to secure the release of His people, and 3) that it could have been avoided if Pharaoh simply yielded to the demand of the Lord.

And for each of these points, we can look both to parallels in the end times and what will occur there, and also to individual instances in every life on earth. God shows His power for exactly the same reasons in both of these.

What is amazing is that even though this is true, and we have the written record of it from the past, most people in the world fail to see it in themselves, and the world of the end times will collectively fail to see it as they head off to their own doom.

¹⁵ (con't) **So there remained nothing green on the trees or on the plants of the field throughout all the land of Egypt.**

Verse 15 shows the victory of the Lord over the false Egyptian gods Nut, the sky goddess, and Osiris, god of crops and fertility. Nut was unable to stop the advance of the Lord's locust army, and Osiris was unable to save the crops and the fruit trees from their complete devastation.

In chapter 9, the Lord said, "...at this time I will send all My plagues to your very heart, and on your servants and on your people, that you may know that *there is* none like Me in all the earth" (Exodus 9:14). The Lord spoke and He continues to demonstrate that His spoken word is true.

*How can anyone be as obstinate as Pharaoh?
Who could continue to harm himself and not relent?
One plague after another, and he still won't let Israel go
Will he continue until the Lord's arrows are all spent?*

*His quiver is full and will never grow empty
And it is only we who suffer as we fight against His word
But He is gracious and forgives, hoping we will see
And acknowledge that He alone is the Lord*

*Let us not be like Pharaoh and continue to fight
But instead let us respond to His loving call
Take advantage of the day, for soon comes the night
Now is the time and in heaven there is room for us all*

II. The West Wind Brings Relief (verses 16-20)

¹⁶ **Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste,**

Something new is added into this call. It reads that he called for them "in haste." The word is *mahar* and it means "hurriedly" or "quickly." Unlike the previous summons,

there is a sense of true urgency in the action. It is as if he has finally been terrified enough to *rush* towards relief.

At this point he could only imagine what it looked like under the covering of the locusts, but he probably figured there was something left to save. Thus he sends for them hurriedly. He really has no idea just how bad it already was. This is important to consider later when he hardens himself again.

No matter what though, he now calls for Moses and Aaron. The Geneva Bible insightfully and correctly states that –

“The wicked in their misery seek God’s ministers for help, even though they hate and detest them.” Geneva

Maybe this has happened to you as well, but I cannot tell you how many times someone has emailed me with a request for prayers or advice who are either unsaved or who are believers who are not living for the Lord. Sure enough, when things go bad, the first thing they do is email or call, looking for me to intercede to God for them or to give them advice as to what they should do.

Very few, if any, ever accept the advice and act on it, and always they want to go back to doing exactly what they were doing before the troubles came. Literally, I don’t think I could count the number of times I’ve seen this. And frequently it will happen multiple times with the same person.

Jesus says that a dog will return to his own vomit, and that a sow will return to her wallow after having been washed. I’ve had both dogs and pigs and so I can say that’s true. And I’ve seen it in humans enough to know that His words are vindicated in the people He created.

^{16 (con’t)} **and said, “I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you.**

His words here improve on what he said during the plague of hail. Then he said “I have sinned this time. The Lord *is* righteous, and my people and I *are* wicked.” Now he doesn’t try to blame anyone else. He is the leader and the responsibility for the sin is his alone.

He also notes the double fault. He sinned against the Lord by not obeying what he was commanded to do, even after having been given sure proofs of the Lord’s deity. And he

sinned against Moses and Aaron for first promising action and then refusing to hold to his spoken word.

This is now the fourth time he has asked for a plague to be ended, but the Lord who reads the heart and who knows the man, already knows what the outcome will be once this plague is removed as well.

His words here are almost identical to those used in the Parable of the Lost Son in Luke 15. Let's look at them side by side –

“I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you.” (Pharaoh)

‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ Luke 15:21

In both accounts, mercy is granted, but we can only hope that the end turned out better for the lost son than what we will eventually see in Pharaoh. The Lord is gracious and merciful, but He is not a cosmic pushover. All wrongs must be judged and a persistent belligerence towards him will eventually end badly for the offender.

¹⁷ Now therefore, please forgive my sin only this once,

This is now the fourth time that Pharaoh has asked for Moses to intercede to the Lord for him. So far he has yielded and asked for relief from the frogs, the flies, and the hail. Now the locusts have brought him to this point once again.

In his words, he says “forgive my sin only this once.” Sure enough, he is using his only free pass and he knows it. With just two plagues to go, he will never be recorded as asking for the removal of a plague again.

¹⁷ (con't) and entreat the Lord your God,

Pharaoh again acknowledges the name Yehovah and that He is their God. And not only that, he acknowledges that He has the power to remove what has come upon him. In other words, he knows that the Lord is the initiator of the action and that He also has the power to end it.

In this is the implied understanding that the Lord has once again defeated the false-gods of Egypt. What is beyond odd is how he continuously vacillates between accepting this

knowledge and then fighting against it. But it is, as I mentioned earlier, not that uncommon among many people.

They cry out for relief with the understanding that a higher power has the ability to fix the problem, and then they completely walk away from Him when the problem is solved. I see it so often that as I was typing this sermon, name after name and face after face came to mind of people who have done exactly as Pharaoh is shown to do here.

17 (con't) that He may take away from me this death only.”

“This death,” or literally “the death” is a way of personifying the tragedy which surrounds him. The fruit trees are being destroyed, the crops are being destroyed, and in turn, the livelihoods and maybe even the lives of the people are being destroyed.

Death is permeating the land as a live force which, if not stopped, will eventually consume all life, either directly or indirectly. He feels certain that if this death is removed then life will be restored. If it is not, all will be lost.

18 So he went out from Pharaoh and entreated the Lord.

We should note here that no promise of release was given. Pharaoh simply asked for the ending of the plague and admitted his sin, but he never said to Moses that Israel will go. It may be that he was hoping Moses would simply believe this was implied, or it may be that he was so overwrought with the locusts that he just never brought it up.

Either way, Moses never asks for the release, knowing that such a promise wasn't to be trusted anyway. He knew that the Lord had a plan and that the Lord would direct his steps through the execution of it. And so there was no need to belabor the point.

He therefore magnanimously turned away without any rebuke or accusation and complied with Pharaoh's request. As John Lange says about this –

“It is, first, an expression of divine forbearance; secondly, the attestation of the miracle displayed in the plague of locusts.” John Lange

The Lord is again the great victor and he is also known to be the merciful pardoner of sin. As His representative, Moses simply went out from Pharaoh and entreated the Lord. And the Lord graciously responded...

19 And the Lord turned a very strong west wind,

By the direction of the Lord, an east wind blew them into Egypt and by the direction of the Lord, they are blown out of Egypt. The word translated here as “west wind” here is *ruach yam*; literally “wind of the sea.” A very strong sea breeze came up as directed by the Lord in order to effect His purposes...

^{19 (con't)} **which took the locusts away and blew them into the Red Sea.**

The wind was so strong that the locusts were literally licked up into it. With their bellies full and with nothing more to be eaten, they responded to both the divine call and the natural forces of the winds and they blew toward the Red Sea.

The Hebrew word for “blew” is *taqa*. It is a word which indicates a resounding thrust, such as a sword, or a noise such as a clap, a blow, or a blast. It is what a trumpeter would do when blowing out a signal on a trumpet. It is used to describe the noise of the trumpeters as they circled Jericho. In this, the symbolism is marvelous.

Just as armies are called to formation and led into or out of battle by such a blast, the Lord’s locust armies are also directed toward the ending of their mission with such a blast. And their final destination is the Red Sea.

Without a continued wind, the locusts will eventually drop into the sea, exactly as the Bible describes here. A man named Pallas notes that in 1799, “Great numbers of them were carried [from the Crimea] by northerly winds into the sea, where they perished, and were afterwards washed on shore in heaps.”

One mighty army has now met its end in the Red Sea. It is almost a foreshadowing of the destruction of Pharaoh’s own armies in that same place in their not too distant future. The patterns are rich and they are exciting.

^{19 (con't)} **There remained not one locust in all the territory of Egypt.**

As unlikely as this may seem, it is known that locusts travel in ranks and with this, combined with the immense west wind, the locusts would have risen together and departed to wherever they were being led. Confirming this, Solomon bears out the orderly nature of the locust in Proverbs 30 –

“The locusts have no king,
Yet they all advance in ranks.” Proverbs 30:27

There is no reason to assume that this is unreasonable.

²⁰ But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go.

The Hebrew reads, "And hardened the Lord the heart of Pharaoh..." Again as always, this needs to be evaluated from the surrounding narrative. One might assume that the Lord has actively hardened his heart, but there are a few things to consider.

The first is that Pharaoh would only now see that it was too late for the vegetation. By the time the call was made, everything was gone, before that though everything was covered with locusts. There would be no way to tell the extent of the damage *until* the locusts were gone.

Now that there were no more crops or trees or grass, Pharaoh would consider that there was nothing further which could be taken from him. So it didn't matter if he kept the Israelites; he had nothing to lose. Thus, the action is active by Pharaoh and passive by the Lord.

Secondly, as we saw, there was no promise of release. Therefore, he couldn't be considered as a liar once again when he said nothing one way or another. Again, it is an active hardening by Pharaoh and a passive one by the Lord.

And third, the very words from Pharaoh's mouth acknowledged that the plague of locusts was from the Lord. It is he who is now rejecting what he already knows to do. This is exactly the same as those who would email or ask for prayers or advice from the Bible and then turn around and ignore one or both, even after things are resolved.

It isn't the Lord who turns them away from Him, it is they who turn. The Bible says that exactly the opposite is true of the Lord –

"The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9

It is impossible that the Lord would contradict Himself, even for a stubborn fool like Pharaoh. And so the hardening is an active one by Pharaoh in response to the Lord's promptings, just as it is with all those who act in the same manner around us.

Even though the Lord knows how Pharaoh or any other person will respond, it doesn't mean he is to blame for that response. It is up to us to open our hearts to Him and to be reconciled to Him. He has already made the offer in the sending of His Son. What more does He need to do? What He expects is that we now respond to that offer and receive

that Gift. If you have never taken this most important step, please let me tell you what you need to know...

Closing Verse: *“The end of a thing is better than its beginning;
The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.” Ecclesiastes 7:8*

Next Week: Exodus 10:21-29 (The Plague of Darkness)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Plague of Locusts

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand
Over the land of Egypt for the locusts, in this be deft
That they may come upon Egypt the land
And eat every herb of the land—all that the hail has left

So Moses stretched out his rod over the land of Egypt
And the Lord brought an east wind, on the land it was focused
All that day and all that night the wind whipped
When it was morning, the east wind brought the Locust

And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt that day
And rested on all the territory of Egypt; they were very severe
Previously there had been no such locusts as they
Nor shall there be such after them, in days distant or near

For they covered the face of the whole earth
So that the land was darkened; of light it was bereft
And they ate every herb of the land, bringing terrible dearth
And all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left

So there remained nothing green
On the trees or on the plants of the field
Throughout all the land of Egypt
The locusts continued, refusing to yield

Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron hastily it's true
And said, "I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you

Now therefore, please forgive my sin, I'm such a clod
Only this once is my plea
And entreat the Lord your God
That He may take away this death only, from me

So he went out from Pharaoh and entreated the Lord
And the Lord responded to Moses' entreated word

And the Lord turned a very strong west wind that day
Which took all of the locusts away

And blew them into the Red Sea
There remained not one locust in all of Egypt's territory

But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart
And he did not let the children of Israel go
Just as the Lord knew from the very start
A process which you and I very well know

It is our hearts which condemn us when we fail to heed
When we hear but ignore God's precious word
But if we at some point acknowledge our great need
That is when we will finally bow to the Lord

And He is merciful and will freely forgive
When we call on Jesus, He will save our wayward soul
At that moment is when we truly do begin to live
And we are inscribed on heaven's glorious scroll

Thanking You Jesus for your gracious saving hand
And opening to us wide the gates of Your heavenly land

Hallelujah and Amen....

EXODUS 10:21-29 (THE PLAGUE OF DARKNESS)

The Bible uses countless natural things to teach us spiritual truths. The finger, a rock, a door, the almond, water, types of grain, and on and on... God created these things and so completely understanding them in every way, He uses them to teach us spiritual truths.

Man does the same thing as well. We may use the word “book” as a metaphor for knowledge, or we might use “glasses” as a metaphor for clear sight. However, we may use things in a way which isn’t intended by God. Instead we twist their intent and form it into an idol of our own making.

The sun can reflect spiritual truths and in the Bible it does just that, but the Bible also reveals that the sun can and has been made into a false god. We rob the Creator of the honor He is due for creating the sun, and instead we give the honor to the creation.

Egypt worshipped the false god of the sun call Ra. It was one of their principle deities. However, God was able to deny Egypt their false god in a way which would have been rather frightening. Does anyone here know what nyctophobia is?

How about lygophobia? Or scotophobia? Or what about achluophobia? They are all the same phobia – fear of darkness. I went through quite a few lists of rankings concerning of phobias that people had compiled and every one of them included a fear of darkness.

Most admit that this is something children are prone to and it diminishes with age, but some people never get over it. What goes bump in the night is truly a scary thing to them. My guess is that when the plague of darkness ended in Egypt, there were a lot more people with nyctophobia than there were when it started. This was real darkness; a groping darkness.

Text Verse: *“For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth,
And deep darkness the people;
But the Lord will arise over you,
And His glory will be seen upon you.” Isaiah 60:2*

I experienced darkness like what came upon Egypt once. I’ll tell you about it in a few minutes. I can tell you that nothing is so terrifying. The senses strain, the mind reels, and

the heart beats very fast in such a circumstance. Imagine living through three full days of this!

The Rolling Stones wrote a song in the mid sixties called Paint it Black. At the end of the song it says –

I wanna see it painted, painted black
Black as night, black as coal
I wanna see the sun blotted out from the sky
I wanna see it painted, painted, painted, painted black

The words reflected a spiritual truth in the person. His life was black and he wanted creation black around him as well. If only he knew what that true blackness was like, he would probably do a closer self-examination and long for the Light. Eternal “outer darkness” is how Jesus describes hell.

He says it is a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, and He teaches us that it is a real place where real people really will be sent. But being sent there is actually a voluntary choice. He has offered us light, life, and peace in place of that. Jesus took all of the darkness of the world upon Himself so that we could see the true Light of God once again.

Think on these things as we evaluate today’s verses concerning the ninth plague upon Pharaoh. Consider where you will spend eternity as we once again look into His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Darkness That Can be Felt (verses 21-23)

²¹ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven,

Arriving now at the ninth plague we should look back and remember that the first nine plagues are divided into three distinct groups. Advance warnings are given to Pharaoh in the first two of the plagues of the specific group, but when the third plague comes, it is without previous notice.

That was the case with the third plague of lice, the sixth plague of boils, and now the ninth plague of darkness. And so without telling Pharaoh what is coming, Moses is instructed to stretch his “hand toward heaven.” Where the hand and the rod are directed is where the plagues come from.

The same is true with this plague also. The hand is stretched toward heaven and the plague which will result will come as a covering from there as well. After the sixth plague of boils, and just before the seventh plague of hail, we read this –

“Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews: ‘Let My people go, that they may serve Me,¹⁴ for at this time I will send all My plagues to your very heart, and on your servants and on your people, that you may know that *there is* none like Me in all the earth.’” Exodus 9:13, 14

The hail, the locusts, and now the coming plague of darkness would come in rapid sequence, and so even without prior notice, Pharaoh would understand that this plague was more than a natural occurrence, but divinely directed as well.

²¹ (con’t) **that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt,**

This darkness is not explained in any further detail in the Bible, and so it leaves open many possibilities as to its nature. However, what is most likely is that it is another naturally occurring event. The locusts of a couple years ago in 2013 came in the springtime, the same time of year that the locust plague in Egypt occurred.

This year, 2015, has had an exceptional amount of such events similar to the plague of darkness around the world – also during the spring. This is the expected time for them to occur. They are known as *khamsin*, which is an Arabic term derived from the word “fifty” because the winds blow sporadically over a fifty-day period.

Though the Arabic term is *khamsin*, the Egyptians call it *khamaseen*, and in Israel they are known as *sharav*. The Biblical term for the *khamsin* is *ruakh qadim*, or “east wind.” They are dry, hot, and sandy. In North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, they normally blow in from the south.

In Egypt, they come normally between March and May and they bring in immense amounts of sand and dust from the deserts. The winds will blow up to 85 miles an hour and the temperatures can rise as much as 65 degrees in just a couple of hours.

Like I said, this phenomenon has been happening around the world this year. In mid-April, the sand winds have covered much of China to even as far as Belarus which went from sunny to pitch black in mere minutes.

For those in Egypt, it would not be an unexpected event and yet because it has occurred in conjunction with the other plagues, and because of its duration, it could also be considered supernatural. Once again, God is using a plague which is notable enough to catch Pharaoh's attention, but natural enough to further harden his heart.

Regardless of what Pharaoh will think about the plague, it will be so intense that it is described with an exceptional expression of hyperbole...

²¹ (con't) **darkness *which* may even be felt."**

The Hebrew here reads, *v'yamesh khoshekh*. The Pulpit Commentary translates this literally as, "and one shall feel, or grasp, darkness." It is a darkness that causes one to grope about because no light at all can get into their eyes.

To move about with only using ones hands and feet as guides would lead to a bumped head, chipped teeth, and maybe a poked out eyeball or a broken shin. But if this darkness is coming from an unusually heavy sandstorm, then it could also literally be felt.

Reports of sand filling houses through every crack are common. The winds are so strong, and the dust is so fine that it literally fills every minute space. The darkness would be complete and the sensation could literally be felt.

This plague would carry the same meaning to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians that the other eight had. It is an attack upon their gods as much as a punishment for abusing and refusing to release Israel. This plague is to be an attack on Ra, the sun-god; Horus, a lesser sun-god; Nut, the sky-goddess; and Hathor, another sky-goddess. Charles Ellicott notes this –

"Ra, the sun-god, was among the principal objects of their worship, especially in the Delta, where Heliopolis and Pithoni were cities dedicated to him. Darkness was a creation of Set—the Evil Principle, the destroyer of Osiris—and of Apophis, the Great Serpent, the impeder of souls in the lower world. It would have seemed to the Egyptians that Ra was dead, that Set had triumphed over his brother, that Apophis had encircled the world with his dark folds, and plunged it in eternal night. Hence Pharaoh's early call for Moses, and permission that the people should depart, with their families." Ellicott

Although this might be a normal conclusion of Pharaoh, I have to disagree with Ellicott's assessment. Pharaoh would not at all be concerned with a battle between the gods of

Egypt. He has been introduced to Yehovah, God of the Hebrews, and he is fully aware of the promise of continued plagues from Him.

Further, his coming actions demonstrate that he is not at all concerned with an internal struggle between these supposed gods, but rather his concern is that the Lord would remove His hand from Egypt and grant them release from the plague.

22 So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven,

Again as has been the case after the first few plagues, Aaron is not mentioned as taking the action. Rather it is Moses who, in obedience to the Lord, stretches out his hand toward *ha'shemayim*, or "the heavens."

22 (con't) and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days.

The term of the last verse is explained in this one. "Darkness *which* may even be felt" is given the intensive Hebrew term *koshekh aphelah* – "an obscurity of darkness." (Pulpit) It is the deepest darkness of all. It will be so dark that it will seem that darkness itself has been obscured.

The senses will be overloaded with it to the point that they will be unable to reason in their normal way. I personally experienced an event almost identical to this when I was mining gold in Alaska in the late 90s. I worked at a little miner's camp with a couple of other guys on the 40-Mile River along the Canada border.

It is the remotest place I've ever been. One day when it was clear blue skies, it suddenly started to get dark from a forest fire. Within only a few minutes, it was so dark that you couldn't hold your hand an inch from your eyes and see even a shadow of it.

We had to grope to simply find our way to a tent and then grope to find matches and a lamp. But even when lit, the darkness immediately consumed the light so that we could barely see. There was so much smoke and ash that it simply swallowed up the light.

And so there we sat, not knowing where the forest fire was in relation to us, or how we would get away from it if it came. It was truly a terrifying experience. And then, as quickly as the darkness came, it disappeared completely. The sky was blue and the visibility was once again unlimited.

It was darkness which could be felt and it was complete in its ability to consume the light around us. If that instance were an example of the intensity of the plague in Egypt, then this was an astonishingly terrifying plague for those who had to endure it. Three days of this would leave one in a state of complete misery.

The plague then is one directed specifically to punish Pharaoh the man and Egypt's false gods. Matthew Henry notes the connection between the physical nature of the plague and the spiritual nature of the reason for it –

“It continued three days; six nights in one; so long the most lightsome palaces were dungeons. Now Pharaoh had time to consider, if he would have improved it. Spiritual darkness is spiritual bondage; while Satan blinds men's eyes that they see not, he binds their hands and feet, that they work not for God, nor move toward heaven. They sit in darkness. It was righteous with God thus to punish. The blindness of their minds brought upon them this darkness of the air; never was mind so blinded as Pharaoh's, never was air so darkened as Egypt.” Henry

This plague on Egypt is given as a punishment for the spiritual darkness of Pharaoh and his kingdom, but a similar plague is coming again in the future. It is prophesied in Revelation 16 at the pouring out of the fifth bowl –

“Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. ¹¹ They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.” Revelation 16:10, 11

The throne of the beast will receive a like judgment to that of Pharaoh. It will consume the light and it will send them into an even further degraded state of spiritual darkness. The world of the future will be a bleak and sorrowful place to behold.

And it is all a result of self-inflicted wounds brought about by turning from God and from the true Light of the world, Jesus Christ. Oh, if the world would just wake up to the truth of what He has done! They would be spared the miseries which are sure to come in the days ahead.

²³ They did not see one another; nor did anyone rise from his place for three days.

The Hebrew here reads *lo rau ish eth akhiv* – “man did not see his brother.” If the darkness here is as intense as what I experienced in Alaska, then there is no reason to

not accept it as written. Even if a light was on in the house, only a shape could be seen in the light, but one couldn't distinguish who the shape was.

It was literally so dark, and the darkness was literally so consuming of the light from our lamp, that to walk a short distance from it would have left one completely lost. The light would be totally swallowed up in a matter of just a few feet.

The only thing you could do in such a case would be to lie down on the ground and not move. Anything else could lead you into a tree, stumbling over a rock or into a small gorge, or maybe into a bear that was waiting out the dark too. The only source of comfort, at all, was that simple little lamp with the slowly fading fuel in it.

The people of Egypt that had oil lamps or torches could light them and move around the house, but it would be beyond foolish to walk outdoors without at least one or two others carrying lamps in case one went out. The only true option would be to sit in the dark, hope for relief to come, and ponder the nature of God who has such immense power. This sentiment is beautifully reflected in Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2 –

“For the pillars of the earth *are* the Lord's,
And He has set the world upon them.
⁹ He will guard the feet of His saints,
But the wicked shall be silent in darkness.” 1 Samuel 2:8, 9

²³ (con't) **But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.**

The same distinction which has been explicitly noted in several of the other plagues is noted again here. Many commentaries on this verse go beyond what the intent is by overstating what is trying to be said. The intent here is that in Goshen, where Israel dwelt, there was light.

This isn't speaking of individual dwellings individually lighted; rather it is speaking of the collective dwellings having light. The reason for the distinction is explained well by John Lange –

“The judgment of darkness doubtless expresses more specifically the fact, that the wisdom of Egypt has become transformed into a spiritual night, in which the night of death soon to follow is pre-announced, whereas the light in Goshen in contrast with it may signify the dawn of a higher wisdom which finally brings freedom.” John Lange

In this, the miraculous nature of the plague is seen first in the arrival of the plague at the time of Moses' action in calling it to occur, and secondly in the intensity of it over Egypt while the lack of it over Goshen.

Matthew Henry again gives a poetic look into the significance of what has occurred –

“It shows the particular favour he bears to his people. Wherever there is an Israelite indeed, though in this dark world, there is light, there is a child of light. When God made this difference between the Israelites and the Egyptians, who would not have preferred the poor cottage of an Israelite to the fine palace of an Egyptian? There is a real difference between the house of the wicked, which is under a curse, and the habitation of the just, which is blessed.” Matthew Henry

But there is a question that one could consider in the coming of this plague. As the Lord has controlled it, and as Egypt is completely debilitated from it, then why didn't the Lord have Moses call Israel out of bondage during this time?

They could easily have marched away and towards Canaan if the Lord directed them. In this, there are a few reasons. One is that the Lord had not yet judged all of the false gods of Egypt, nor had he sufficiently multiplied His wonders in the land.

There was another plague which needed to be executed upon Egypt, and there was yet more for Israel to record and memorialize for their future instruction and remembrance. Secondly, God is orderly and precise. The number 10 has significance in Scripture. Ten is one of the perfect numbers. As EW Bullinger notes –

It “...signifies the perfection of Divine order, commencing, as it does, an altogether new series of numbers. ... Completeness of order, marking the entire round of anything, is, therefore, the ever-present signification of the number ten. It implies that nothing is wanting; that the number and order are perfect; that the whole cycle is complete.” EW Bullinger

The ten plagues of Egypt will lead Israel to the Ten Commandments at Sinai. In each there is a stamp of Divine completeness which the Lord is showing as He works through these redemptive programs.

Third, it is the Lord's intent to lead Israel out, not be stealth as if they were fleeing from a greater foe, but to lead them out in triumph in the face of a foe-defeated. Whereas Pharaoh has had a high hand against the Hebrew people, they would be led out by the high hand of the Lord.

Through such a display, it will be a memorial to them for all time of the great work of the Lord. And as these plagues only picture the greater work of Christ, it is fitting that the exodus would occur in the sight of all people with the Lord leading the way.

*Darkness has come upon the land
A pall so heavy that our eyes cannot see
And it came about at the Lord's command
Such a plague, such a burden! How can it be?*

*The very light from our lamps is consumed by the air
Even a short walk from it would lead to disaster
We have to simply sit and with our eyes stare
At the dark, gloomy shadows from the lamp on the wall's plaster*

*Oh to be rid of the burden of Israel!
To see them go so that we could just find some relief
Will Pharaoh finally release them? Only time will tell
Surely he will yield, and in the Lord he will acknowledge belief*

*This time certainly we know, that Pharaoh will let them go
It must be that his heart has softened; surely it is so*

II. To Serve the Lord our God (verses 24-26)

²⁴ Then Pharaoh called to Moses and said, “Go, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be kept back. Let your little ones also go with you.”

From this, we can see that even if Pharaoh was aware of such times of darkness from previous sandstorms, this one was of such a magnitude that it was surely a supernatural occurrence. It came at the call of Moses and it stayed an inordinate amount of time. Further, its effects were absolute in their scope.

If the Lord could do this once, He could do it again. And He could also do it for whatever duration He chose. Pharaoh wants no more of such a display. Matthew Henry challenges us to contemplate such misery ourselves –

“Let us dread the consequences of sin; if three days of darkness were so dreadful, what will everlasting darkness be?” Henry

I have lived through a very short span of such darkness. Three days would have been unimaginable. And so to contemplate facing such a plague of infinite days is impossible to even consider. For Pharaoh now though, he is ready to make a deal.

The status of the plague of darkness isn't given. Was Moses summoned during the darkness, or was he summoned after it ended? It doesn't say explicitly, but no matter what, it appears that the preparations for the tenth plague which are found in chapter 12 actually predate the meeting which is now held between them.

When this meeting is over, there is a guarantee that the two will not meet face to face again. In chapter 11, as that meeting is ending, Moses warns Pharaoh that about midnight death would come to Egypt. And in the middle of chapter 12, it says that at midnight it occurred.

So Moses was well aware of what would transpire *before* meeting Pharaoh and the people of Israel had used their time of light, while Egypt was in darkness, to prepare for the marvelous events which lay ahead. For now though, Pharaoh is willing to yield further than in the past. After the promise of the eighth plague, but before its coming, this exchange was seen –

“So Moses and Aaron were brought again to Pharaoh, and he said to them, ‘Go, serve the Lord your God. Who *are* the ones that are going?’”

⁹ And Moses said, ‘We will go with our young and our old; with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds we will go, for we must hold a feast to the Lord.’”

¹⁰ Then he said to them, ‘The Lord had better be with you when I let you and your little ones go! Beware, for evil is ahead of you. ¹¹ Not so! Go now, you *who are* men, and serve the Lord, for that is what you desired.’ And they were driven out from Pharaoh’s presence.” Exodus 10:8-11

Finally, Pharaoh has granted release of all of the people. He has slowly had his resolve squeezed out of him. But he still wants both to afflict Israel and to ensure that they will return without force being necessary. And so he offers what on the surface is a compromise. All can go, but the flocks and herds must stay.

But this is really no compromise at all. First, Egypt’s own flocks and herds have been reduced to nothing. It is obvious that after a seven-day journey Egypt would have completely plundered the flocks which had been left behind.

Secondly, it is absurd to think that such a large contingent of people could survive in the wilderness without flocks and herds to milk and to eat along the way. And thirdly, the very notion of a sacrifice to the Lord implies that animals were needed for the offerings.

This is actually as much of a slap in the face as it is an offer of favor. He may be hoping that Moses will be fooled by the offer and excited at the prospects of it, but he would be wrong...

²⁵ But Moses said, “You must also give us sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.

It appears that Moses immediately understood the intentions of Pharaoh concerning the flocks and the herds. There is nothing stated here that the Egyptians would plunder them, but the way Moses responds shows that Pharaoh was looking at the flocks as his own.

He says, “You must also give us sacrifices and burnt offerings...” He doesn’t say that they need to take their animals as he did in the past. Nor does he even say that they need to be *allowed* to take their animals. Instead, his words are chosen to highlight the situation as he perceives it. It is as if Pharaoh thinks the flocks are already his, but Moses responds to the contrary...

²⁶ Our livestock also shall go with us;

They are not Pharaoh’s livestock and he is not the one to control the decision as to whether they will stay or go. The demand was made before and it is repeated now. And the demand is absolute in its scope as we see with his continued words...

²⁶ (con’t) not a hoof shall be left behind.

This is a proverbial saying; an idiom. It means not the smallest fraction of something. Every animal will go and nothing will be left. It’s also the first time that a hoof is mentioned in the Bible.

The word is *parsah* which comes from *paras*, meaning to divide. Hence you have the logic of the idiom – “Even that which can be divided will not be left behind.” And the reason for this will no longer be withheld from Pharaoh. If he had missed the reason in his thinking before, it would now be explicitly given to him...

²⁶ (con't) **For we must take some of them to serve the Lord our God, and even we do not know with what we must serve the Lord until we arrive there."**

The animals are for the worship in the wilderness to Yehovah, the same God who has laid waste the land of Egypt and the same God who is their God. He is to be served and the scope of the service is not even known to those who will serve. Hence the pronoun "we" in the term, "and even we do not know" is emphatic.

Moses is hiding nothing, but openly explaining that they have no idea what lies ahead when they gather before the Lord. Until they arrive and assemble, they are as much in the dark concerning the details of the offerings as Pharaoh is. Hence, every animal must go. Moses is adamant and the Geneva Bible explains why –

"The ministers of God should not yield one iota to the wicked, in regards to their mission." Geneva

What a good lesson for us to consider even now. We have been given directives in the Bible concerning our faith and practice, but we don't have all of the details. If the Lord tells us that homosexuality is not to be condoned in the church, we are not to yield an inch in regards to that issue.

Whatever the issue is, it is our responsibility to the Lord which takes precedence. Far too often, the world wants us to yield to their demands or their personal mores and to abandon an inch or two of our faith to them. But we are the ones who will stand before the Lord and give an account of our actions.

What the world wants is ir...relevant in relation to what our faith and practice demands of us.

*We are responsible first and foremost to the Lord our God
We will not yield to you what to Him along belongs
Pharaoh, you have once again proven to be a giant clod
Would you deprive the Lord of offerings, praises, and songs?*

*How long will you fail to perceive what your eyes have seen?
How long will you fight against our great Lord?
From the first to the last and in everything in between
You have bucked against Him and against His word*

*If you don't agree to our terms you will regret the choice
Another plague will come which will destroy your heart
But when it is over Israel will rejoice
Our redemption draws nigh, to you this warning I impart*

III. Words to be Regretted (verses 27-29)

²⁷ But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go.

It is an almost exact repeat of verse 20 at the ending of the eighth plague. The same word for "hardened" is used. The only real difference is that it says "them" instead of "the children of Israel." From the context it is obvious that this is again a self-hardening of the heart by Pharaoh.

The action by the Lord is passive. He has instructed Moses concerning the words to use which will have the greatest effect on this stubborn soul. He has also used plagues which have defeated Egypt's gods, one by one. But He has done it with means which are otherwise natural, even though the supernatural is involved.

Pharaoh has been weighed and measured, and he has been found wanting. His arrogance has trapped him in a web which is impossible for him to escape. And yet, it is a web which he himself has spun. The Lord simply provided the means for him to spin it.

He had offered a concession over the last meeting by allowing the children to go with the men, but that offered grace was marred by the stipulation that the flocks couldn't go. When Moses rejected that, he allowed his pride to once again step in and take over.

And that despite the emphatic statement by Moses that they didn't know what was required in the service of the Lord. How much like Pharaoh are so many! They are given the directives, but not the details. "How long will I have to serve the Lord?" "What claim might He lay on me in the future?" "Will He ask me to give up home or family or life at some point?"

For those whose hearts are soft, the answers aren't necessary. But for those whose hearts are hard, the very notion of obeying the Lord in an unknown capacity is oppressive and tedious. And so they would rather continue the fight against Him than yield to His obviously superior will.

28 Then Pharaoh said to him, “Get away from me! Take heed to yourself and see my face no more! For in the day you see my face you shall die!”

His words reflect a violent outburst which shows how truly enraged and yet anguished he was. He is literally frantic about the situation. It’s obvious that he is outmatched and he knows it. But it’s also obvious that he doesn’t want to admit defeat in the face of what is plainly total defeat.

He is like the army general who has seen his ranks decimated and yet he pushes them on, unwilling to accept that the battle is over. It reflects an intense pride which has been the downfall of many. And because he can’t face the reality of the situation, he throws a... temper tantrum, threatening the messenger of the One he fears.

His defiance though seals his own fate. Moses may never again come into his presence, and yet Moses is the only mediator for the One who controls his ultimate destiny. As Daniel says about the antichrist of the end times is true of Pharaoh here –

“...yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.” Daniel 11:45

29 So Moses said, “You have spoken well. I will never see your face again.

There is a difference between speaking correctly in a logical sense and correctly in a moral sense. Sometimes they overlap, sometimes they don’t. Moses is not saying that Pharaoh has spoken in a morally proper manner, but in a logically correct one.

He has already been informed, as we will see in the coming chapters, that the final plague is coming and it will be that very night. The people would be immediately released and therefore there was no need for them to ever meet face to face again.

Moses knew this and so he stated that what Pharaoh said was logically correct. As Matthew Henry says about this –

“Vain malice! To threaten him with death, who was armed with such power! What will not hardness of heart, and contempt of God’s word and commandments, bring men to!”
Henry

And so ends Moses’ time in Pharaoh’s courts. For the Hebrews, encounters with Pharaoh began 430 years earlier when Abraham journeyed to Egypt. About 215 years later their forefather Joseph was taken out of prison to appear before Pharaoh.

In his meeting, he went from prisoner to the second highest authority in the land. After his death though, he and what he did for Egypt, was forgotten.

But the plight of the Hebrews wasn't. In time, Moses was born and was adopted into Pharaoh's house where he grew until the age of 40 when he went into a type of exile. Then another 40 years later, he appeared before Pharaoh once again in order to secure the release of his people.

Now, 430 years after the original promise to Abraham that He would give the land of Canaan to his descendants, Moses has the last encounter with Pharaoh before their departure. There is symmetry in these encounters which reveal patterns which are both precise and astonishing.

Everything the Lord has done to this point has been for the benefit of His people, even if it seems that He had forgotten them He hadn't. And each of these stories has brought us pictures of the greater redemptive workings of the Lord in history. Israel is about to experience the Passover from their land of bondage.

But we are figured into this story as well. Christ came to deliver us from bondage to sin and death and to lead us to His holy mountain. He became our Passover Lamb to secure this for us. The pictures will continue and every one of them details the marvelous work of the Lord for His people, both in actual occurrence and in prophetic picture.

In Him, the spiritual darkness is replaced with God's marvelous light. The surety of hell and separation is abolished and the promise of heaven and friendship is restored through His wonderful work!

Let us never stop looking into this word. As long as there is breath in our lungs, let us continue forward, searching out its mysteries, rejoicing in its marvels, and basking in the warm stream of love and life which proceeds from it. It is all about the love of God which is found in Jesus Christ.

If you have never received this greatest of all Gifts, please let me tell you how you can today, even now...

Closing Verse: *"That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting
That there is none besides Me.*

I am the Lord, and there is no other;

⁷I form the light and create darkness,

*I make peace and create calamity;
I, the Lord, do all these things.” Isaiah 45:6, 7*

Next Week: Exodus 11:1-10 (Announcing the Final Plague) (31st Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

It would be good to consider before we close that Jesus Christ went into the tomb of darkness for 3 days, just as Egypt was plunged into 3 days of darkness. He took for us what we deserve. Let us thank the Lord for calling us out of spiritual darkness into His marvelously wondrous light.

The Plague of Darkness

Then the Lord to Moses said
“Stretch out your hand toward heaven, I say
That there may be darkness over the land of Egypt instead
Darkness which may even be felt this day

So Moses stretched out toward heaven his hand
And there was thick darkness three days in all of Egypt the land

They did not see one another
Nor did anyone from his place for three days rise
One could not tell who was his brother
But all the children of Israel had in their dwellings light for their eyes

Then Pharaoh called to Moses and said
“Go, serve the Lord
Only let your flocks and your herds be kept back instead
Let your little ones also go with you, so is my word

But Moses said, “You must also
Give us sacrifices and burnt offerings too
That we may sacrifice to the Lord our God, you know
It is the thing we are required to do

Our livestock also shall go with us
Not a hoof shall be left behind as we trod
For we must take some of them
To serve the Lord our God

And even we do not know with what we must serve the Lord
Until we arrive there and only then receive His word

But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart as we know
And he would not let them go

Then Pharaoh said to him in a manner sore
"Get away from me!" He did cry
Take heed to yourself and see my face no more!
For in the day you see my face you shall die!

So Moses said, "You have spoken well
I will never see your face again
This is the account that the Bible does tell
Of the consequences of the hardened heart of men

We get tripped up in pride; a sad, sad state
And it causes us grief and pain to come our way
This is a lesson the Bible does relate
And the message it does to us portray

But there is a cure to this disease called pride
It is to humble ourselves before the Lord
And with Him to walk in each and every stride
And to meditate upon His word

The change will come to each of us
When we willingly call out to Him for terms of peace
When we humble our hearts and received Jesus
The grief will end and the warring will cease

Thank You O God for Your wondrous saving grace
Thank You for the promise of eternity with you in Your heavenly place

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 11:1-10

(ANNOUNCING THE FINAL PLAGUE)

On August 2nd, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait with about 100,000 troops. On August 8th, they announced the annexation of Kuwait. Three months later, on November 29, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 678 setting a deadline for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait before January 15, 1991, or face military action.

Talks began in Geneva between U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and Iraq Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, but by 9 January of 1991, they ended with no progress. On 12 January, the U.S. Congress passed a joint resolution authorizing the use of military force to drive Iraq out of Kuwait.

By this time, and with this final action, there was only an “when” not an “if” as to whether there would be a war or not. Some things are simply going to happen and there is nothing that will stop them. Time marches on, heads are often self-willed and obstinate, and hearts get harder, not softer, when faced with confrontation.

Some scholars have claimed that if Pharaoh had simply agreed to let Israel go after having this final plague was announced, the Lord would have relented and not brought the plague on Egypt. But this is not correct. The structure of chapter 11 takes care to understand the timeline of events that occur.

The words of Moses which announce this plague are actually a continuous thought from the meeting started in Chapter 10. Pharaoh hardened his heart, refused to let Israel go, and ordered Moses’ dismissal. Moses agreed, but after that, during the same meeting, the last plague is announced.

There is no option as to whether Pharaoh can relent or not. Instead, there is only the absolute assurance that the plague will come and that it will be the Lord who executes the action. There is a point where bargaining is ended and only inevitable punishment will result.

Saddam Hussein found this out. He lost his sons, he lost his army, he lost his nation, and he lost his life, all because of a stubborn, hard heart. The same was true with Pharaoh. History is replete with losers like this.

Text Verse: *“Therefore you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Drink, be drunk, and vomit! Fall and rise no more, because of the sword which I*

will send among you.””²⁸ And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup from your hand to drink, then you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts: “You shall certainly drink!””’” Jeremiah 25:27, 28

Judgment came upon the nations which surrounded Israel because of their treatment of Israel and because of their obstinate hearts before the Lord. Sin heaps up in a land until there is simply no more remedy and the only alternative left is judgment.

The world is increasingly obstinate and hard-hearted against the Lord once again. The glories of the church age are quickly fading and this time of grace is coming to an end. Anyone who thinks that God will somehow work differently now than He has in the past is deluded.

We are given these stories to hopefully learn from. Unfortunately, you can’t learn from what remains unopened and untaught. Most of the world is at this very point with the treasure of God’s superior word. But it is still available to instruct us if we will but look into its hidden riches. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. One More Plague (verses 1-3)

¹ Now the Lord had said to Moses, “I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt.

At the end of the previous chapter, these were the final words we looked at –

“Then Pharaoh said to him, ‘Get away from me! Take heed to yourself and see my face no more! For in the day you see my face you shall die!’

²⁹ So Moses said, ‘You have spoken well. I will never see your face again.’”

But coming up in verse 8 of this chapter we will read –

“And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, ‘Get out, and all the people who follow you!’ After that I will go out.” Then he went out from Pharaoh in great anger.”

From this it is evident that verses 1-3 are parenthetical, having been spoken before the meeting with Pharaoh, which is still ongoing. Due to deficiency in tenses in the Hebrew language, the context drives the translation. In the case of many translations, like the

KJV, they incorrectly state here “And the Lord said...” rather than “Now the Lord had said...”

Thus, such translations make it appear that there is a contradiction because it said they would never meet again, but then they do meet once again. Rather, this is one continuous meeting, but a parenthetical thought is now being introduced.

At some point in the past, the Lord had said to Moses, “I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt.” This has been the reason for Moses’ boldness of speech before Pharaoh. He has the sure word of the Lord that what is coming will be final. Thus his words have been direct and filled with boldness.

The word for “plague” here has not been used before. It is *nega* which comes from *naga*, meaning “to touch.” This plague is personal and will personally touch those affected. The other plagues affected the people, but the personal nature of this one is highlighted by the use of this word.

It is the same word used in Isaiah 53:8 when speaking of Christ. He, the Son of God, would become our Passover Lamb –

“He was taken from prison and from judgment,
And who will declare His generation?
For He was cut off from the land of the living;
For the transgressions of My people **He was stricken.**” Isaiah 53:8

Already, in the first words of this chapter, we are seeing a picture forming of the work of Christ. Remembering that Pharaoh pictures the ruler of this world and Egypt pictures the fallen world, we are being shown what the Lord would do for us in these types and pictures from 1500 years before His arrival.

^{1 (con’t)} **After that, he will let you go from here, and when he does, he will drive you out completely.**

The Hebrew here for “drive you out completely” is *kalah garesh y’garesh etkhem mizzeh* – “completely driving out he shall surely drive out you from here.” The word “completely” then is speaking of all of the people and everything they own.

As Canon Cook notes, “the meaning is – when at last he lets you depart, with children, flocks, herds, and all your possessions, he will compel you to depart in haste.” There will

be complete release, just as has been demanded. But more so, it will be not just with Pharaoh's approval, but as if he absolutely insists that they go.

²Tell the people that men and women alike are to ask their neighbors for articles of silver and gold."

All the way back at the beginning of this journey when Moses stood before the burning bush, the Lord told him this in Exodus 3 –

“And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be, when you go, that you shall not go empty-handed. ²² But every woman shall ask of her neighbor, namely, of her who dwells near her house, articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing; and you shall put *them* on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians.” Exodus 3:21-22

As you can see, at that time the Lord only mentioned the women asking for these items. Now that mandate is extended to men as well as women. All are to ask for such articles. The word for “articles” can mean a whole host of things from weapons to utensils and from cups to plates.

As before, articles of silver and gold are specifically requested, not to enrich the Israelites, but for what the Israelites will do with them in the wilderness. They are being prepared for an organized mode of worship which will continue on until the coming of Christ.

These articles will be used in the construction of the tabernacle and all of the utensils and furniture within that tabernacle. And every part of what they construct will picture Him... every detail of it. God is plundering the Egyptians in order to form worship for His people. This then is ultimately a picture of Christ.

In Christ, God took from humanity in order to build His greater and eternal Temple. He did it in that Christ came from the stream of humanity to be the point of worship and meeting with God. As the tabernacle of the Old Testament, so Christ in the New!

As I noted during the Exodus 3 sermon, the KJV uses the term “borrow” rather than “ask for” these items both there and again here. It is quite possibly the worst possible translation of a word in the history of the world, as most scholars agree.

To borrow implies to return and it is perfectly understood from the situation that returning was not a consideration. The plundering of the Egyptians has brought a lot of

criticism on the Bible over the years. People have used terms like “fraud,” “theft,” “deception,” and the like to describe what occurred here.

But what can one expect when a word and a context which surely means “to ask” is mistranslated as “borrow?” These men and women are instructed to *ask* of their neighbors for the articles they would need and to which they actually had a 215-year right.

³ (The Lord made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people.

Exactly as was said in Exodus 3, it is noted here. The Lord had said he would make the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people and now it is a completed truth here. And these words also show us that the word “borrow” is wholly incorrect.

If the intent was “borrow,” there would have been no need for the Lord to have given the Hebrews favor in their sight. People will lend to others even if they don’t really like them as long as they know the thing will be returned. Instead, the words are given to show that the Egyptians were favorably disposed to giving them these things.

And finally, the picture of Christ, which these words reflect, would make no sense with the word “borrow.” Christ wasn’t borrowed from humanity. He came through it and He belongs to it for all eternity as the incarnate word of God.

³ (con’t) and Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh’s officials and by the people.)

These words are a result of the events of the nine previous plagues. When Moses first came, it was with Aaron as his spokesman and with a slowness of tongue which he felt would be a hindrance, not a help. But during the plagues, he amazed and baffled the magicians of Pharaoh.

Then he showed favor to the servants of Pharaoh and the people by announcing the plague of hail in advance and giving them warning to bring their animals in, lest they die. By the time of the plague of locusts, the people were nearly begging Pharaoh to act and release the men for the worship of Yehovah.

Throughout all of the plagues, Moses had shown himself the representative of the God who was greater than their greatest gods. Being the representative of the Lord, he then

was greater than the representative of their gods, Pharaoh. This is all implied in these words now.

*Just one more plague lies ahead
It will be a final blow, one beyond compare
With it every firstborn son of Egypt will soon be dead
There will be great sorrow; mournful cries will arise from there*

*When it comes, Pharaoh in haste will drive you out
But before you go, be sure to ask for articles of silver and gold
And as you finally start off, give a resounding shout
For the marvelous deeds you have seen unfold*

*You will leave this land for another place
One which I have set aside especially for you
There in that land I will bestow upon you My grace
For you My people these things I will do*

II. There Will be Loud Wailing (verses 4-7)

⁴So Moses said, “This is what the Lord says:

With the parenthetical thought of verses 1-3 now stated, the words of Moses to Pharaoh in their meeting which started in the previous chapter now resume.

⁴ (con’t) ‘About midnight

ka’khatsoth ha’laylah – meaning “about the middle of the night,” the final terrible plague will come upon the land. The time of the plague is announced and it is given in order to have the strongest effect possible upon the hearer. Midnight is when men are tired or even asleep, but the coming of this plague would be something which would deprive them of it.

Further, though the time of day is given, the exact day is not. Would it be tonight? Would it be next week? The suspense of not knowing is intended to wear out the mind of the obstinate man who had challenged the Lord.

From the entire passage of this plague, even we can't be certain whether it was on this same night, and whether the planning for the Passover came before this meeting, or whether the first 28 verses of chapter 12 happened after the meeting with Pharaoh.

What is most likely is that this plague will come upon Egypt on the very same night after this meeting. But for sure, all we know is that the plague is pronounced and it will be at midnight.

⁴ (con't) **I will go throughout Egypt.**

The "I" in this verse is emphatic. The Lord has spoken and the Lord will perform. The terminology is similar to what Isaiah writes about concerning a future plague which is coming upon the earth –

“Come, my people, enter your chambers,
And shut your doors behind you;
Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment,
Until the indignation is past.
²¹ For behold, the Lord comes out of His place
To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity;
The earth will also disclose her blood,
And will no more cover her slain.” Isaiah 26:20, 21

When judgment is due, the Lord will come out of His place in order to execute that judgment. Pharaoh is warned; we are warned.

⁵ **Every firstborn son in Egypt will die,**

The term “firstborn” is applied to males. The firstborn is considered the strength of the man and the continuation of his name. Thus we saw this in the blessing of Jacob upon his sons in Genesis 49 –

“Reuben, you are my firstborn,
My might and the beginning of my strength,
The excellency of dignity and the excellency of power.” Genesis 49:3

⁵ (con't) **from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne,**

Pharaoh is the highest official in the land. This is only the second time that the “throne” has been mentioned in the Bible. It properly means “seat of honor.” The first time it was seen was in Genesis 41 when referring to the throne of Pharaoh in relation to Joseph. Now it is referring to the throne of Pharaoh in relation to his son.

This son bore the Egyptian title *erpa suten sa*, meaning “hereditary crown prince.” Unless he died before his father, or unless he was removed from this royal position, he would be the one to assume the position and title of Pharaoh after his father.

Thus, this is a direct challenge to the supposed deity of the Pharaonic dynasty. Along with him, several other gods of Egypt are hereby challenged – Min, the god of reproduction; Heqet, the goddess who attended women at childbirth; and Isis, the goddess who protected children.

Each of these, including Pharaoh himself, will be shown as false gods, completely under the power and control of Yehovah, the God of the Hebrews, the God of Israel, and the One true God.

^{5 (con't)} **to the firstborn son of the female slave, who is at her hand mill,**

In contrast to the firstborn son of Pharaoh, the firstborn son of the female slave would be considered the lowest level in the entire societal scale of Egypt. And in contrast to his throne, is the hand- mill of this maid. While he sat in the place of honor she would squat at the millstones pulverizing the grain.

The term here for her labors is *akhar ha'rekhayim* – It properly means “behind the millstones.” This will take consideration to understand. There are two millstones, thus the plural word is used. One was on the ground and didn't move. The other was on top of it and would have a hole in the middle and a handle on it as well.

In Matthew 24:41, Jesus explains that two women would sometimes work together on such millstones. One woman would hold grain and drop it into the hole. The other would grab the handle and pulverize the grain by spinning the millstone. She is the one “behind the millstone.” The harder work would be done by the lower slave. Like a world champion limbo star, this is as low as one can go.

Thus, this verse is an all-inclusive statement. Both Pharaoh in his seat of comfort to this lowest of the lowly slaves, and all in between – together they would be equally affected

by what was coming. All will be afflicted by the torment of the horrifying plague. But despite what is coming, there is a note of grace.

In Exodus 1:22, Pharaoh had demanded that all of the males of the Hebrews be cast into the river. Here in response to that edict, which was all but forgotten by them, the Lord sets out to destroy only the firstborn. The words of Habakkuk can be retroactively applied to this account – “In wrath remember mercy.” (3:2)

Despite this touch of grace, every family is included and no family is exempted. Heartache, sorrow, and death will touch all alike. But there is yet more...

⁵ (con't) **and all the firstborn of the cattle as well.**

The word is *behemah* and it means properly “beasts,” not just cattle. It would include any household pets, from the revered cat, to the friendly dog, and to the exotic monkey. Whatever animals were kept in home, barn, or temple, they would all be affected by this plague.

Thus, it is a complete attack on both domestic and religious life. The beloved pets and their sacred animals would all be shown to be under the authority of the Lord. No god represented by any animal would be able to stop the onslaught which has been ordained by Him and its effects will never be forgotten...

⁶ **There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt—worse than there has ever been or ever will be again.**

The word here for “wailing” is *tseaqah*. It means an outcry as if in anguish. Thus “a loud wailing” is a good choice of words. Even today, women in the Middle East continue with the loud wails for which they are especially known. Unlike the west where we often withhold emotional outbursts, there it is common and it is extremely loud.

But unlike a funeral for one person mourned by an isolated group of people, this outcry would be from all people throughout all of the land. Imagine the sound of millions of shrill wailing cries permeating the darkened skies of Egypt. Surely nothing had ever occurred like it before and never since has such a sound been heard.

⁷ **But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any person or animal.’**

This is often thought of as a proverbial expression meaning that there will be only quietness and peace in Israel which is contrasted to the wailing of Egypt. A similar form of expression is found in Joshua 10:21. After a great battle where Israel's enemies were defeated, we read this –

“And all the people returned to the camp, to Joshua at Makkedah, in peace. No one moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel.” Joshua 10:21

But there is more to this than a sense of peace and quiet. There is also another noted judgment upon Egypt's gods. The god Anpu, later known as Anubis, is the dog-headed god associated with mummification and also the after-life.

The implication then is that while the dogs were wailing along with the humans, which they are often known to do, no such wailing was to be found among the Israelites. The god Anubis was ineffective in keeping the Egyptians from needed mummification and Yehovah was fully capable of protecting each and every life associated with Israel. And there is a reason for this distinction to have been made...

⁷ (con't) **Then you will know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.**

Israel is to be redeemed from the plague, Egypt will suffer through it. The death of the firstborn is all that will withhold the entire wrath of God in Egypt. Otherwise, they would be utterly consumed. However, in Israel, a substitute will be accepted. A lamb will take the place of the people.

When the plague comes, in that day, the Lord promises to “make a distinction” in the land. The term in Hebrew is *yaphleh*. It is the third of seven uses of the word *palah* in the Bible. It means to “set apart,” but the word also means “wonderfully” or “wondrously.”

And surely this is fitting for what will occur in this plague. There is a distinction and it is found between the redeemed of the Lord and those who refuse to yield themselves to Him. The Lord will work wondrously.

⁸ **All these officials of yours will come to me, bowing down before me**

There is more in the Hebrew here than we get in the English. There is a strong play on words which we miss. The words “will come” is the Hebrew *v'yaredu*, literally “and will

descend.” It is an idiom which indicates going from a nobler place to one of less grandeur.

And yet, when they get there, they will come “bowing down before me.” In other words, these officials would come to acknowledge the true royalty of the land. Though Moses isn’t in a palace, they will descend to his place in order to exalt him. It is a fitting parallel to what is said about Christ in Isaiah 52 –

“Kings shall shut their mouths at Him;
For what had not been told them they shall see,
And what they had not heard they shall consider.” Isaiah 52:15

⁸ (con’t) **and saying, ‘Go, you and all the people who follow you!’**

Again, there is a Hebrew idiom not seen in the translation. The words say “the people who are at your feet.” It is an expression which means those who are willing to obey and follow a leader. Where his feet step, they were willing to follow in kind. They will finally acknowledge him as the leader of his people.

Moses is the human redeemer of Israel. Thus he pictures Christ who is the leader of Israel and those who willingly follow Him. Two comparable passages of note are found in the New Testament which are directed to the Jewish believers –

“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:” 1 Peter 2:21

These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from *among* men, *being* firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.”

-Revelation 14:4

⁸ (con’t) **After that I will leave.”**

Moses adds in these words to let Pharaoh know that only after the authorities of Egypt come and bow before him will he leave. Thus it is a hard jab directly at the person and position of Pharaoh.

⁸ (con’t) **Then Moses, hot with anger, left Pharaoh.**

In an extremely unusual burst of emotion, Moses finally turns and leaves once and forever from the face of Pharaoh. The words for “hot with anger” are *ba’khorī af* – “in heat of anger.” But, *af* literally means “nostril.” And so we get the mental picture of his nostrils flaring and his face turning red in rage. Ellicott nicely describes the reason for his emotions –

“For once his acquired ‘meekness’ failed, and the hot natural temper of his youth blazed up. His life had been threatened—he had been ignominiously dismissed—he had been deprived of his right of audience for the future ... Under such circumstances, he ‘did well to be angry.’” Ellicott

*For those I have redeemed, there will be peace
I will make a separation between them and the world
Between us there will be harmony, all strife will cease
This for My people as their redemption is unfurled*

*My people will be safe while the land around them dies
To them there will be calm in the midst of woe
Everywhere there will be mournful wailing and cries
Except among My redeemed will it be so*

*And all of this is a part of an even greater plan
Their joys only picture countless souls in the future’s world
From every nation on earth there I will redeem man
Yes, they shall be My people, as the plan of redemption is unfurled*

III. The Foolishness of the Hardened Heart (verses 9 & 10)

⁹The Lord had said to Moses, “Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you—so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt.”

This verse in Hebrew actually begins with the word “and.” It is used in order of thought, not specifically in time. And so, unlike some translations, the next words are correct. It should say, “The Lord had said...” rather than, “The Lord said.”

This is calling to mind the words which have been spoken several times and in several ways since his encounter with the Lord at the burning bush. It is a final recalling of the

events which have led to the place where we now stand, just prior to the actual events of the Passover.

Further, the words “Pharaoh will refuse to listen...” are correct. It’s obvious from the entire account of the nine preceding plagues that Pharaoh has willingly and stubbornly refused to listen to the Lord. Yes, the Lord worked on Pharaoh in such a manner that the outcome was assured, but it was only because of the obdurate nature of the man.

When someone taunts or prods another, the outcome will be based on the nature of the one taunted or prodded. Pharaoh was wired as one who would only increase his stubbornness in the face of the Lord’s calculated prodding, but it is still he who is to blame for the outcome.

And once again in this verse, the reason for these things coming out this way is given – “so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt.” Had one or two plagues been enough to secure the release of Israel, the memory of what happened would have been quickly buried in the sands of passing time.

But as it came about, even many hundreds of years after the exodus, the surrounding nations still remembered what occurred and trembled at the name of the Lord. Despite the additional time of suffering in Egypt before their departure, Israel received other benefits from the time of these plagues as well.

- 1) They could personally see the events unfold before their eyes, thus recognizing the greatness of the Lord and His superiority over all other gods.
- 2) They were given confidence in Moses as their leader, a confidence that was challenged, but never overthrown by the majority. Instead a sound system of human government lay under the theocratic rule of the Lord.
- 3) It gave them time to prepare for their inevitable departure, rather than being hastily removed from their longtime dwelling in a haphazard manner.
- 4) They were free from any type of attack by the Egyptians for well over three hundred years. Thus their southern flank remained secure and they could use that safety to establish themselves in their new homeland, not worrying about attack from that direction. And finally,
- 5) They were also able to plunder the Egyptians on their way out. Had they not remained during the full time of the plagues, this would not have occurred.

For these and certainly other reasons, the additional stay in Egypt by Israel was an acceptable cost to pay. The Lord wisely determined all things for their ultimate benefit.

¹⁰ Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, but the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go out of his country.

Again, this verse begins with the word "and" in the Hebrew. It shows with certainty that the previous verse is to be rendered in the past, not the future tense. After the next plague, Pharaoh will in fact not just let them go, but he will drive them out.

Reading and thinking these things through shows us why it is so detrimental to an understanding of the Bible to be captivated by a single, fallible translation.

God's word is not in error, but man's translation of it often is. Those who teach that one translation and no other should be used only set themselves up for faulty theology and a single-mindedness which is harmful, rather than helpful.

This is the last time that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is noted prior to the exodus. The next time the hardening of his heart is mentioned is after they leave Egypt, but before they come to the shores of the Red Sea. The Lord is not through with Pharaoh yet, but He is done with him for the time being.

And so, the wonders which have been conducted are mentioned and the hardening of Pharaoh's heart to this point is cumulatively chalked up to the work of the Lord. He has worked out His plan exactly as He said it would happen in advance of it happening.

Therefore, the credit for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is given to the Lord even though it was Pharaoh who actively hardened it each time he was faced with a decision to comply or refuse. The past nine plagues, and the wording associated with them, are a classic study in the nature of man and how he responds to external stimuli.

Unfortunately for Pharaoh and Egypt, they have been used as examples for us at their own loss. From this account, which really happened in history, we can learn how to act as humans and how to respond to the Lord as He unfolds life's lessons before us. Saddam Hussein never bothered with the Bible and he repeated the same type of mistake as Pharaoh.

Someday, the antichrist will follow along this same sad path. And unfortunately, others are lost in their destructive wake. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis perished because of Saddam; billions of humans will perish because of the antichrist.

In Isaiah 13, the Lord says he will make man rarer than fine gold. This is really coming upon the world, but it can be avoided. God has offered us terms of peace which circumvent the leaders of this world. It is found by calling on Christ. By doing so, we are transferred to His leadership.

Just as he led Israel out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, he can and will do the same for those who call on Him. If you want a part of that heavenly visitation, let me tell you what you need to know...

Closing Verse: *“Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me!*

For my soul trusts in You;

And in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge,

Until these calamities have passed by.” Psalm 57:1

Next Week: Exodus 12:1-11 (It is the Lord’s Passover) (32nd Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Plague on the Firstborn

Now the Lord had said to Moses

“I will bring one more plague on Egypt and on Pharaoh

After that, he will let you go from here

And when he does, he will drive you out completely as you go

Tell the people that men and women alike

Are to ask their neighbors for articles of silver and gold

The Lord made the Egyptians favorably disposed

Toward the people, just as the Lord had told

And Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt the land

By Pharaoh’s officials and by the people, he was considered grand

So Moses said, “This is what says the Lord:

‘About midnight throughout Egypt I will go

Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, according to my word
And then that I am the Lord, Egypt will surely know

From the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne
To the firstborn son of the female slave, who is at her hand mill
All the firstborn will die as I have shown
And all the firstborn of the cattle as well

There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt
Worse than there has ever been or ever again will be
But among the Israelites not a dog will bark
At any person or animal, with your own eyes this you will see

Then you will know that the Lord as to you I tell
Makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel

All these officials of yours will come to me, it is true
Bowing down before me and saying
“Go, you and all the people who follow you!
After that I will leave, and for this you will be praying

Then Moses, hot with anger, left Pharaoh
Out of his presence he did go

The Lord had said to Moses
“Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you
So that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt
His heart will be hardened through and through

Moses and Aaron performed as the Bible does impart
All these wonders before Pharaoh
But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart
And he would not let out of his country the Israelites go

From this, important lessons we should learn
An entire nation was judged because of one hardened heart
For truth and justice should our souls yearn
And the Lord’s great name to others we should impart

Someday what happened to Egypt will happen again
But this time it will come upon the entire world
Great tribulation and plague will come upon all men
As God's righteous judgments are unfurled

And so now is the time to call out for redemption
To receive Jesus and be saved from this great tragedy
Through His shed blood we will receive exemption
At the rapture He will come, our saving remedy

The time may not be far off now
The world is quickly falling apart as wickedness does increase
So let us get the word out to everyone somehow
Before God's mercy upon the world does cease

We thank You Lord that there is saving grace
We thank You Lord for the Gift of Jesus
Someday soon we will see You face to face
Such wondrous things You have done for us!

Praises to You our great and awesome God
Thank You for those heavenly streets we will someday trod!

Hallelujah and Amen...

***THE DAY OF CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION**

Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey on Sunday, 6 April 0032. This is based on dating from the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 and the exemplary work of Sir Robert Anderson.

However, people will still try to find a reason why the crucifixion wasn't on Friday, 11 April 0032. There are a couple reasons why this is disputed, each which certainly results from misunderstanding of biblical terminology. The first is a fear that what's stated in Matthew 12:40 would mean an error in what Jesus said. The second results from a perceived conflict between the gospel accounts in Matthew, Mark, and Luke and that of John.

In the first disputed reason, Jesus is quoted by Matthew as saying, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Matthew 12:40

The resurrection certainly occurred on a Sunday and only the most extreme cases dispute this – and they do it without justification. Some folks fear that because He rose on a Sunday and it was "3 days and 3 nights" that Jesus was in the tomb then it was either Wednesday or Thursday that He must have gone to the cross. It's important to note that this verse is from Matthew and is directed to the Jewish people – Jesus as King. Hebrew idioms would have been understood and not needed any clarification or verbal amending. To the audience Matthew was writing to any part of a day is considered to be inclusive of the whole day. It's no different than terminology we use today. If I arrive in Florida on a plane at 11:30pm on 11 April, during a later conversation I would still say I was in Florida on that day. The biblical pattern of "evening and morning" being a day goes back to the first chapter of the Bible and includes an entire day – regardless of what part of a day one is referring to.

The same verse, as recorded in Luke says, "As the crowds increased, Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation." Luke 11:29, 20 In this instance, Luke was not writing to only Jewish people, but predominately to non-Jewish people – Jesus as the Son of Man. Therefore, the terminology is amended to avoid confusion. This occurs many times in the gospels and therefore the addressees (or the background of the writers themselves) need to be identified to understand proper terminology.

The second issue to be resolved is that some scholars claim that John “appears” to place the crucifixion on a different date than the other writers. Because of this, an attempt to insert some second type of Passover meal is made. This supposedly helps the Bible out of an apparent problem. However, no such meal is identified in the Bible – at any time. Nor is it necessary to make something erroneous like this up. The Bible identifies the timing of the entire Passion Week, dispelling the problem. The terminology for “Preparation Day” used in all four gospel accounts absolutely clears this up and will be noted below.

Here’s what you need to know:

Paul plainly states that the Feast of Firstfruits is a picture of the resurrection:

“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” 1 Corinthians 15:20

The feast of Firstfruits was a Sunday according to Leviticus 23:15 – “From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks.” Note: the Sabbath is a Saturday. We don’t need to go any further there to know this is correct and that Christ rose on a Sunday.

Here is the math from the gospel accounts. It’s all there in black and white and very easy to look up –

**“Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.” John 12:1 This would have been a Sabbath day (Saturday.)

**“The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem.” John 12:12 This would have been 5 days before the Passover, meaning Sunday (Palm Sunday) as the Passover would have started Thursday night at sundown and run until Friday night at sundown (remember biblical days start at sundown).

The account couldn’t be clearer that the next day after the Passover was a Sabbath. This is indicated several times. Some people have attempted to use the terminology in John (it was a “high day” or a “special Sabbath”) to indicate that it could have been a day other than a Saturday. Special Sabbaths are specified in Leviticus and don’t necessarily fall on Saturdays. However, the term “Sabbath” as used in the other gospel accounts is indicating a Saturday. There is no indication, anywhere, that there were two Sabbaths in

a row on this particular week. In fact, such an analysis does an injustice to the reading of the text. Therefore, the special Sabbath occurred on a regular Sabbath day (Saturday).

From this we can give the entire week's schedule (refer to the cited verses in your own Bible to familiarize yourself with what's being said) –

Sabbath 6 before // John 12:1 – ...six days before the Passover. Bethany/Lazarus.

Sunday 5 before // John 12:12 & Mark 11:10 – The next day... Palm Sunday/Riding the donkey.

Monday 4 before // Mark 11:12 Now on the next day... Jesus cursed the fig tree.

Tuesday 3 before // Mark 11:20 Now in the morning... The withered fig is identified.

Wednesday 2 before // The gospels are silent on what occurred on this day.

Thursday 1 before – Passover starts at Sundown //Mark 14:1 After two days it was the Passover... (this is the first timing mentioned since Mark 11:20 which was Tuesday).

Note: Pay special attention to the fact that in the following accounts Mark is using Jewish time (sunset to sunset and John is using Roman time) –

Mark 14:12 – “Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread when they killed the Passover Lamb.”

John 13:1 – “Now before the Feast of the Passover....” Meal, Washing of Feet, Gethsemane.

***Christ crucified this same 24 hour period, but it was obviously after the final night at Gethsemane and then the illegal trial. Mark is speaking of this event from sundown, John is speaking of it on Roman time (this is obvious because they use different terminology for the same meal where Judas left to betray the Lord... can't miss this point and get it right.)

6 days before – Saturday

5 days before – Sunday

4 days before – Monday

3 days before – Tuesday

2 days before – Wednesday

1 day before – Thursday

The Day – Friday

The problem with people believing that John was speaking of a different day (as mentioned above) is that they miss the fact that the terminology for the day is different

based on the author. To clear up any misunderstanding between the synoptic gospels and the Gospel of John, one needs only to compare the uses for the term “Preparation Day.” Once one does this, there are no discrepancies in the accounts –

Matthew 27:62 – “The next day, the one after the Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate.” This was the day after the crucifixion. Matthew says it is the day “after Preparation Day.”

Mark 15:42 – “It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached...” This is the day of the crucifixion. Mark says “It was Preparation Day.”

Luke 23:5 – “It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.” This is the day of the crucifixion. Luke says “It was Preparation Day.”

John 19:14 – “Now it was Preparation Day of the Passover.” This is the day of the crucifixion. John says “It was Preparation Day.”

Based on the biblical evidence, there is

- No discrepancy between any of the accounts.
- Jesus was crucified on a Friday.
- Jesus rose on a Sunday.

As a final note, the Bible says 13 times that He was raised “on” the third day. This is mentioned by Jesus himself as well as the apostles. Therefore, it must have been Friday that Christ was crucified.

Please don’t believe (as some have claimed) that Christ rode the donkey into Jerusalem on a Saturday instead of a Sunday. This would have been the Sabbath. If He did, He would have violated the law –

“Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.” Deuteronomy 5:12-14

There is no need to make the assertion it was a Saturday unless you simply wanted to finagle the dating. There is also no biblical provision for an exemption to the commandment prohibiting working a donkey. As stated above, the work of Sir Robert Anderson in the 1800s clearly demonstrates that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on 6 April 0032. This can be validated in other ways and is the correct year and month for the Lord's crucifixion.

The biblical evidence is quite clear and without ambiguity or total uncertainty...Jesus Christ was crucified as the Passover Lamb on Friday, 11 April 0032 and was resurrected to eternal life on Sunday 13 April 0032.

He now offers eternal life to all who call on Him by faith. Have you accepted His offer of peace?

EXODUS 12:1-11

(IT IS THE LORD'S PASSOVER)

Due to the length of this sermon, my opening comments will be short. In just 11 verses, we will see a few points which will form patterns which fill both the pages of the Bible and concepts of redemptive history which first picture, and then are repeated in the work of the Lord Jesus.

Everything fits as it should because it comes from the mind and the wisdom of God. And all of it points to Jesus because it is all about Jesus. This is our Lord; this is our Savior; this is Jesus – the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Text Verse: *“And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.” Revelation 5:6*

What glory is to be found in His superior word! And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Beginning of Your Months (verses 1 & 2)

¹ Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron

The beginning of Chapter 12 highlights, once again, that what occurs or is mandated is at the direction of Yehovah. In the past, it has been the call of Moses and Aaron, the announcement of the Lord's intentions for Israel to the people of Israel, the confrontation with Pharaoh, the giving of the signs and wonders, and so on.

Now actual legal matters which are a part of the law itself are to be given. This constant use of the words, “Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron” are given to show us that divine authority rests behind both the redemptive process of Israel as well as all of their laws and practices.

This includes the entire spectrum of the body which regulated Israel's affairs – religious, ecclesiastical, and political. Everything which is to govern their society was of divine, not

human origin. Further, there is a certain dignity which is given to this particular instruction for the Passover.

Though it is a part of the law recorded at Sinai, its practice actually precedes the other laws which will be given. Thus the Passover is a sign of their redemption. In other words, it precedes the event itself. Further, the naming of Moses and Aaron here shows that these two alone are the recipients of the law.

A special distinction is bestowed upon them as the prophets who will transmit the law. After them, all other prophets who follow will merely work within the confines of that law. And so, in anticipation of the coming Passover, these words were spoken.

Much of this chapter may have actually occurred prior to the ending of the plagues recorded previously, but in order to show the logical progression of the plagues, these words follow after the final meeting with Pharaoh. Therefore, it may be rightly translated, "Now the Lord *had spoken* to Moses and Aaron."

If so, then when the law was given to Moses at Sinai, the Lord carefully selected all of the details of history, from Genesis 1:1, right through the Exodus account, and put them in the order which follows logically for us to understand the events as they occurred, but in separate sections to avoid them overlapping.

This was seen, for example, in the recorded life of Isaac. His death is recorded in Genesis 35, and yet some events which occur during his life come in later chapters. The same is probably true here. The instructions for the Passover here in chapter 12 may actually predate the events of the ninth plague, that of darkness.

¹ (con't) **in the land of Egypt, saying,**

Later in the law, there will be additional instructions or repeats of these instructions concerning the Passover for the people of Israel. The words, "in the land of Egypt" are stated here to show that a separate instruction on the Passover was given prior to the actual giving of the rest of the law, but that this is included in the law.

Thus it is one harmonious whole even if it was received at a different place and time. We think of the Law being received at Mount Sinai as the one and only giving of the law, but in all, there will be three unique places where the law is derived from. First this portion is in Egypt.

The next will be at Mount Sinai when the people are brought there after the exodus. And the third will be there again using the name Mount Horeb. This will occur after the time of the wilderness wanderings. There the final reception will occur which encompasses the entire book of Deuteronomy.

We can't say that it is merely a repetition of the same law because there are noted differences and additions. As one of many examples, we can look at the fourth of the Ten Commandments. When it was received after the Exodus, the reason for it reads –

“For *in* six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” Exodus 20:11

However, when it was repeated after the wilderness wanderings, the reason given is different. There it says –

“And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.”

-Deuteronomy 5:15

In the first announcement of the fourth commandment, the reason given is based on creation – “...in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them.” In the second announcement, the reason given is based on redemption – “...the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm.”

This is a pattern which will continue all the way through Scripture and even to the book of Revelation. Further, the words “in the land of Egypt” show the Lord's dominion even in the midst of the enemies of Israel. In the past, He had established them as a people and then He continued to tend to them in Egypt.

The pattern follows later in history also. Israel was called out of the midst of their enemies, having been tended to during their Babylonian exile. The church was later established in the midst of their hostile Jewish enemies. Later the true church was called out of the false church during the reformation.

And in a marked incident of immense magnitude which has happened in recent years, Israel has once again been called out of exile from among their many enemies and back to her homeland. As the church age is ending, Israel is being prepared for her long

anticipated meeting with the Lord. He has carefully tended to them in the midst of their enemies.

Finally, these words show us the anticipatory nature of such occurrences. The giving of the Passover in Egypt anticipates the assurance of redemption from Egypt. The giving of the Lord's Supper before His death anticipated our redemption. And the repeated taking of the Lord's Supper as a memorial anticipates the realization of our redemption. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11 –

“For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.” 1 Corinthians 11:26

A lot can be discerned from the few words of this first important verse of Exodus 12. One of the things we saw in them is perfectly realized in the next verse, that of creation preceding redemption...

²“This month *shall be* your beginning of months; it *shall be* the first month of the year to you.

Until this time, the Bible has been dated based on the creation model and calendar. The story of Noah, for example, gives specific dates, but they are based on the creation calendar which began in the month of Tishri. Now a new calendar, a redemption calendar, has been instituted by the Lord for His people.

As I said, this pattern of redemption following creation continues throughout the Bible. In the book of Revelation, there are twenty four elders before the throne of the Creator, acknowledging Him as such and falling down before Him with the words –

“You are worthy, O Lord,
To receive glory and honor and power;
For You created all things,
And by Your will they exist and were created.” Revelation 4:11

However, in the next chapter, it notes that that there is a Lamb at the throne whom they fall down before, acknowledging Him for His acts of redemption with the words –

“You are worthy to take the scroll,
And to open its seals;
For You were slain,
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood

Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
¹⁰ And have made us kings and priests to our God;
And we shall reign on the earth.” Revelation 5:9, 10

Like the calendars of the Bible, like the reason for the Sabbath in the Ten Commandments, and like the reason for praising God in Revelation, the pattern follows from creation to redemption. And so, in anticipation of the *redemption* of Israel, Moses is told that this will be the first month for these redeemed of the Lord.

In Exodus 13:4, the name of the month will be given, Aviv. Later in the books of Nehemiah and Esther, the same month is called by its Babylonian name, Nisan. However, it remains the same month regardless of which name is used. The name Aviv means “greenness” or “fresh” and it indicates fresh young ears of barley grain which come forth at this time of year.

In the Bible, this will continue to be the first month of the religious calendar. Tishri will be the first month of the civil calendar.

Understanding when one calendar or the other is used eliminates any supposed contradictions in the dating of the Kings of Israel. What seems like almost horrendous error between the books of Kings and Chronicles is actually perfectly given dates using these two different calendars.

As an interesting pattern, the first sacred month is the seventh month of the civil calendar and the first civil month is the seventh month of the sacred calendar. Understanding this will reveal marvelous patterns concerning the work of Christ which are hidden in plain sight. The story of Noah is a hidden story of the death and resurrection of Christ. By understanding which calendar is used, one will be able to pull out immense riches from this sacred word.

As an interesting note, the Hebrew calendar is unique and follows neither the Egyptian, nor the Babylonian calendars. It is given by God for the people of God in order to reveal the work of Christ in history. During the church age, this calendar has not been used by us because we have been called out of the Gentile world.

However, as we approach the end of the church age, these patterns and seasons are once again coming into focus and greater use. God is preparing the world for the end times and then the return of His Son to rule for a thousand years.

*Creation must precede redemption
Just as Genesis precedes Exodus
From the plagues of Egypt, Israel received exemption
By a working of the Lord so glorious*

*And one more plague will come upon the land
In it Egypt will find itself in a terrible jam
But once again, God will be seen as more than grand
Through the Passover, and the slaying of the lamb*

*In this plague Israel will finally find its release
From Egypt's bondage and servitude
The long years of toil will finally cease
And out from Egypt will march the Hebrew multitude*

II. A Lamb Without Blemish (verses 3-6)

³Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: ‘On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of *his* father, a lamb for a household.

What is obvious here is that these instructions were given prior to the tenth of the month. For the Lord to say for this to be done after speaking to the congregation implies that it was spoken at a time in advance of the tenth.

In this verse is the first use of the word *edah* or “congregation” in the Bible, thus it is the first time Israel is considered as such. The word comes from another word *yaad* which means “to appoint” or “to meet.” They are now a congregation of people involved in a united act according to the commandment of God.

And this commandment is to do a certain thing at a specified time. On the tenth day of the first month, they are told to take a lamb according to the house of the father. This means appropriate to the size of the house. The word “lamb” here is *seh* and it simply means one of the flock, either a goat or a lamb.

It could also mean any age and of either sex. Later, more specific instructions will be given concerning the animal though. What is also implied is that the people had the

ability to either own or afford such a lamb. There seems to have been no one who was extremely impoverished among the people. This tenth day of the first month is the same day which the Israelites crossed the Jordan forty years later. That is recorded in Joshua 4:19 –

“Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth *day* of the first month, and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho.”

⁴And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take *it* according to the number of the persons; according to each man’s need you shall make your count for the lamb.

This verse is obvious on the surface. If one lamb is too large for a family, then they could unite with another family to have the right sized meal for the number of people involved. Later rabbinic traditions placed the size of the family at no less than 10 people. It is also noted that no more than 20 was considered appropriate.

⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish,

Everything about the Passover anticipates Christ Jesus. The lamb will be a Passover sacrifice which will, because of its nourishment, carry the people through the exodus of their redemption from Egypt. Jesus is called the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world in John 1:29.

His life, because of its nourishment, carries the believer through the exodus of our redemption from the world of sin and death, which Egypt pictures. Paul, in the New Testament, explicitly calls Jesus the Passover offering in 1 Corinthians 5:7 –

“Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”

That this lamb was to be without blemish is seen realized in Christ’s perfect life. In Luke 23, after his interrogation concerning the Lord, Pilate declared Jesus without fault –

“So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, ‘I find no fault in this Man.’”

-Luke 23:4

In Hebrews 7:26, we read this about Jesus –

“For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners...” Hebrews 7:26

And Peter, writing to the Jews of the dispersion, refers directly to the Passover for his description of Jesus –

“...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers,¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

-1 Peter 1:18, 19

No defect was to be seen in these Passover lambs because they were to picture to the world the perfect, undefiled, and spotless Lamb of God whom they picture.

⁵ (con't) **a male of the first year.**

This requirement is given to the Hebrews as a note concerning the lamb standing in place of the firstborn. The firstborn was to be redeemed through the death of the lamb. Thus is it an act of substitution. However, this restriction also looks ahead to Christ.

In the first year, the animal is considered more perfect in terms of innocence and yet it is in the midst of life. Later in Exodus, it will prescribe that such offerings come after the eighth day of their life. This is the same day that a baby is circumcised.

Therefore it pictures the innocent Christ in the midst of life. Not a baby in Bethlehem, and not an old man in Nazareth, but a male in Jerusalem in the midst of His life and yet endowed with innocence, waiting to be made an Offering of redemption.

He was born without original sin, lived without any sort of committed transgression, and was humble, pure, undefiled, and harmless. He is the epitome of what we would think of in such an innocent animal.

⁵ (con't) **You may take *it* from the sheep or from the goats.**

Both animals are used in sacrifices in the Bible for various reasons. This exception here for either a sheep or a goat was probably given to allow the poorer people to buy a less valuable goat than a sheep. The smell of the goat offering is not as sweet as a lamb. Therefore, the goat is used to picture a sin offering. That would picture Christ who, as Paul in 2 Corinthians 5, says –

“For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

The Lamb, having the finer smell, would picture Christ as Paul’s words of Ephesians 5 state –

“And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” Ephesians 5:2

The lamb was generally considered the more likely choice at the Passover and among the people, but either animal ultimately pictures Christ’s work. Thus the Lord allowed either for the feast.

⁶ Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month.

This then is a period of five days. If one selects an animal on the 10th day and sacrifices it in the evening of the fourteenth day, it is a total of five days. The animal was to be kept during this period and until the time of the Passover. The reason for this is not that the family could observe it for defects as is often claimed.

Rather, it was *selected because it had no defects*. Animals with defects were noted and disregarded at the selection of the animal. The reason for this advanced time was to ensure that everyone had an animal ready for the Passover.

This is especially true considering that these instructions probably came before the plague of darkness which lasted three full days. Therefore the selection five days earlier was necessary. In picture, this five-day period is speaking of the time-frame from the evening of Palm Sunday until the evening of the Passover, which the four gospels record as being five full days. In Mark 11:11 it says –

“And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.” Mark 11:11

If one counts five evenings from Sunday evening, they will come to Friday evening. Sunday evening to Monday evening is one. Monday to Tuesday is two. Tuesday to Wednesday is three. Wednesday to Thursday is four. And Thursday to Friday is five.

And if anyone is interested in a detailed breakdown of the four gospels showing exactly this, all they need to do is go to the written update of this sermon at the Superior Word website and I will include it at the very end of the sermon.

The key to understanding the timeline for Christ's day of crucifixion is the term "Preparation Day" which is included in all four gospels. If one follows the timeline and notes that term, they can see the perfection of the timeline given here in Exodus, realized in the harmoniously recorded gospels.

In the greater picture of Jesus' ministry, this early selection – the purpose of it – rather than being a time of inspecting for defect was, as Matthew Henry states –

"...denoting the marking out of the Lord Jesus to be a Saviour, both in the purpose and in the promise." Matthew Henry

Adam Clarke importantly notes that four things which marked this first Passover which were not required again –

1. The eating of the lamb in their houses dispersed through Goshen.
2. The taking the lamb on the tenth day.
3. The striking of its blood on the door posts and lintels of their houses. And,
4. Their eating it in haste.

Succeeding generations did not have these requirements levied upon them. Thus, the original Passover alone serves as the necessary picture of the greater work of Christ.

⁶ (con't) **Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it**

This is one of the main parts of the Passover that is unlike other sacrifices that are mentioned later for Israel. The congregation itself sacrificed the animal rather than it being done by the priests. This actually looks forward to the words of John in Revelation 1 –

"To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." Revelation 1:5, 6

This act in Exodus recognized the priestly status of the people as a nation, just as we have been given priestly status in Christ.

⁶ (con't) **at twilight.**

The Hebrew here is *ben ha'arbayim* – “between the evenings.” It seems like a perplexing phrase, but one has to consider biblical time. According to the Bible, a day is divided into “evening” and “morning.” Thus there are actually two evenings to be reckoned. The first began after twelve and went through until sunset.

The second evening began at sunset and continued till night, meaning the whole time of twilight. This would therefore be between twelve o'clock and the termination of twilight. Between the evenings then is a phrase which allows the three o'clock sacrifices at the temple to be considered as the evening sacrifice even though to us it would be considered an afternoon sacrifice.

This is the same time-frame that Christ died on the cross, which is recorded in the gospels as three o'clock in the afternoon.

*A Lamb, spotless, and pure – without any defect
Will be sacrificed in my place
And looking at that Lamb, I can certainly detect
The greatest love and grace... this I see looking upon His face*

*Oh! That I could refrain and not see Him die
Oh! If there could be any other way
How could this Lamb go through with it for one such as I?
Oh God! This perfect Lamb alone my sin-debt can pay*

*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!
Behold the sinless One, there on Calvary's tree
He has prevailed and the path to heaven has been unfurled
The Lamb of God who died for sinners like you and me*

III. It is the Lord's Passover (verses 7-11)

⁷ And they shall take *some* of the blood and put *it* on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it.

After the animal was slaughtered, its blood would be drained into a bowl and from there it would be taken to the doorway. Verse 22 will show us that it was to be applied using a

bunch of hyssop. The hyssop was to be dipped into it and then it was to be struck to the doorposts and lintels.

The word for doorposts here is *mezuzot*, the plural of *mezuzah*. The lintel is a word found only here in the exodus account – *mashqoph*. It comes from another word, *shaqaph*, which means “to look down” and so it was probably a latticed window above the doorway. The base of the window would be the door’s lintel. The word *shaqaph* is used in Psalm 85 when speaking of the Lord –

Mercy and truth have met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed.
¹¹ Truth shall spring out of the earth,
And righteousness shall look down from heaven. Psalm 85:10, 11

I don’t want to stretch the meaning of *mashqoph* too much, but I can’ help but see in this word, which is only used three times in the Bible and all are in this chapter pertaining to the Passover, that it appears to be a picture of Christ on the cross, looking down from the eyes which bled in agony the night before at Gethsemane. In fact, it perfectly pictures it because the sprinkling of the blood is again a picture of the Lord. Matthew Henry explains it quite well –

“The blood of the lamb must be sprinkled, denoting the applying of the merits of Christ’s death to our souls; we must receive the atonement ... Faith is the bunch of hyssop, by which we apply the promises, and the benefits of the blood of Christ laid up in them, to ourselves. It was to be sprinkled on the door-posts, denoting the open profession we are to make of faith in Christ. It was not to be sprinkled upon the threshold; which cautions us to take heed of trampling under foot the blood of the covenant. It is precious blood, and must be precious to us. The blood, thus sprinkled, was a means of preserving the Israelites from the destroying angel, who had nothing to do where the blood was. The blood of Christ is the believer’s protection from the wrath of God, the curse of the law, and the damnation of hell.” -Henry

As he noted the threshold was not marked with blood. It is an explicit lesson explained in Hebrews 10 –

“Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant

by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?"

-Hebrews 10:29

It would have been a profane act to strike the threshold with blood because it is a profane thing to trample the blood of the covenant underfoot. The picture is clear.

⁸Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire,

The Hebrews were given specific guidelines to roast the lamb. The reason for this is that it is the quickest way of cooking the meat. Further roasting would allow the entire animal to be cooked without dividing it. It is a sign and a memorial to us concerning the painful sufferings of Christ.

Christ died for us, assuming all of the divine wrath that we deserve upon Himself. This is pictured in the fire of the sacrifice. There is a picture of purification and sanctity being tied to the fire. But there is one more picture which may be drawn from the roasting process.

Justin Martyr says that the process was accomplished by using two wooden spits at right angles and thus it would extend the sacrifice on a cross. If so and not just a fabled legend, there could be no better picture of the sufferings of the Lord.

Next it notes that this was to be done, as it says, "that night." This would have been on the night of the 15th, the night of the full moon. It is not by accident that the night the Hebrews left Egypt, they would have the full moon to assist them on their journey.

Everything was perfectly planned for this special moment in time. As a side note, by understanding that Jesus died that same afternoon 1500 years later, we can know with 100% certainty that it was not an eclipse which darkened the skies that day.

As the moon is full at night, it is on the opposite side of the earth from the sun. When the sun was out, the moon was hidden. In other words, it is impossible to have an eclipse of the sun during a full moon. So if you see one of the countless videos claiming that this is what occurred and proving it by star charts, you can save your money and not buy it.

Again, it was not by accident that the moon was full at that time. It thus was a sign to the people that it was not a natural occurrence which darkened the skies that day, but rather a supernatural one which reflected the state of the heavens at the death of the Lord.

⁸ (con't) **with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.**

The unleavened bread is later noted as being used because of the swiftness of the exodus out of Egypt. This is certain, but it only supposes that the bread was not to be made until the time of the meal. They had at least five days' notice as to what was coming and so the Lord had another reason in mind for this as well.

The unleavened bread or *matzah* is a picture again of the Lord. Leaven in the Bible pictures sin. It causes bread to be puffed up, such as man is when filled with pride. And leaven is a species of corruption because it is produced by fermentation. In Luke 12, Jesus warned the disciples by saying –

“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.” Luke 12:1

Later in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul explicitly ties leaven to sin and how we should avoid it –

“Your glorying *is* not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷ Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. ⁸ Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.”

-1 Corinthians 5:6-8

The bitter herbs are certainly a lesson to the Israelites and to us. To Israel, they pictured the bitter bondage that they were about to leave. For us, it is a similar picture. We are to remember the bitterness of our own Egypt, the life of sin that we had once been a part of.

It was a land of torture, bondage, and living under the wicked ruler of this world. The bitter herbs are a memorial of Christ's work to lead us out of that sorry place and to the wonders of eternal life with Him.

⁹ **Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire—its head with its legs and its entrails.**

These first instructions are given to complement and repeat that the animal was not to be eaten either raw or boiled. It was only to be roasted as a whole animal. And the entire thing, including its head, legs, and entrails were to be cooked.

Later commentators say that the entrails were removed, washed, and returned, but that is only a commentary. What we have is exactly what was expected. This again is a picture of Christ. His whole human nature is infused both in a spiritual sense and an effectual sense into His church.

This is symbolized in the Lord's Supper which He instituted prior to His death. The eating of the entire animal is intended to instill in us the truth that we are expected to have all of Christ, or none of Him.

¹⁰You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire.

There are probably at least two reasons for this particular verse being included. The first is to ensure that nobody would take along any bone or other part of the animal as a talisman or memorial which could later be turned into a talisman. If you don't think this is likely, just do a search through Catholic websites concerning body parts of people which are used for just that.

They have heaps and heaps of them. This Passover was to be participated in and then memorialized in later remembrance feasts, but it was not to be turned into a good luck charm that could be carried throughout one's life.

The second reason is similar to the first. It was to ensure that there would be no putrefaction of anything left behind or any possible use of it by those who came behind the Israelites for profane purposes. In type and picture, we are to carry with us the sacrifice of Christ, not in idols, but in our hearts and in who we are.

We are to honor and revere the God who gave us this great Lamb and who has redeemed us through His death. Concerning the entire Passover meal, Matthew Henry again gives wonderful words of how they picture Christ and our relationship to Him –

“The solemn eating of the lamb was typical of our gospel duty to Christ. The paschal lamb was not to be looked upon only, but to be fed upon. So we must by faith make Christ our own; and we must receive spiritual strength and nourishment from him, as from our food It was all to be eaten; those who by faith feed upon Christ, must feed upon a whole Christ; they must take Christ and his yoke, Christ and his cross, as well as Christ and his crown. It was to be eaten at once, not put by till morning. To-day Christ is offered, and is to be accepted while it is called to-day, before we sleep the sleep of death. It was to be eaten with bitter herbs, in remembrance of the bitterness of their

bondage in Egypt; we must feed upon Christ with sorrow and brokenness of heart, in remembrance of sin. Christ will be sweet to us, if sin be bitter.”

¹¹ And thus you shall eat it: *with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste.*

The words here are given, in advance, for the people of Israel to know that their time of bondage was coming to a close and to be quickly ready to depart from it and into a new part of redemptive history. “A belt on your waist” isn’t the greatest translation and it doesn’t give the sense of what is going on.

Rather it should say “with your loins girded.” The dress of the people was loose. When they wanted to travel, and especially to go in a hurry, they would tighten up the loose clothing so that it wouldn’t cause them to trip or get caught up on anything. An example of this is found in 1 Kings –

“Then the hand of the Lord came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.” 1 Kings 18:46

In the New Testament, Peter gives us a spiritual application of this for the believer in Christ –

“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, *as* in your ignorance; ¹⁵ but as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, ¹⁶ because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’” 1 Peter 1:13-16

Having sandals on their feet was completely out of the regular custom. In Middle Eastern homes, sandals or shoes have always been taken off indoors. This would be a sign to them that at any time they were literally within an instant of being told they were to leave.

The staff in the hand admonition is similar to the shoes. When the people went out, they would grab their staff for the walk. It was used for defense against whatever came along as well as a help over the difficult terrains they would encounter. It’s no different today. But when one comes home, the staff is set aside.

The Lord was telling them that they would need their staffs and they would be needed that night. If they didn't have them as they ate, they may have left them behind in the rush that would ensue. Therefore, they were told to be ready at any and every moment.

Thus, they were to eat the meal in haste and in a state of preparedness for a hasty departure. Everything about the words indicates urgency. Probably the best analogy for us concerning this admonition for them to eat in haste and be ready in haste is that all we have is *right now* for Christ.

We have no assurance of tomorrow and therefore we need to always use today to the fullest. When people need to hear the gospel, we need to be prepared to give it. And when the Lord blows the trumpet to call us home, we need to be prepared for our departure. We in Christ have been redeemed, but only so far as we belong to Him.

Someday that will be realized in the twinkling of any eye. That is what we need to always be ready for – both towards others and as individuals awaiting our exodus from this fallen world.

^{11 (fin)} **It is the Lord's Passover.**

Pesach hu l'Yehovah – The words are emphatic. It is not just a common meal, nor is it any ordinary sacrifice. As the Pulpit Commentary says –

“The lamb is Jehovah's. It is his pass-sign – the mark of his protection, the precious means of your preservation from death. As such view it; and though ye eat it in haste, eat it with reverence.”

The meal then is being used as a metonymy for the entire observance. Everything about what is to occur is tied up in the sacrifice of the lamb. It is a perfect reflection of the work of the Lord. All to do with redemptive history is tied up in His cross.

This is also the first time the term *Pesach* or “Passover” is used in the Bible. The meaning of the word is debated, but it appears to have two concepts tied into one. The first is that the Lord will pass by rapidly, and the second is that He will spare those who have trusted Him; those who have applied the blood.

And this is exactly what we can expect of Christ on behalf of His church. A time is coming upon the world when great plagues will cut through the masses of humanity. There will

be woe and terror everywhere; most will not survive. But before that time comes, the Lord promises an exodus for His people. They will be spared from what lies ahead.

The only way to be a part of the wondrous moment, which will be but a blink in time and then it will be over, is to have the blood of the Lamb applied to your own life. With that seal of surety, you can be exempted from the destruction and taken directly to God's Promised Land. Let me tell you how you can receive this grace...

Closing Verse: *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.” Titus 2:11-14*

Next Week: Exodus 12:12-20 (Saved Unto Holiness) (33rd Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

It is the Lord's Passover

Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron
In the land of Egypt, concerning what to do
Saying, “This month shall be your beginning of months
It shall be the first month of the year to you

Speak to all the congregation of Israel
Saying: ‘On the tenth of this month (it will be no bother)
Every man shall take for himself a lamb
According to the house of his father

A lamb for a household
So they shall do as I have told

And if the household is too small for the lamb
Let him and his neighbor next to his house take it

According to the number of the persons
According to each man's need your count for the lamb you shall make it

Your lamb shall be without blemish
A male of the first year
You may take it from the sheep or from the goats
And further directions from Me you will hear

Now you shall keep it until
The same month on the fourteenth day
Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel
Shall kill it at twilight; towards the end of the day

And they shall take some of the blood
On the two doorposts it they shall put
And on the lintel of the houses where they eat it
But not on the threshold where is placed the foot

Then they shall eat the flesh on that night
Roasted in fire, with unleavened bread
And with bitter herbs they shall eat it
They shall do all of this as I have said

Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water
But roasted in fire as you have heard
Its head with its legs and its entrails
Do this according to My word

You shall let none of it remain until morning does return
And what remains of it until morning it you shall with fire burn

And thus you shall eat it:
With on your waist a belt
Your sandals on your feet
And your staff in your hand, so that it can be felt

So you shall eat it in haste
It is the Lord's Passover
With which My people have been graced

Lord, thank You for the Lamb of God
The Lord Jesus who takes away our sin
We can have confidence now as we trod
That for us the victory He did win

Help us never to forget the great deeds you have wrought
Help us to fix our eyes always on the Lord Jesus
Who by His precious blood we were bought
He who has done such marvelous things for us!

Praise You O heavenly Father, yes we praise You
And Hallelujah to the Lamb who is ever faithful and true

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 12:12-20

(SAVED UNTO HOLINESS)

One final plague is coming upon Egypt before the Israelites will be released from their bondage. However, this plague will be unlike anything which has occurred before, both in type and magnitude. It will strike at the heart of every family in Egypt.

The Lord will pass through the land and selectively kill all of the firstborn males, of Pharaoh himself, all the way down to the female servant who is behind the handmill. He will also kill the firstborn of every animal. However, there is a notable difference in this plague in another way as well.

In the previous plagues a distinction was made, either implicitly or explicitly, between the Egyptians and Israel. They didn't need to do anything to be exempt. They simply were. But in the case of this plague, they need to do something; they need to provide a sign or they too will be struck by the plague.

Why was this necessary? The Lord had already showed from the previous plagues that He could tell the difference between the people. And more, the people already had a sign – they had circumcision. Why wasn't this sign acceptable instead of the killing of an animal and spreading its blood on the doorway of their houses?

The answer is that circumcision of the flesh only brought them into covenant relationship with the people of Israel as a collective whole. It is what designated them as a people group. However, it was not a sign of faith from the individual. Rather it was a mark placed upon them before they knew to do right or wrong.

Throughout all of the dispensations in the Bible, the means of salvation remains the same; it is by grace through faith. A person could have simply refused to follow the instructions of the Passover and they too would have suffered the punishment of losing their firstborn.

Paul shows in Romans that being circumcised doesn't save anyone. There needs to be a conversion of the heart or the circumcision of the flesh means nothing. Without faith in God's provision, every external sign and deed in the world won't get a person one step closer to being saved.

And yet there is more. Being redeemed implies a cost. The concept of redemption indicates a purchase is made to buy something back. In essence, there is a clearing of a

debt. The blood of the lamb on the doorposts and lintel showed that a price had been paid. A substitute had died in place of those inside the house.

Today we will see what comes after being saved. There is a responsibility that goes along with it. If it isn't acted on, then there are consequences for that failure to act. These stories, and the minute details they contain, show pictures of greater things to come in Christ.

Are you saved? Have you called out to Christ and accepted His death as your price of redemption? If so, then you are now called to a new life and a new direction in that life...

Text Verse: *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; ¹⁵ but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." 1 Peter 1:13-16*

Following immediately after the Passover comes another feast, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Unlike the other feasts, the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were given to Israel prior to their deliverance. What they picture in Christ Jesus was also given prior to the introduction of the New Covenant.

Jesus instituted the New Covenant in His blood, becoming our Passover Lamb. He also imputed His righteousness to us; His sinless perfection, typified by the unleavened bread. Both of these were alluded to prior to His death. As we are granted His sinlessness in a positional way, isn't it right that we act in the manner which we have been called to in an actual way?

Hopefully, we will learn this lesson from the introduction of the Feast of Unleavened Bread in today's passage. This and so many other wonderful pictures of Christ are there, waiting for us to search them out from His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Blood shall be a Sign (verses 12 & 13)

¹² **'For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night,**

The Lord now promises that He will take the necessary action of this final plague in order to redeem Israel. Their long time of hard service and heavy bondage is finally coming to an end and in anticipation of that great moment, more instructions and details are now provided.

The words “I will pass” are not given as a connection to the name “Passover.” They are a completely different word, *v’abarti*, which simply means “to go through.” There is a difference being made here between Egypt and Israel. “Passing through” is meant in judgment; “Passing over” is meant in mercy.

Further, it is the Lord who personally promises to perform this. It is not a designated representative, such as a powerful angel, but rather it is the Lord who will act. The Bible notes elsewhere that salvation is of the Lord, but judgment is as well. Both of these actions at the Exodus prefigure the work of Jesus in the future.

^{12 (con’t)} **and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast;**

Some years ago Simcha Jacobovici, the Naked Archaeologist, did a special on the plagues of Egypt. During his less than scholarly work, he found natural reasons for all of the plagues, diminishing them to the point that God was left out of the picture completely. He gave reasons for each plague and pulled a few sleight of hand maneuvers in the process, but the most egregious error he made was concerning the plague on the firstborn.

He claimed that the firstborn of Egypt lay on a cot that was lower than all the others as a sign of dignity. Because of this, natural gasses crept in and killed all of the firstborn of Egypt because they alone slept on that honorable bed.

First, there is no such proof of any such sleeping arrangements, and secondly this verse says that the firstborn of both man and beast were affected. Unless the Egyptians made little firstborn pig, monkey, donkey, cow, and goat beds that were lower than the rest, we can be assured that the Naked Archaeologist is as full of hot air as his crummy theories.

There is no possible natural explanation for what occurred on that terrible night of the first Passover. Having cleared that up, in Exodus 4, this promise was first revealed to the ears of Moses –

““Then you shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Israel is My son, My firstborn.’²³ So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.”” Exodus 4:22, 23

Now the time for those words to be fulfilled has come. But to make the plague all the more remarkable, it will include not only the firstborn of the people, but of all of the animals as well. The fifth plague was somewhat of a precursor to this coming plague. In Chapter 9, a distinction was made between the livestock of Israel and that of Egypt –

“And the Lord will make a difference between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt. So nothing shall die of all *that* belongs to the children of Israel.”
-Exodus 9:4

Pharaoh failed to heed that remarkable occurrence and pressed on in his stubborn attitude. Now, the final plague will be refined to such a precise extent that it will make the plague upon the livestock seem almost insignificant in comparison.

¹² (con’t) **and against all the gods of Egypt**

Although most of us have read Exodus, including these few words here, we probably haven’t lost any sleep over them. But scholars vary in their opinion of what they mean, even to amazing degrees. The word “gods” can also mean “princes” and so some say that this means that they will equally suffer in the plague, but that is obvious on the surface. Every household with the blood is exempted, every other will suffer.

It could also mean that the term “gods” is explained by the firstborn of the people and the beasts. In other words, the firstborn of Pharaoh was considered the royal heir to the throne and thus he was a deity. And all of the beasts that were worshipped would have their firstborn killed as well. Thus the judgment is against “all the gods of Egypt” in this sense.

One person changes the spelling of “gods” to “habitations” – “against all your habitations” – by reversing one letter in the Hebrew. Instead of *elohe*, he changes it to *ahley*. But that kind of fiddling with the Bible is tenuous at best. Another possibility is that as the Lord went through Egypt, he destroyed their idols.

This view actually has precedent elsewhere in the Bible. In 1 Samuel 5, we read this account about Dagon, the god of Ashdod –

“Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. ² When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon. ³ And when the people of Ashdod arose early in the morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the earth before the ark of the Lord. So they took Dagon and set it in its place again. ⁴ And when they arose early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. The head of Dagon and both the palms of its hands *were* broken off on the threshold; only Dagon’s *torso* was left of it. ⁵ Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor any who come into Dagon’s house tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.” 1 Samuel 5:1-5

That is similar to the Indiana Jones movie, Raiders of the Lost Ark, where the ark was stored in a wooden box with a Nazi symbol on it. The symbol was burned right off the box, just as Dagon was knocked off his perch. At least two other times, speaking of Egypt of the future, the Lord is said to literally destroy their idols –

“Behold, the Lord rides on a swift cloud,
And will come into Egypt;
The idols of Egypt will totter at His presence,
And the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst.” Isaiah 19:1

“He shall also break the *sacred* pillars of Beth Shemesh that *are* in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians he shall burn with fire.”

-Jeremiah 43:14

But all of these options fall short of being correct. What this probably means above all else is what one would assume when reading it without inserting any presuppositions. In Chapter 11, Moses told Pharaoh exactly what was coming by speaking these words to him –

“Thus says the Lord: ‘About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt; ⁵ and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the female servant who *is* behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the animals. ⁶ Then there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as was not like it *before*, nor shall be like it again.’” Exodus 11:4-6

Knowing this in advance and then seeing the onset of the plague, Pharaoh and all of Egypt would petition their false gods. But none would be able to save the firstborn. Thus, it would be a complete judgment on each and every god of Egypt in one fell swoop.

They were entreated for mercy, but no mercy would come because they had no ears to hear and no power to stave off the plague. Because of this, the gods of Egypt are therefore judged as false gods. This then would be the same type of judgment as when the Lord accepted Elijah's offering on Mount Carmel.

The god of the worshippers of Baal was judged to be a false god before the Lord, exactly as the people acknowledged after seeing the Lord's fire come down from heaven.

¹² (con't) **I will execute judgment: I *am* the Lord.**

e'eseh shephatim ani Yehovah – "I Yehovah will execute judgment." It is emphatic that Yehovah would personally attend to the judgment upon Egypt. He alone would work salvation and He alone would work destruction. To Him alone belongs the power and the glory, and to Him alone belongs the fear of His enemies.

¹³ **Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you *are*.**

What has to be understood is that Israel was not guilt-free. They had worshipped the idols of Egypt and they had not been faithful to their God. But the Lord had called Abraham and made His promises to him. His plan of redemption for mankind was to come through this group of people, guilty as they may be.

But the guilt implied that judgment was necessary. And so in order to atone for their sins, an innocent lamb was sacrificed. It is the blood which atones for sin and which expiates the guilt for the sins of the people. Those who had applied the blood would be exempt from judgment.

If this isn't a clear enough picture of the work of the Lord Jesus and the mercy of God, then you might go back to the beginning and recheck your faith! Every detail of this account shows us pictures of what Christ, the Lamb of God, has done for us. Israel is being used as a microcosm of the greater salvation of all people.

We all stand guilty before God. And yet, by applying faith in the shed blood of Christ to our lives, we are granted mercy and saved from the wrath to come. The doorposts for Israel; Calvary's cross for the world – the blood is the sign for the people of God.

The sign is for us, not for God. He has provided the sign for our assurance of His following through with what the sign represents. Israel will be passed over; the church will be raptured up. And both will be saved from the time of wrath which those around them would have to face.

¹³ (con't) **And when I see the blood, I will pass over you;**

u'phasakhti alekem – the words are emphatic. “I will pass over you.” Here, the spoken word is the guarantee. The Lord spoke a promise to Abraham and Abraham believed. In that act of faith, the Lord counted it to him for righteousness. By faith, Israel was to keep the Passover and the sprinkling of blood. This is what Moses, who represented Israel, was noted for in Hebrews 11 –

“By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.” Hebrews 11:28

Likewise, God has given us His word and our belief in what that words says is what counts us as righteous. The blood is the sign of that guarantee. The blood of the lamb in Egypt was the sign to the people. Our reception of the blood of Christ on Calvary's cross is our sign. When the Lord sees the blood, the Lord will pass over.

God will not destroy those who are saved by the blood. It is a picture of our own redemption, certainly a pre-tribulation rapture for the church, and a complete protection for the sealed 144,000 of Israel during the tribulation.

¹³ (con't) **and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.**

The word for plague here is *negeph*. It is the first time it is used in Scripture and it means a mortal blow. The sense of the passage is that when the conditions laid down by the Lord were met, the privilege which he had extended to the people would be granted. If they failed to meet them, it would not be.

Even among Israel, there was always a choice of obeying or disobeying. One way or another, Egypt would be struck, but Israel had been granted mercy. And so it is true

with the world. Judgment will fall on all people, but for those who receive the word and accept the sign, mercy will come.

*In judgment I will pass through the land
I will destroy those who remain at war with Me
In My anger, I will strike with My mighty hand
A crushing blow for all the world to see*

*But there is also mercy for those who pay heed
I will not strike those who have faith in My word
When I see the blood, then it is agreed
That I will extend mercy, even I the Lord*

*Their judgment came in a Substitute
An innocent Lamb for them has died
My righteousness to them I will impute
For to their hearts, the Lamb's blood they have applied*

II. An Everlasting Ordinance (verses 14-16)

¹⁴ 'So this day shall be to you a memorial;

In these words comes the first use of the word *zikkaron*, or “memorial,” in the Bible. The Feast which is now going to be explained was to be a constant reminder to the people of the redemption of Israel and all that it entailed. In order for it to be so, the Lord gives His instructions concerning the celebration...

¹⁴ (con't) and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations.

Besides the Passover, this is the first mandated “feast” or *khag* in the Bible. Previously, Moses demanded of Pharaoh that the Israelites be allowed to go into the wilderness to observe a feast to the Lord, but that hasn't occurred yet and it was not a mandated feast at that time. Rather it was a request. This, however, is.

From this time on, it was to become an annual reminder of the work of the Lord on their behalf and their responsibilities to Him. All generations of Israelites after this were to observe the feast so that they would never forget His acts on their behalf.

¹⁴ (con't) **You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance.**

The term “everlasting ordinance” is *khuqat olam t'khaggu*. In essence it is a feast which is to be observed for ever. This everlasting ordinance is not necessarily speaking of the Passover, but of the Feast of Unleavened Bread or *matsot*. The Passover is what makes the Feast of Unleavened Bread possible.

The Passover is one of the annual feasts of the Lord, and eventually the two became united in terminology, but the Feast of Unleavened bread is a separate and distinct celebration with its own picture and fulfillment in Christ and in His church.

¹⁵ **Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses.**

The Passover is on the 14th of the month. This feast is held from the 15th to the 21st day of the month. A seven-day week is believed to have been unknown to Egypt at this time, but it was not unknown completely in the world.

Abraham's family observed a seven-day week as was seen in the marriage of Jacob to Leah. Jacob was asked to fulfill his marriage week with her before marrying Rachel. Despite this, there isn't any record of Israel observing a seven-day week until this point.

From here on out, it would be the standard observance of the people. Whatever day of the week the 15th fell on, they were required to remove all leaven from their houses and keep it out for a full week. During this time, they were to eat unleavened bread.

The reason for this was that it pictured the complete removal of the yeast of Egypt from their bread. In the Bible, bread is the fundamental means of sustaining the body – even a symbol of life itself. If one didn't remove the yeast of Egypt, it showed that they longed after that which Egypt provided.

In essence, they had failed to separate themselves from the life they were called to leave. The removal of Egyptian yeast thus symbolized their new life, being purified from their old means of sustaining life.

In general yeast can be considered in two ways. First it causes fermentation, and thus corruption. But it also causes the bread to rise, thus picturing pride, which itself is a form of corruption. The remembrance of the feast is given for the reason of severing themselves from the wicked practices of Egypt.

However, the picture is given for us to see Jesus and His perfection as well as our obligation to act in a pure and undefiled manner. This is explicitly stated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 5. The Corinthians were having issues with immorality in the church and Paul wrote to them words of correction. In them he identifies both the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread –

“Your glorying *is* not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷ Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. ⁸ Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.”

-1 Corinthians 5:6-8

First he noted that Christ is our Passover. After this, he notes that we are to “keep the feast.” It is not the Passover, but the Feast of Unleavened Bread of which he speaks. The leaven of malice and wickedness are to be removed so that we are unleavened, picturing sincerity and truth.

We have been called out of “spiritual Egypt,” meaning the fallen world. If we don’t remove the yeast of Egypt, meaning the old immoral ways of the world, it shows that we still long after that which the world provides rather than what Christ has offered. As always, every word we are seeing in the Old Testament is pointing to a much larger picture of redemptive history.

¹⁵ (con’t) **For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.**

The penalty for eating bread with yeast was for that person to be cut off from Israel. This seems like a harsh penalty, especially when it is a mere observance of something that happened only once in their history. However, it is a picture of a greater truth which is again explained by Paul in 1 Corinthians 5.

What is it that we are to do with those who transgress the commands of the Bible in the church age? The answer is found in what Paul recommends for a man who was living a sexually immoral lifestyle in Corinth –

“...deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” 1 Corinthians 5:5

Like the Israelites of old, we are to expel the man living in malice or wickedness. And Paul gives the exact reason why we are to treat a fellow Christian in this manner in Galatians Chapter 5 –

“A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” Galatians 5:9

If yeast were allowed in the house of Israel, it would be used, as yeast is used, for leavening the bread. Thus all of the bread would be leavened. If sin is allowed into a church it is bound to infect the entire congregation. It is a lesson our modern church has forgotten. And how quickly we have degraded into the vilest of conduct in many once-faithful denominations!

¹⁶ On the first day *there shall be* a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you.

A holy convocation, or *miqra qodesh*, is called for both the 15th of the month and the 21st of the month. It was to be a gathering of the people for sacrifice, prayer, and fellowship. It may also have included instruction as well. Later, the convocations were called by the blowing of silver trumpets which were directed by the Lord to be made for this purpose.

¹⁶ (con't) No manner of work shall be done on them;

This is explain in more detail in Leviticus 23:7, 8 –

“On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. ⁸ But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord for seven days. The seventh day *shall be* a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work *on it.*” Leviticus 23:7, 8

Customary work means employment or other regular work. This then is not a Sabbath observance which forbid work of any kind, including the cooking of meals. This is seen as we continue...

¹⁶ (con't) but *that* which everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you.

Food could be prepared on this particular day of convocation and thus it is not a Sabbath. This is important to know and remember concerning the timeline of Jesus'

cross. The gospels are very clear that the day following Christ's crucifixion was a Sabbath, not a convocation. In Luke 23, this is what is recorded –

“Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb *that was* hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. ⁵⁴ That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near.

⁵⁵ And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. ⁵⁶ Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.” Luke 23:53-56

Therefore, understanding the terminology here and that of the gospels, we can know, along with other assurances, that Christ's cross occurred on a Friday, not a Wednesday or a Thursday.

*As a memorial and as an everlasting ordinance
You shall leave behind the life you once held dear
To you there is now to be a new allegiance
And in your life shall a new lifestyle appear*

*For those who are unwilling to comply with My word
You shall hand them over to Satan as is their choice
This is for their good, so that on the Day of the Lord
Their spirit will be saved according to My voice*

*I have spoken that all who come to Me will be saved
But the congregation needs to be kept pure and holy
And so for those who have willingly misbehaved
They must in this life suffer their own indignity*

III. Let us keep the Feast (verses 17-20)

¹⁷ So you shall observe *the Feast of Unleavened Bread*, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt.

To us, the words translated “this same day” would be an unusual expression. They are *b’etsem ha’yom* – in bone (of) the day. The meaning is “that of the same substance.” It goes all the way back to Genesis 2 where Adam said –

“This *is* now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man.” Genesis 2:23

Adam was declaring the woman to be of the same substance as he. Thus, to say the “bone of the day” is to mean, the day of the same substance as the original. Each year on the same day, the 15th of the first month, the Feast is to be commemorated. It is an interesting idiom that didn’t make it into the English language as so many others did.

It is on this same day that the Lord says that He will have brought out Israel’s army. It is the third time the word *tsaba*, or armies, is applied to the people of Israel. The Lord is their Commander and they are His hosts. When they leave, it will not be as a ragtag bunch of people, but as an army bearing dignity and order.

17 (con’t) Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance.

Again, they are reminded that this day is to be observed. The repetition has purpose. It is to show that they are to pay special heed to this instruction and never fail to follow through with it. The exodus itself began on this day, the 15th of the month.

This corresponds to our new life in Christ coming after the judgment on our sin and our deliverance from it. In essence, there is our day of adoption which is followed immediately by our journey in being the Lord’s adopted. We will never be un-adopted and so we are to conduct ourselves as if this were truly the case.

18 In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening.

In the Hebrew the word “month” is missing at the beginning of the verse, but it is not an unusual form of ellipses. When something is otherwise understood, it is often dropped. Because the word is used two more times in the verse, it is to be understood that it is the first month.

This is a general repeat of verse 15 and it is a reminder that if a person were to eat bread with yeast in it during this period, it would in essence be a denial of the new life in which they were called to live. The generations afterward were to follow suit as a reminder of this same calling.

The entire seven-day period was made holy through the special observances of the first and the seventh days of the feast. These *miqra qodeshim*, or holy convocations, sanctified the entire period. They therefore stand in place of all seven days. This observance then is realized in our life in Christ.

The eating of the unleavened bread pictures our pursuit of Christ in this new life. His words in John 6:27 point to this –

“Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.” John 6:27

The giving up of regular work is then picturing our having attained true rest in Him. This is seen in Hebrews 4:3, where it says that we who have believed in Christ enter into His rest. A few verses later, the author of Hebrews explains it further –

“For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His.” Hebrews 4:10

In Christ, our labors are finished, symbolized by the convocations at the beginning and end of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Again, these two days stand in place of the entire feast period.

¹⁹ For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether *he is* a stranger or a native of the land.

Again, this verse appears to be a mere repetition of what has already been said, but it isn't. An addition is made which is that there is no distinction between a native born or a stranger in the congregation. The native of the land in Hebrew is *ezrakh ha'aretz* or literally, “a tree in its native soil.” The stranger is the word *ger*; a foreigner or an alien. The distinction between the two is important. The native is speaking of a literal descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The land was promised to them and thus they are considered of the native soil. The stranger is *anyone* who has joined themselves to Israel and accepted their customs and practices.

This has enormous ramifications both at the exodus, where an immense multitude of foreigners joined Israel and became a part of the collective whole, as well as numerous

incidents of foreigners coming into Israel throughout the pages of the Bible. It also includes those non-Israelites who have joined Israel today.

They are all collectively under the same umbrella. And the same is true with those who will live in the land after the tribulation period. Here is what Ezekiel says about them –

“It shall be that you will divide it by lot as an inheritance for yourselves, and for the strangers who dwell among you and who bear children among you. They shall be to you as native-born among the children of Israel; they shall have an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. ²³ And it shall be *that* in whatever tribe the stranger dwells, there you shall give *him* his inheritance,” says the Lord God.” Ezekiel 47:22, 23

Those who are joined to Israel are to bear the same responsibilities, and they are to share in the same opportunities. This hasn't changed even in modern times with Israel and it is the exact same expectation of those in the church. All are considered on an equal basis in Christ. Paul explains this in Ephesians 2 –

“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— ¹² that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” Ephesians 2:11-13

This is why he uses the imagery of the olive tree in Romans 11. There is the native tree and there is the wild olive. The same conditions are levied upon both and the same honors are granted to both.

²⁰ You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.”

These words extend the meaning of what was said about the bread. Not only are they to eat unleavened bread, but they are to eat nothing with leaven in it. No food of any kind was to have any form of yeast in it. Further this prohibition is to go to any dwelling where they reside.

This includes their time in the wilderness, in Canaan, and even during their exiles. They were required to observe this at the same time each year wherever they lived. Having

said that, because this feast is fulfilled in Christ, it is also set aside in Christ, as are all of the feasts of the Lord.

He has accomplished everything which was pictured by the Old Testament system, and every law required by that system. In Him alone is found the perfection of God's standard. Now, instead of observing these feasts, we trust in their fulfillment in Christ. Paul explains this several times and in several ways in the New Testament. But he is exceptionally clear about this in Colossians –

“So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.” Colossians 2:16, 17

Israel's laws concerning the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread symbolize their deliverance from Egypt and consecration based on their redemption. Those shadows are now fulfilled in Christ. And so let us keep the feast in Him, not with externals, but with the internal changes which He desires from His people.

We've come to the end of today's verses, but not the end of the story. Much wonder lies ahead and all of it pictures a greater story, that of Jesus. It is through Him that true deliverance from this corrupt world comes about. And it is through Him that heaven's doors are once again opened for the people of the world. If you have never received Jesus as Lord and Savior, please give me just another moment to explain how you can today...

Closing Verse: *“...if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:²² that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,²³ and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,²⁴ and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.” Ephesians 4:21-24*

Next Week: Exodus 12:21-28 (What do You Mean by this Service?) (34th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night
And will strike in the land of Egypt all the firstborn
Both man and beast will face this plight
And against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment as I have sworn

I am the Lord
This is my spoken word

Now the blood shall be for you a sign
On the houses where you stay
And when I see the blood, by my design
I will pass over you and not come by your way

And the plague shall not be on you to destroy you
When I strike the land of Egypt as I am set to do

So this day shall be to you a memorial
And you shall keep it as a feast
To the Lord throughout your generations
You shall keep it from the greatest to the least

You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance
Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread
On the first day you shall remove leaven
From your houses, just as I have said

For whoever eats leavened bread
From the first day until the seventh day
That person shall be cut off from Israel
Thus I have commanded you in this way

On the first day there shall be a holy convocation
And on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you too
No manner of work shall be done on them
But that which everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you

So you shall observe the Feast
Of Unleavened Bread as I instructed you

For on this same day I will have brought your armies
Out of the land of Egypt as promised to you

Therefore you shall observe this day in your governance
Throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance

In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month
At evening, you shall eat unleavened bread
Until the twenty-first day of the month at evening
Remember to do as I have said

For seven days no leaven shall be found in the houses of your nation
Since whoever eats what is leavened
That same person shall be cut off from Israel's congregation
Whether he is a stranger or a native of the land
This is what to you I now command
You shall eat nothing leavened, but instead
In all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread

These are the instructions as given by the Lord
For Israel's feast as He commanded them to do
And so by His spoken word
They were so charged with His words to carry through

But this feast is only a picture, a mere shadow
Of the greater work of the Lord Jesus
In what He has done, we have come to know
The fullness of what God has done for us

And so let us keep the feast in sincerity
Let us devote our lives to holy living in His sight
We as the Lord's redeemed have been called to purity
And to conduct ourselves in a manner just and right

And so let it be according to His word
That we live this way for all of our days
Pursuing Christ and Christ alone – our precious Lord
And giving to God, through Him, all of our praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 12:21-28

(WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THIS SERVICE?)

The night that I started typing this sermon, I got up at about 12am or so as I usually do to finish the night downstairs. The reason why I do this isn't important, but I can say that when I get down there each night, I do enough things before lying down that I don't fall right back to sleep. Instead, my thoughts will wander through events of the day or whatever else is on my mind.

As I was thinking about the sermon typing of that day, a few thoughts came to mind. As of November 2014, the entire Bible is now translated into 531 languages and 2,883 languages have at least some portion of it. That means that human minds are reading, studying, and contemplating the Bible in all of these languages.

And certainly God is revealing different aspects of His word to different people based on their language. I am convinced that different languages will open the Bible in different ways. Knowing, or at least being able to study, the Bible in the original languages has a unique benefit, but the concepts, pictures, and eternal truths which are drawn out from this book are not limited to those languages.

However, there is a uniqueness in the biblical languages that will reveal things that cannot otherwise be drawn out through other languages. That is why it is important to at least study those original languages. God has hidden marvelous clues concerning His Son, His plan of redemption, and the pictures which point to both in them.

As always, today I will give you highlights of the Hebrew language which are unique and which cannot be discerned from any English translation. And why can I do that? Because they are available to any and all via the internet!

And so as I lay there thinking about His word, I thought, "How blessed we are here today!" We have not just one version in English, but somewhere around 900. We have thousands of tools for studying the word. We have all of the combined commentaries of more than 2000 years of scholars, pastors, and theologians.

This is the most biblically blessed age in all of human history. And yet, modern sermons may expand on biblical truths, but not biblical insights. And many hardly even expand on biblical truths.

The airwaves are awash with feel-good, pre-written sermons which can be bought on line or found in one of a thousand sermon-layout books which have been printed to help pastors not worry about exerting any real effort in their weekly responsibility.

Instead, they take what someone has done, add in a few personal life-applications, and get back to other “more important” things. I was given dozens of sermon prep books before I started preaching and I have never used one. In fact, they went in the recycle.

Going through the Bible one verse at a time is sermon work in and of itself. As I will never go through these particular verses again in my life, I want these sermons to be a record of my love and respect for this eternal gift, the Holy Bible. And your attendance each week is a similar mark of respect for the One who gave us this treasure. May the Lord be glorified through our pursuit of His superior word!

Text Verse: *Thus says the Lord:*

“Heaven is My throne,

And earth is My footstool.

Where is the house that you will build Me?

And where is the place of My rest?

² For all those things My hand has made,

And all those things exist,”

Says the Lord.

“But on this one will I look:

On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit,

And who trembles at My word. Isaiah 66:1, 2

Of all of the wonders which fill the universe, there is a certain place where the Lord finds pleasure. Heaven is filled with His glory as He occupies His throne. The earth is adorned with evidences of His tender care. It is a blue pearl in the midst of a swirling universe of majestic wisdom.

And yet, with all of the splendor which is seen here, He calls our home His “footstool.” To Him, it is simply a place where He can rest His feet. By His knowledge, all things exist in heaven and on earth, but yes... there is a certain place where the Lord finds pleasure. Where is it? Well, He just told us.

It is in the one who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at His word. Imagine that! In all the glorious magnificence of heaven and earth, He regards such a

person. This is how important the Holy Bible is to Him. And this is how favorably He regards the one who holds it in high esteem.

Let us never fail to do so. Instead, let us love it, pursue it, cherish it, and tremble at it... just as we would tremble at the sight of His own majestic face. Let us so regard this wondrous gift. Great marvels are to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Hyssop and Blood (verses 21 & 22)

From verse 20 to 21 we have been transported from one time frame to another. In verses 1-20 the instructions anticipated the coming Passover and were probably given before or during the plagues of locusts and darkness. Now in verse 21, we have been forwarded in time to the day of the Passover for the final instructions of this great and momentous event...

²¹ Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them,

In verse 3 of this chapter, the Lord spoke these words to Moses –

“Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: ‘On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of *his* father, a lamb for a household.’” Exodus 12:3

In that verse, Moses was told to speak to all the congregation of Israel. In this verse, he only summons the elders. The implication is that, as often occurs, the representatives of the people speak to the people as mediators.

When the CEO of a company speaks to his staff, they in turn pass the words on to their subordinates and so on down the line. However, he is said to speak to the entire company when he actually only speaks to a handful of people. This is the same way that Moses is speaking to the congregation.

He speaks to the elders, meaning the chiefs of the tribes, and they will in turn speak to those below them. In this way, the entire congregation will quickly get the message that is to be conveyed. And the message contains words which anticipate their release...

²¹ (con') “Pick out and take lambs for yourselves

The words are *mishku uqehu lakhem tson* = draw and take to you (the) flock-animal. The Hebrew is ambiguous and it could mean one of two things –

- “Go, and take your flock animal,” or
- “Withdraw from the flock your animal.”

If this is the day of the Passover, which the text implies, the first is surely correct. They had been told to have the animal ready on the 10th and then to slaughter it on the 14th. As this is the 14th of the month, the day of the Passover, Moses isn’t asking them to go get an animal, but to go get the animal which had been selected.

21 (con’) **according to your families,**

This direction and its explanation was given in verse 12:4 –

“And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take *it* according to the number of the persons; according to each man’s need you shall make your count for the lamb.” Exodus 12:4

“According to your families” means that the animal which had been selected was designated for a certain number of people which may have included people from other families. The reason for the repetition will be realized in the next verse because it is something that wasn’t explained before.

21 (con’) **and kill the Passover *lamb*.**

Let’s do some learning from these few words about Bible translations –

- ...and kill the Passover *lamb*. (NKJV)
- ...and slaughter the Passover animal. (NLT)
- ...and slaughter the passover-sacrifice; (YLT)
- ... and sacrifice the Phase. (Douy-Rheims)
- ...and kill the passover. (KJV)
- ...and kill the Passover. (World English Bible)

...and kill the Passover *lamb*. The NKJV inserts the word “lamb” for what they believe is clarity. But the word for “lamb” in the earlier part of this verse is *tson*. It means an animal of the flock and so it could be a lamb or a goat. They have made an assumption that they believe adds clarity, but it is not wholly correct. Further, as we will see, the

word “Passover” is used in a special way. The insertion does not convey the intent of the verse.

“...and slaughter the Passover animal.” The NLT gets the terminology better than the NKJV, because *tson* is an unspecified animal. It could be a goat or lamb, and so “animal” is clearer. But the insertion is still unwarranted.

“...and slaughter the passover-sacrifice;” Young’s literal translation explains the Passover as a sacrifice. Although not incorrect, if one understands the Bible in context, the word “sacrifice” is unnecessary. It is a learning tool which is not inappropriate, but not necessary for one schooled in the feast.

“... and sacrifice the Phase.” Douy-Rheims uses an obsolete word for “Passover.” The etymology of the word is from the Latin translation of the Hebrew, and so this is not incorrect. The word Phase, which means “phase,” “stage,” or “aspect” may be tied to the moon, which is full on the night of the Passover.

“...and kill the passover.” The KJV terminology is correct. The word “Passover” is applied to the lamb itself. Therefore, the word is put in place for the sacrifice being offered. This is comparable to what is said in 1 Corinthians about the Rock –

“For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.” 1 Corinthians 10:4

The word “Rock” is substituted for and yet means “Christ.” One word is given to mean both. This is the intent here with the word *ha’pasach* or “the Passover.” The word means the animal to be sacrificed, which in turn signifies the entire feast.

However, the KJV is still not complete. The reason is that they wrote it with a small “p” when in fact, it is a proper noun and should be capitalized. And so, let’s go to one more translation...

“...and kill the Passover.” The World English Bible gets the gold star for literal intent, clarity, and grammar. They capitalized the “P” on “Passover.” I hope you enjoyed this minor excursion into Bible translator’s preferences and how they can affect other areas of Bible knowledge. And the reason for all this is because of what the Passover symbolizes. The answer is found in 1 Corinthians 5 –

“For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.” 1 Corinthians 5:7 NASB

The reason for the minute detail of what the Hebrew is actually saying is because of what the Hebrew is actually picturing. In the end, it is all about Jesus. Today, take time to read 1 Corinthians 5:7 in as many translations as you can. There you will see a wide range of variations. I chose the NASB because it most accurately reflects what the original Greek says.

²² And you shall take a bunch of hyssop,

Here is something new which was not mentioned in the earlier verses explaining the ritual. The people are now told that they are to use a bunch of hyssop with which to apply the blood. This was not previously stated.

The word “bunch” is *aguddah*. It is the first of four uses of this word in the Bible. It means a band as in a band of men. The reason for telling you this is that it wasn’t just a single piece of hyssop, but a bunch. The blood was to be heavily spattered on the doorposts and lintel. The directions are specific – the blood is to be evident.

The word hyssop that we use today comes from the Hebrew through the Greek. In Greek, it is *hussopos* and this is a transliteration from the Hebrew *ezov*. You can hear the similarity *ezov/hyssop*. It is an herb native to the Middle East and elsewhere. It has antiseptic, cough relieving, and expectorant properties.

Because of this, it is used as an aromatic herb and for medicine. It’s a brightly colored shrub with dark green leaves. During the summer, it produces bunches of pink, blue, or, more rarely, white fragrant flowers.

The hyssop is mentioned only 10 times in the Old Testament, and with but one exception found in 1 Kings 4, it is consistently used in connection with purification. In one of the most moving psalms of the Bible, the 51st, David pours out his heart to the Lord over his sin before the Lord.

He had gone into another man’s wife and then had her husband killed to cover up the act when she became pregnant. In complete remorse for his actions, he penned this psalm which includes these words in the 7th verse –

“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” Psalm 51:7

David understood the significance of the hyssop and included these words, understanding that if he wasn't so purified, he would be cut off from his people, just as his predecessor Saul was. But the Lord looked on his heart with favor and purified him.

However, the hyssop finds its ultimate fulfillment not in the Old Testament, but in the New. The hyssop of the Passover from Egypt only prefigured the hyssop of the true Passover. The words are recorded in John 19:28-30 –

“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, ‘I thirst!’ ²⁹ Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put *it* on hyssop, and put *it* to His mouth. ³⁰ So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.”

In Exodus, the hyssop applied the blood to the openings of the door. In John 19, the hyssop was applied to Jesus' mouth, the opening of the Door, as He called Himself. It is a prophetic announcement that the only way to be saved is through Him. The hyssop then is a symbol of His work – His word and His Spirit as explained by Paul in Ephesians 5:25-27 –

“...Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”

The Passover of Egypt only looked forward to our greater Passover from sin. Thank God for Jesus Christ, our true and eternal purifier from all iniquity and unrighteousness.

²² (con't) **dip *it* in the blood that *is* in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that *is* in the basin.**

The word “basin” here is *saph*. It means a cup or bowl, but it also has the secondary meaning of threshold. This is the first time that it is used in the Bible and it is used twice in this verse. The repetition of the word has intent.

The cup holds what is in the cup. In Zechariah 12, the same word is used to describe Jerusalem as a “cup of drunkenness.” In Jerusalem will be God's fury against the nations—

“Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem.” Zechariah 12:2

The same thought is found in the exodus account. The cup holds the blood and the blood is what withholds God’s wrath. Therefore, the cup and what it contains, is not only symbolic of protection for those who possess it, but they are symbolic of God’s wrath for those who don’t.

The war against Jerusalem of the future is in no small way depicted here in the book of Exodus. The secondary meaning of this word, *saph*, is threshold. The word is used in the same way as it is here in Exodus as it is in the book of Zephaniah –

“Flocks will lie down in her midst,
All beasts which range in herds;
Both the pelican and the hedgehog
Will lodge in the tops of her pillars;
Birds will sing in the window,
Desolation *will be* on the **threshold**;
For He has laid bare the cedar work.” Zephaniah 2:14 (NASB)

Therefore, we are being shown that. “Theologically, it becomes a symbol of God’s presence in holy power or judgment.” (HAW) Through the use of the blood in the basin, there at the threshold of the house, God’s power to save and His righteous judgment are being depicted.

²² (con’t) **And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning.**

This is the second new addition from the earlier explanation of the Passover and it explains why the words “according to your families” were repeated. Whoever came into the house to share in the meal was expected to stay in the house and not leave. They were not to go back to their own house after eating, but to stay put.

Those who were selected to join the family meal were considered as a part of that house until the plague was accomplished. What it should indicate to us is that any redeemed by the Lord should be considered as close to us as our own family. They have been passed over and are now a part of a greater family. Unfortunately, this isn’t yet realized among believers and it won’t be fully so until the day when we stand in the presence of the Lord and forget all of our petty differences.

Those who awaited the Lord's deliverance in Egypt, and those of us who await its fullness now, can both take the advice of Jeremiah that he gave during the destruction which occurred all around him –

*"It is good that one should hope and wait quietly
For the salvation of the Lord." Lamentations 3:26*

The world is falling apart around us and we need to hope and wait quietly and among our true family until we have been brought out from this place of trouble.

*The sweet smell of hyssop fills the air
A bright crimson stain of blood surrounds the Door
Testimony that a Lamb has died there
From His undefiled body the blood did pour*

*Innocent and pure! Why did the Lamb have to die?
Wasn't there any other way for us to be free?
O God, my heart out to you does cry
How could the precious Lamb have died for one such as me?*

*Where can such love be found? How can it be true?
Did the Creator really send His own Son to Calvary
To bring back to Himself people such as me and you
Where can such love be found? Tell me, how can it be?*

II. For You and Your Sons Forever (verses 23-25)

²³ For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians;

Based on the coming words of this verse, scholars will say that the Lord doesn't actively destroy the firstborn of the Egyptians, but this portion of the verse is clear. Moses says that Yehovah, the Lord, will pass through to strike them.

Thus, there is no reason to think that He merely passed through to strike and then gave the job of striking to another to actually accomplish. Rather, the Lord struck the Egyptians, He struck Israel when they were in disobedience, and He will strike the nations when He returns at the second coming.

23 (con't) and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door

It is the blood and only the blood which can protect those in the house. The Lord would pass over any door with the blood. If a family of Israel didn't believe it was necessary, they too would suffer in the plague. Nothing but the blood can save. It is an eternal truth concerning Christ which is pictured in this ancient event.

Without receiving Christ through belief in His work, there can be no redemption; only the fear of death and condemnation.

23 (con't) and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you.

The words "the destroyer" are *ha'mashkhit*. The word *shakhat* means "destroy." The definite article *ha* in front of it is what brings it to life, *ha'mashkhit* – "the Destroyer." Scholars attempt to find every possible way of disassociating "the Destroyer" from the Lord. But there is no reason for this. As the Pulpit Commentary notes and as I have already said –

"...it is to be noted that elsewhere Jehovah himself is everywhere spoken of as the sole agent." (Pulpit)

This is correct and evidence for it is found in the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 15:26, it says, "The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death." However, there is a definite article in front of "death" there as well. It says, "The death." Paul is personifying death, showing that it is a result of an action.

This then takes us all the way to the end of the Bible where in Revelation 20 it says –

"The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." Revelation 20:13, 14

There, in both instances, death is again personified, just as it is here in Exodus. The destroyer is death, the result of the Lord's judgment. It is not an entity itself, but the result of a work-accomplished.

Not intending to change the word of God, but so you can understand the intent, we could paraphrase it by saying, “The Lord will pass over the door and not let the Death which is in the land of Egypt come into your houses to strike you.”

24 And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever.

The ordinance here is not speaking of the sprinkling of the blood. That was never repeated again. Rather, it is speaking of the precept of the blood of the sacrifice and the observance of the Passover as a commemoration of redemption.

As curious as it may seem, Moses has been speaking in the plural form all along, but he suddenly changes to the singular form in the middle of this verse. “You (plural) are to do this and you (plural) are to do that.” However, it now says, “You (plural) shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you (singular) and your (singular) sons forever.

The only commentator who even mentioned this said, “Perhaps, we are to understand that Moses insisted on the perpetuity of the ordinance to each of the elders severally.” (Pulpit) But that doesn’t make any sense because he is talking to all of them.

Instead, it is a picture of individual salvation. What is being said is, “You (people) shall observe this thing as an “ordinance-to-you” (a ‘personal-ordinance’) and your (every individual) sons... In the Hebrew, there is a dash, known as a *maqeph*, between the words “as an ordinance” and “for you.”

לְחַקְּךָ-לְךָ



maqeph

This dash unites the two words so that they become one in intent. Every person individually must participate within the group. In other words, it is a personal ordinance within the collective; each person is obligated to observe the feast. It is a picture of our salvation. In the church we have to personally receive Christ.

There are no tag-along Christians united through the family, but not through Christ. Even the Old Testament gives us hints as to how God operates towards His people. It is by grace and through faith that we are saved, in all dispensations.

²⁵ It will come to pass when you come to the land which the Lord will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service.

The Passover was to become a perpetual memorial, every year at its time. After they entered Canaan, which was promised to them through their fathers, they were to continuously and faithfully observe the rite. Assuming control of the land didn't end the need for the Passover, instead it necessitated it.

The Lord was to be proven faithful in the grant of land and therefore the people were to be faithful in the keeping of the ordinance. Should they go into exile from the land, they would still be obliged to perform the Passover because even in exile, they were promised to again receive the land.

Therefore, the annual rite was never to be neglected, but it was to be a reminder and a tutorial for the next generation concerning the work of the Lord on their behalf. The rite of the Passover is the longest continually observed such rite in the world today. It has carried Israel as a people for 3500 years.

And yet, it is an observance which they missed the significance of when it was fulfilled in Christ. As Matthew Henry says –

“The keeping of this solemnity every year was, 1. To look backward, that they might remember what great things God had done for them and their fathers. Old mercies, to ourselves, or to our fathers, must not be forgotten, that God may be praised, and our faith in him encouraged. 2. It was designed to look forward, as an earnest of the great sacrifice of the Lamb of God in the fulness of time. Christ our passover was sacrificed for us; his death was our life.” Matthew Henry

For every Jew who comes to know the Lord, the observance takes on a new and wonderful dimension to them. And for every son of Christ in the church, we look to the cross and observe it as our true Passover. Redemption has come, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

*When I see the blood, I will pass over you
When proof that the Lamb died is properly applied
Then My promise which is faithful and true
Will be kept, and in you I will be glorified*

*My child, redeemed of the Lord
You have faithfully adhered to My word*

*And so the consequences of sin are gone at long last
The time when death had its hold has now passed*

*You have moved from death unto new life
From the bars of iron and the chains of brass I have set you free
Between us is ended all enmity and strife
Through My Son, the Lamb, you are reconciled to Me*

III. Recounting the Deeds of the Lord (verses 26-28)

²⁶ And it shall be, when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’

The rituals of the Passover were both explicit and unusual. Every sense would be affected by its observance. The smell of the lamb, the taste of the bitter herbs, the sight of the set table, the sound of the cracking *matsah* bread, and the physical sensations associated with conducting the rite – into the night – would all be impressed upon every mind who participated.

Eventually, the children would get old enough to want to know why they were observing the rite – “Papa, what does it all mean?” It was the intent of the Lord that it would be held infrequently enough to not get caught up in the ordinary and yet frequently enough to allow Israel to be eager in anticipation of its return.

The memories of the previous year would be just fresh enough for the children to say, “We have done this some time before and now we’re doing it again.” It is comparable to our own observances throughout the year. We learn to eagerly anticipate them because they are not too frequent to get tired of, but not too distant that there is no hope of the day finally arriving.

And when the days arrive, we have stories to explain their origin and why we observe them. If we talk about them in secular holidays, such as the 4th of July, how much more should we talk about them on the more important, Christ-centered ones.

And with each observance, the details shouldn't be overlooked. If they are, then the true nature of the observance gets replaced with unhealthy traditions. Christmas has lost much of its meaning because we have failed to pay heed to what it originally meant.

To the Jews, the Passover never took on its proper significance because it became to them an observance of how the Lord *loved them* instead of how they should have loved the Lord. Only in the cross of Christ can the Passover take on its fullest meaning. Matthew Poole warns us about losing our religious heritage by not being wise in our spiritual observances –

“God expects this even from the Jewish children, and much more from Christian men, that they should inquire and understand what is said or done in the public worship or service of God, and therefore not to rest in dumb signs, whereof they neither inquire nor know the meaning, or in the service of God in a language which they understand not.” Matthew Poole

In the years leading up to the reformation, rites were conducted in Latin and dumb signs had replaced directed love and devotion. The reformation brought the church back to Christ, but once again He is being lost to so many. He has become an idol of prosperity, licentiousness, and social reform to many instead of being our holy sacrifice and our means of purification *from* sin and impurity.

²⁷ that you shall say, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord,

zebakh pesakh hu l’Yehovah – “Sacrifice Passover, it to Yehovah.” This is an emphatic statement and it is the most formal and precise description of it which has been given. But the question is, “What does “it” describe?” Is it speaking of the whole ritual or the animal of the ritual?

The answer must be the animal. The term “sacrifice” is what draws out the meaning. There are formalities associated with any sacrifice, but it is the sacrifice which defines the formalities, not the other way around.

The Passover sacrifice had its formalities; the sin-offering had its own as well. Each sacrifice was meant for a certain purpose and the formalities were given in conjunction with the sacrifice. A life will be taken as a substitute. When the proof of the death of the animal is presented, there will be a result which follows...

27 (con't) who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.”

Every detail of the Passover rite has pictured the greater work of Christ. Not a detail has been given which fails to show forth what He did. Israel was to slaughter an animal and eat it after putting its blood on the doorposts and lintel. We have been instructed by the Lord to “...take and eat, this is My body” once we have applied the blood of the cross to our own lives.

Israel was passed over in mercy; Egypt was struck with a mortal blow. We are passed over in mercy; the world who rejects Christ will perish. The Passover animal stopped being sacrificed when the temple was destroyed. For 2000 years, the Jews have observed the Passover without it.

However, the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper has been faithfully observed by true believers in a continuous manner for those same years. There have been no gaps in the true praises of God among His people. But they have come from different lips and different hearts during the wanderings of the Jews.

The final, ultimate Passover Lamb died so that we could continue to sing His praises for all eternity. Soon, our time here will be finished and Israel will come to know what they had missed. Salvation is of the Lord and the Lord is Jesus.

27 (con't) So the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

“The people” here at first seems to imply the elders who came before Moses. These people surely went back through and told the masses and the worshipping must have flourished in Goshen like flowers in the springtime. This is the first time that this sentiment has been seen since all the way back in Exodus 4:31 –

“Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. ³⁰ And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses. Then he did the signs in the sight of the people. ³¹ So the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.”

-Exodus 4:29-31

There was a time when they believed the word of the Lord and the message from Moses, but they fell away because of their hard bondage. Now, with the very hour of the deliverance at hand, they once again bow their heads and worship.

This act, among other things, surely signifies their agreement to the annual ordinance, thankfulness for their coming freedom, gratitude for the surety that they were God's people and that He had been faithful to His promises to them, and joy at the anticipation of all that the exodus implied. Are these also traits that each one of us stores in our own hearts as we come to the Lord's Table?

These things were fulfilled in an earthly sense for Israel and they are fulfilled in a greater, spiritual sense for us. Their redemption was for relief from pains of the body. Ours is for relief of the pains of the spirit.

Their redemption came about by a meal involving an earthly animal; ours comes in partaking in the body and blood of the heavenly Lord. Their redemption allowed them to go from bondage in Egypt to freedom in Canaan. Ours has brought us out from the bondage of sin and death and it guarantees eternal freedom in heaven.

In all ways, the Passover of Christ is superior to the Passover of Moses, a Passover which only looked forward to that of Christ. Therefore, let us be loyal to the One who directs us through His word, filled with thanks for the freedom we possess, grateful for the bond which exists between our Creator and us, and filled with joy at the anticipation of our heavenly calling and assured eternal walk in His presence.

²⁸ Then the children of Israel went away and did so; just as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

The disbelief which permeated the people after their initial meeting with Moses has been replaced with absolute certainty in Him after seeing the nine great plagues which had by this time fallen on Egypt. The stubborn defiance by the officers of the Hebrews toward Moses is now replaced with gratitude and certainty.

The people who complained about their hardships are now reveling in the prospect of freedom. This is the Passover! This is the time of God's favor! Today is the day of salvation! The bondage has come to an end! This is the message that the Hebrews had received, and they were ready to follow up on that message with action.

They would slaughter the Passover, apply the blood, and await their release. And here we are today, finding out that the Passover of Israel is only a picture of a greater

Passover for each of us. The Lamb that was slain is Jesus. The blood that was applied evidenced His death. And the judgment which rightly should have fallen on us was taken out on Him.

Only Jesus can take us out of spiritual Egypt and restore us to the presence of God. This is the message of the Bible and this is the word which has gone forth. If you have never received this gift of God's love and grace, be sure to do so today. *Now* is the time of God's favor! Today *is* the day of salvation! Let me tell you what you need to know in order to be saved from the wrath to come...

Closing Verse: *"By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them." Hebrews 11:28*

This closing verse is from Hebrews 11, the great hall of fame of faith found in the Bible. God acknowledged Moses' faith because of the sprinkling of the blood. And He will do so in your life as well if you will but receive His Gift. Do it today! Receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Next Week: Exodus 12:29-36 (The Plague on the Firstborn) (35th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

What Do You Mean by this Service?

Then Moses called for all the elders
Of Israel and said to them
"Pick out and take lambs for yourselves
According to your families, and kill the Passover lamb

And you shall take a bunch of hyssop
The blood that is in the basin, you shall dip it in
And strike the lintel and the two doorposts
With the blood that is in the basin

And none of you shall out of the door go
Of his house until morning as I have instructed so

For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians
And when the blood there He sees
On the lintel and on the two doorposts
The blood which His holy wrath does appease

The Lord will pass over the door as He said He would do
And not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you

And you shall observe this thing, forgetting never
As an ordinance for you and your sons forever

It will come to pass when you come to the land
Which the Lord will give you
Just as He promised, please understand
That you shall keep this service, just as He has instructed to do

And it shall be, when your children say to you
“What do you mean by this service, tell me this?
That you shall say, “It is the Passover
To the Lord it is a sacrifice we are never to miss

He passed over the houses of the children of Israel
In Egypt when He struck the Egyptians, leaving many dead
And delivered our households as we today continue to tell
So the people worshipped as each bowed his head

Then the children of Israel did so after they went away
Just as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron
So they did on that day

The story of the Passover is a truth found in God’s word
But it only is a picture for us to see so much more
It was meant to look forward to Jesus our great Lord
When His sacrifice once again opened heaven’s door

Israel was brought out of bondage in Egypt the land
But we too have been brought out from sin’s strong hold
By the work of Jesus, a deed mighty and grand
It is a story which will forevermore be told

How can we but praise You, our majestic King!
How can we but share the wondrous gospel story!
Forevermore the redeemed of the Lord will sing
Of our sweet Savior, clothed in light and splendid glory

Yes, we praise You now, O God, and even for all eternity
Our hearts long to see You Lord, in all of Your majesty

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 12:29-36

(THE PLAGUE ON THE FIRSTBORN)

For the second and last time in Exodus, the kneading bowls of the people will be mentioned. The first time was during the plague of frogs which filled the kneading bowls of the Egyptians. This time it will be contrasted with the kneading bowls of the Israelites which will be filled with dough and then wrapped in cloth to keep out contamination.

The only other time these kneading bowls are mentioned is in the book of Deuteronomy – once in Israel's expected blessings for obedience, and once in their expected curses for disobedience. A kneading bowl is something personal to the household. It is where the bread is made.

The bread is prepared and it is brought to the table. The table is where the meal is. And the meal is where life's most tender moments with family and friends often occur. We can think of our kitchen counter as today's kneading bowl. We keep it clean and we prepare our meals on it.

Nobody would consider eating food that was prepared on a counter filled with roaches or mold... well maybe roaches – no probably not. We take good care of where we prepare our meals because we want to stay healthy and because we want to eat food which tastes good and which doesn't have bugs in it.

When we go into a house which isn't clean in this way, we will find any excuse for not eating what is offered. But in considering this, do we make as much effort in our spiritual house? Is our spiritual bread prepared without contamination?

How carefully we tend to our physical food, but how carelessly we often tend to our spiritual food! Do we take time to read God's word? And if we do, do we simply read it in order to say we've read it, or do we savor it as a meal of the purest sort?

And in what other areas do we neglect to live in a spiritually pure manner? Do we eat the bread of immoral images? Do we consume greed or envy over possessions? Do we drink up bitterness by the mug full? What is it in our lives that we can correct for in our spiritual meal?

Adherence to the word carries great benefit. Failing to adhere to it carries great consequences. Israel as a nation found this out, and each individual will find it out as well. Some are blessed and realize it in this life. Others won't find out until it's too late.

Let's be sure that our kneading bowls are filled with unleavened bread as we walk in this life we have been granted.

Text Verse: *"Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl."* Deuteronomy 28:17

A cursed kneading bowl is a kneading bowl that is defiled and unsuitable for use. It could also be an empty kneading bowl that leaves one staring at it wondering when they will eat their next meal. Either way, it is useless to be used for what it was designed.

The kneading bowls of Pharaoh and Egypt were defiled, but they failed to pay heed. Now, eight plagues later, they will suffer the greatest plague for having not learned the lessons of the past. It will be such a terrible thing that they will urge Israel to leave.

Let us learn the lesson of the kneading bowl and keep ours clean and undefiled. Let us keep our lives holy and our doctrine pure. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Let us partake only of the true Bread, the pure and unleavened Bread of Christ which is revealed in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Go, Serve the Lord as You have Said (verses 29 & 30)

²⁹ And it came to pass at midnight

Nine plagues have come upon Egypt. Nine times they have been afflicted by the hand of the Lord. The land has been ruined and death has been seen. And with the distinction being made between the Egyptians and Israel, the plagues would have been all the more wondrous.

Several times, Pharaoh seemed ready to relent and release captive Israel, even speaking aloud that it would happen. But because of his stubborn heart, he always found a reason to back off from actually following through with his words.

His heart was hard and it only grew harder through the carefully timed wonders which the Lord sent into the land. Now, for several days there has been darkness in the land. The people would have been beside themselves as they sat in their houses, not being able to even tell if it was day or night.

Here at midnight on the 15th of the month of Aviv, the worst terror of all would come upon the people of Egypt. Being the 15th of the month, it would be a full moon, the

most propitious time of all for the Exodus of Israel. They would have the moon to illuminate the land as they picked up their belongings and headed out of Egypt.

But for the Egyptians, midnight would make the plague all the more horrifying. The people would have slept, waking to hear the sounds of death consuming their loved ones. Their minds would have been dull and the darkness would only make the calamity more terrible. Would the death strike others? Might it even... even strike me?

And Pharaoh would have the overwhelming horror that he had been told in advance that the plague was coming. In their final meeting, Moses told him that midnight was the hour for it to occur. Whether he believed it possible or not then, he now realized the truth of the statement. Death had come at midnight.

29 (con't) that the Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt,

Unlike all of the other plagues which could possibly be seen as natural, this one cannot. The death of the firstborn only is unique and cannot be ascribed to anything except a targeted attack. There is a purposeful, willful intent behind the action. Nature does not act in such a way, ever.

No amount of speculation concerning what type of natural phenomena will ever adequately resolve what occurs here. Attempts to find them have only proven the one so speculating to be foolish. The attack will come against all people in all living conditions and even against the animals.

But more than that, those with the blood applied, even if in the exact same neighborhood, will be spared. The impossibility of this being a natural event is assured. Let us accept the narrative at face value and not attempt to undermine the magnificence of what occurred on that sacred midnight in the land of Egypt.

Be advised though that there are so-called scholars who would so attempt to weaken the account. The liberal scholars at Cambridge state as they often do that the text has been manipulated. Here are their words –

“This particular form of the tradition (Sage) evidently first arose partly through the influence of the Isr. spring-offering of the Passover, partly through that of the Isr. custom of dedicating the first-born, which together brought into the tradition the sparing of the houses and first-born of the Israelites, and transformed the Egyptians who perished in the plague into first-born.” (Liberal and perverse “scholars” at) Cambridge

May they be judged appropriately for their lack of faith in the surety and truthfulness of God's holy and superior word!

And yet, as straight forward as these words appear, there is room for some argumentation. Concerning those targeted, they have been interpreted in a multitude of ways. Is this speaking of only the firstborn son, or the firstborn who opens the womb, regardless as to whether it was a male or a female?

Does it mean all the firstborn in a house? Because if so, it could mean the grandfather who was a firstborn of his mother, the father who was the firstborn of his mother, and so on. If it includes women, then it could include an aunt or a mother.

Some scholars say the word "firstborn," which is *bekor* implies a male only. Others disagree. Some even argue that the word, which can mean "chief" or "most" can be speaking in a superlative sense, such as the "most favored." Little agreement is found among those with such diverse opinions.

However, the narrative itself, as well as the pictures found throughout the Bible, gives us the proper answer. Exodus 1:16 details Pharaoh's words which said –

"When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see *them* on the birthstools, if it *is* a son, then you shall kill him; but if it *is* a daughter, then she shall live." Exodus 1:16

A few verses later, in verse 22, Pharaoh gave another command –

"So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, 'Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive.'" Exodus 1:22

Pharaoh had ordered the killing of Israel's sons and the Lord would now slay the firstborn sons of his land. And as a certainty of this, In Exodus 4:22, we read these words–

"Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord: 'Israel *is* My son, My firstborn. ²³ So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.'" Exodus 4:22, 23

In these verses, the word *ben* or "son" is used in conjunction with *bekor* or "firstborn." This was targeted only at the males. Whether it means the males of all generations or only those of the youngest generation is not specified, but if Pharaoh himself were a

firstborn, then it would mean only the youngest, because he didn't die. If not, then we can't know.

No matter what, because of their treatment of God's firstborn son, called the Israelites, they would now be so treated. As Jamieson-Faucett-Brown notes –

“They were made, in the justice of God, to feel something of what they had made His people feel.” Jamieson-Faucett-Brown

²⁹ (con't) **from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne**

The highest seat in the land was not exempt from the punishment of the plague. And in fact, he was the most deserving of it, having sat in the royal seat, overseeing the unjust laws and crimes committed against the people of the Lord.

He had been given his warning before the first plague that this day would come and he refused to heed it. With each subsequent plague, the day of this judgment drew nearer, and yet he continued to stubbornly refuse to pay heed to the words he had heard and the marvels he had beheld.

²⁹ (con't) **to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon,**

Curiously, these words do not read the same as the warning given in Exodus 11. There it said –

...and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the female servant who *is* behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the animals. Exodus 11:5

There is a possible reason for the change which can be answered by the fact that elsewhere in the Bible captives worked at a grinder while in prison. This is seen in Samson who was taken captive by the Philistines. In Judges 16, it says –

“Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison.” Judges 16:21

However, this doesn't explain *why* the change was made, only a possible answer for it. And so I would suggest that this change is to point us to the work of Christ. In Exodus 11:5, it says –

“...the firstborn of the female servant who *is* behind the handmill.”

Grammatically, this could be saying that the firstborn is behind the handmill or the female servant is behind the handmill. However, my friend Sergio notes that –

“Context wise, it continues a sentence where in the first part it uses the exact same language and reference: firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to firstborn of the maidservant who is behind the handmill.”

He goes on to say that, “I understand that Pharaoh was the one who sits on the throne, not his firstborn. Only when Pharaoh dies, then his firstborn takes his throne.”

In the exodus, we have to remember that the lamb was sacrificed in place of the firstborn. I don’t think it would be stretching it to say that Christ died for all people and this is reflected in Him in the words of Exodus 11. He truly was the Firstborn behind the stone in His grave, represented by the millstones.

And yet at the same time He is the Firstborn of the female servant. Mary called herself “the maidservant of the Lord” in Luke 1, she being the mother of the Lord. Thus in the ambiguity of the wording – He fills both roles.

In Exodus 12, He was the “Firstborn of the captive in the dungeon” meaning the Firstborn of fallen man, and yet he was the “Firstborn in the dungeon” meaning the grave. The same word for “dungeon” here, *ha’bowr*, was used in Genesis where it was called “the pit.” In those sermons, it was clearly a picture of Christ in His death.

Finally, the continuity in the ability to mean both things extends to the phrase “from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne.” In the Joseph sermons, Pharaoh which means “Great House,” pictured God on His throne. And so the same ambiguity in the wording can be applied here also. It can read either “Pharaoh who sat on His throne,” or “the firstborn who sat on His throne.”

Jesus sat on the throne of heaven, but condescended to come to earth where He died as the Firstborn Son of God. This is seen in Colossians 1 –

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him

all things consist. ¹⁸ And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” Colossians 1:15-18

He is also the Firstborn who sat on His throne as is spoken of numerous times in the New Testament. One which fits this perfectly is found in Hebrews 1 –

“But to the Son *He says*:
Your throne, O God, *is* forever and ever;
A scepter of righteousness *is* the scepter of Your kingdom.” Hebrews 1:8

I do believe this evaluation is correct. It is showing us that there has been an exchange made. The firstborn of God, the firstborn of the maidservant, and the firstborn of the captive are all picturing the Lord and His wondrous work for the people of the world.

Because of what He has done, we may now join Him as the firstborn registered in heaven, as the author of Hebrews tells us –

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect...” Hebrews 12:22, 23

God did not cause the people of the world to suffer unjustly. And there is nothing that has happened to us that He was not willing to endure Himself.

²⁹ (con't) **and all the firstborn of livestock.**

The word here should be translated as YLT states it, “and every first-born of beasts.” This word is *behemah*, which means any beast, whether livestock, a family dog or cat, the camel at the hitching post, or any other beast in the land. There is a reason for this particular judgment.

Due to Egypt’s animal worship, the Lord was showing that all animals were under His authority, even those which had not yet been named in any judgment. If they had made an idol of Rover, he would now be shown as a false god. If they had made an idol of Fifi the cat, it would now be proven false as well. The Lord created, and the Lord has judged.

³⁰ **So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians;**

Whether it was the sounds of death which awakened the living, or whether it was the sounds of the living who knew of the death which awakened all others, everyone in Egypt was aroused from their sleep because of what had transpired.

Only the deaf would lay in a peaceful slumber unless they too were awakened to mourn their own dead. Egypt had been crushed before, but never had it received such a punishing blow which reached to the very heart of all people...

^{30 (con't)} **and there was a great cry in Egypt,**

Pharaoh was warned of exactly this in Chapter 11 –

“Then there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as was not like it *before*, nor shall be like it again.” Exodus 11:6

Ancient travelers of past ages have recorded the habits of the Egyptians when death came near to them. Compiling several scholars’ notes on this, Adam Clarke gives the following summary for us to consider –

“No people in the universe were more remarkable for their mournings than the Egyptians, especially in matters of religion; they whipped, beat, tore themselves, and howled in all the excess of grief. When a relative died, the people left the house, ran into the streets, and howled in the most lamentable and frantic manner.” Adam Clarke

With a culture known for such outlandish mourning over the dead, the term *tseaqah gedolah*, or “great cry” probably should be considered an understatement. Words would fail to describe the sounds emanating in the darkness of night in the land of Egypt.

^{30 (con't)} **for there was not a house where there was not one dead.**

If, as I suggested earlier, only the firstborn son of the house was destroyed, then these words might be taken as hyperbole. Not every house would have a firstborn son, but every house with one would suffer the plague and have dead among them.

But even in houses without a firstborn son, there still could have been firstborn animals. If someone had a favorite monkey that they idolized, or a precious puppy that they loved, they too would have been afflicted by the plague, even if it were less painful than a human child.

And considering that everyone would know a house with a firstborn son, then everyone would have been personally touched by what occurred. The plague would have afflicted every person in the land and the mourning sounds would have been beyond our ability to put into words.

*In one final mighty blow upon man and beast
The Lord came through Egypt the land
From the greatest even to the least
No family was exempt from His punishing hand*

*Except those who had applied the blood
The precious blood of a lamb, innocent and pure
For those there was safety from the deathly flood
Behind the doors, they were safe and secure*

*Judgment has been rendered upon Egypt's sin
Upon Pharaoh and all his subjects in the land
Their rebellions had finally done them in
No family was exempt from the Lord's punishing hand*

II. Be Gone! (verses 31 & 32)

³¹ Then he called for Moses and Aaron by night,

There is again argument and dissension among scholars what these words mean. Did Pharaoh call for Moses and Aaron to come before him? If so, then it would seem to violate what was said in Chapter 10 –

“Then Pharaoh said to him, ‘Get away from me! Take heed to yourself and see my face no more! For in the day you see my face you shall die!’

²⁹ So Moses said, ‘You have spoken well. I will never see your face again.’”

-Exodus 10:28, 29

However, scholars attempt to argue that because of the urgency of the situation, he called for them to appear before him again. However, Chapter 11 answers this and shows that to not be the case. Moses, knowing in advance what would occur said these parting words to Pharaoh –

“And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, ‘Get out, and all the people who follow you!’ Exodus 11:8

Speculation is unnecessary. Pharaoh sent his messengers while he mourned over his dead. He was unwilling to personally go and beg for them to leave.

^{31 (con’t)} **and said, “Rise, go out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel.**

Exactly as Moses had said would come about, Pharaoh now fulfills, imploring not only Moses and Aaron, but all of the people of Israel to leave. And he gives the reason for the order, finally realizing what he ignored throughout the entire period of the plagues...

^{31 (con’t)} **And go, serve the Lord as you have said.**

This was the *original request* made in the first meeting between these three back in Chapter 4, “...let my son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.” All of the pains, all of the destruction, all of the death and misery could have been avoided if Pharaoh had simply allowed Israel to go.

But when one doesn’t know the true God he is just another of many gods, or he may even be considered a false-god or no-god at all. Unfortunately, when we don’t recognize the Creator, we cannot anticipate what He is capable of. Israel forgot their Lord and they were all but destroyed, twice.

The world has, like Egypt in these verses, all but forgotten the Lord, and the plagues of Egypt will come on a global scale. When it is all said and done, there will be little left. And all of this is because of a failure to serve the Lord, just as He has requested since the beginning of time.

³² **Also take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone;**

Not only were they granted leave, but they have been granted absolute leave. Everything they possessed was to go with them, exactly as the Lord said in Exodus 11 –

“I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets *you* go, he will surely drive you out of here altogether.” Exodus 11:1

Not only is the word from Pharaoh a grant to go serve the Lord, it is a petition begging them to go, even directing them to go. His thoughts were so overwhelmed with the events of the past months and of what occurred that night, that he could only long for them to be gone. But in their going, he looked for release from any further plagues by speaking the continuing words of verse 32...

32 (con't) **and bless me also."**

u'berekhtem gam oti, "and bless me also." The words are plural, "you (plural) bless me also. Imagine the emotion of the man which would cause him to utter these words to his great foes. The last time they stood face to face, Pharaoh threatened their lives if they ever came before him again.

And yet now, the broken man can only beg for a blessing. No other words could so exactly show forth his complete submission to the Lord. In Genesis 47:7, the first thing that Jacob, who is Israel, did when coming into the presence of Pharaoh was to bless him. In Genesis 47:10, the last thing he did before leaving Pharaoh's presence was to again bless him.

Now 215 years later, the last thing that is requested by Pharaoh of Israel's representatives, is a blessing. It is a nice touch tying the two stories together in a unique way. Jacob voluntarily blessed Pharaoh in the past. Pharaoh now begs for more.

*"Bless me also!" cried the people who wouldn't repent
"Bless me also!" cried those who persecuted the people of the Lord
"Bless me also!" they cried when the plague was sent
"I know now I should have paid heed to His word*

*"Bless me also!" cried the arrogant leader of the land
"Bless me also!" he cried after leading in wickedness
"Save me from any further punishment from God's hand
No more curses please! Instead I implore you to bless*

*How can we ignore the Lord every single day?
How can we ignore Him year after year?
And then ask Him to bless us when things don't go our way
We humans are incurably dull I do fear*

III. The Plundering of the Egyptians (verses 33-36)

³³ And the Egyptians urged the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste.

The word for “urged” here is *khazaq*. This same word has been used nine times already in Exodus in relation to Pharaoh. Eight of them were concerning the hardening of his heart. One was concerning his continued holding of them instead of letting them go. Now it is used concerning the Egyptians *urging* Israel to go.

The irony in the use of this word now is amazing. The same word which has been used concerning their continued bondage in Egypt is now being turned around as an urgent appeal to get them to leave... immediately. And the reason for the urgency of their request is in the continued words of the verse...

³³ (con't) For they said, “We *shall all be dead.*”

kulanu metim – “We.all.dead.” Their alarm at what had transpired was so great that they were certain their own death was at hand. As Benson notes –

“When death comes into our houses it is seasonable for us to think of our own mortality.” Benson

Having helped out in the mortuary in Japan while in the service, I can testify that this is true. When you’re around the dead in an enclosed space, you will inevitably think of your own mortal state. In the case of the Egyptians, they could only think that the death would transfer to them as well.

It was as if a sentence of death hung over their heads, calling to them because of the presence of the Israelites. They wanted Israel gone so that the sentence would be commuted.

³⁴ So the people took their dough before it was leavened,

Because of the urgency of the moment, the dough that had been prepared for the exodus was not leavened when they left. There is no contradiction in this and in the instructions found in the earlier verses of this chapter. There it said –

“So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance. ¹⁵ Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.”

-Exodus 12:14-15

Those verses I just read were in anticipation of the exodus and were to be a memorial. There is no reason to think that the general populace knew of these instructions. They simply made bread day by day and added the yeast in before they baked it.

In the case of the Israelites on this night, they waited to leave, but had no idea that they would nearly be forced out in a moment. The Lord knew what they didn't and anticipated the annual ritual in advance of the actual circumstances which precipitated it.

The dough or *batseq* comes from the verb *batseq* which means to swell. It implies that dough swells through fermentation, but in the case of this dough, it was not yet leavened and would not swell.

³⁴ (con't) **having their kneading bowls bound up in their clothes on their shoulders.**

As I said earlier, this is the second of only four times that the *mishereth*, or kneading trough, is mentioned in the Bible. The first was during the plague of frogs where it said that the frogs went into the kneading troughs of the Egyptians. They were small elongated wood or wicker troughs where dough was made.

They were lightweight and could be easily carried as described here. Wrapping them, or anything else like this, was a common way of carrying things. In parts of the world, it still is. This is what Ruth did when she left Boaz on the night of their meeting at the threshing floor.

She used her shawl as a way of carrying the barley that he gave her to take home. When I lived in Japan, my wife did this for me every day with my lunch. She'd wrap it in a large piece of cloth, usually one of my bandanas, and I'd carry it to work. Even thirty years later, my friends that I served with still bring that up from time to time.

If I were to look for a reason for the inclusion of this verse, which on its surface seems unnecessary to the account, it would be that it is a picture of Christ. The lamb died in place of the firstborn. In Christ, He died in place of the sinner.

He is sinless, just as the dough was unleavened. Sin results in death, leaven results in corruption. He, being the sinless Bread of life, is carried by the Lord's people in their Exodus from the world of sin. Like Israel who carried heavy burdens for the Egyptians, we carried a heavy burden in spiritual Egypt, but we carry a light one in Christ. He referred to this in Matthew –

“Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

³⁵ Now the children of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, and they had asked from the Egyptians articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing.

As was seen before in reference to this, the King James Version blindly followed after the Geneva Bible and used the term “borrowed” instead of “asked.” It is the most unfortunate of translations which has led to all kinds of scandalous remarks concerning the Lord and the Lord's people.

If they “borrowed” and didn't intend to return, then they stole. Such is the nature of a mistranslation. It has led to many accusations being levied against the soundness of the account. The people *asked* and the Egyptians *gave*.

The word for “articles” here can mean a whole host of things from weapons to utensils and from cups to plates. Articles of silver and gold and also garments are requested, not to enrich the Israelites, but for what they will do with them in the wilderness.

They are heading out and will soon develop an organized mode of worship which will continue on until the coming of Christ. These articles will be used in the building of the tabernacle, every detail of which pictures Jesus. God is plundering the Egyptians in order to form this worship for His people.

Likewise, in Christ, God took from humanity in order to build His greater and eternal Temple. He did it in that Christ came from the stream of humanity to be the true Ark of

that temple. And He has done it from His people who have become living stones in His temple. Every detail is given to show us hints of the glory to come in Christ.

³⁶ And the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they granted them what they requested.

All of Egypt would have been aware of the plight of the Israelites and they would have known that the Lord had judged Egypt because of them. They would look on Israel with fear, yes. But they would also look on them with a sense of realizing the wrongs that had been committed against them. As Matthew Henry says –

“Thus the Lord took care that their hard-earned wages should be paid, and the people provided for their journey.” Henry

Today, people continue to send money to Jewish causes and for the return of those who want to make the move back to the land of Israel. They do it because they perceive the injustices that have been committed against them in the past.

If each person in Egypt were given a single gold ring, a single silver cup, and a one nice garment, it would come out to an immense amount considering the number which is recorded as departing. If one person decides they will no longer go to Starbucks or Disney World because they don't want to support the gay agenda, it may only mean \$100 a year in lost revenue.

But if all Christians were united in this effort, it would deprive them of hundreds of millions of dollars a year, maybe more. Such is the nature of accumulated wealth. When the tabernacle is to be built, Moses will ask the people for donations for the effort. However, after a while this will be seen –

“Then all the craftsmen who were doing all the work of the sanctuary came, each from the work he was doing, ⁵ and they spoke to Moses, saying, ‘The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded *us* to do.’

⁶ So Moses gave a commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, ‘Let neither man nor woman do any more work for the offering of the sanctuary.’ And the people were restrained from bringing, ⁷ for the material they had was sufficient for all the work to be done—indeed too much.” Exodus 36:4-7

In the end, the extraordinary amount carried out collectively was individually a moderate repayment for many hard years of service, and a just recompense for harsh injustices against them.

³⁶ (con't) **Thus they plundered the Egyptians.**

Each individual Egyptian was glad to have helped in a small way, but the Egyptian economy as a whole was severely harmed in a big way. It is like the common adage, “I went broke saving money” when buying many items that were on sale. Egypt was plundered one small donation at a time.

The Pulpit Commentary provides us with a graphic explanation of the sight of Israel ready to depart –

“The result was that the Israelites went forth, not as slaves, but as conquerors, decked with the jewels of the Egyptians, as though they had conquered and despoiled them.”
Pulpit

Everything about this final plague on Egypt speaks of the work of Christ. In the greatest sense, God judged the world’s sin through His own Firstborn. There is a price for redeeming. In Egypt, it was with the firstborn of the people of the land, or with an innocent lamb.

In the world we live in, it can only be from the Firstborn of God, who also is the Lamb of God. Every picture of the past goes both ways, and both ways point to Christ. It is all about Him. Imagine that... we have been purchased by the very Creator of all things through the most precious life, that of Jesus.

How can we turn away from so great a salvation? How could we escape God’s wrath if we did? Nothing but the blood... nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ can wash away our sin. If you have never called out to Him for healing and restoration, please do so today. Let me tell you how you can...

Closing Verse: *“Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.”*

-Deuteronomy 28:5

Next Week: Exodus 12:37-51 (The Exodus) (36th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it

on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Plague of the Firstborn

And it came to pass at midnight
That the Lord struck all the firstborn
In the land of Egypt, showing His might
And how the land did mourn!

From the firstborn of Pharaoh
Who sat upon his throne
To the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon
And all the firstborn of livestock, man and beast did moan

So Pharaoh rose in the night from his spot
He, all his servants, and all the people of Egypt
And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not
A house where the life of one wasn't stripped

Then he called for Moses and Aaron by night
And said, "Rise, and out from among my people go
Both you and the children of Israel
And go, serve the Lord as you have said, yes even so

Also take your flocks and your herds, as you have said
And be gone; and bless me also, now that my son is dead

And the Egyptians urged the people
That they might send them out of the land in haste
For they said, "We shall all be dead."
Hurry! There is no time to waste

So the people took their dough
Before to it they could leaven impose
Having their kneading bowls as we know
Bound up on their shoulders, in their clothes

Now the children of Israel had done as tasked
According to the word of Moses, he did tell

And they from the Egyptians had asked
Articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing as well

And the Lord had given the people favor
In the sight of the people of Egypt
So that they granted them what they requested
Thus they plundered the Egyptians; their wealth was stripped

With this final plague, Israel is ready to leave
After many years of hard bondage the time is spent
And while the people of Egypt moan and grieve
Israel will take part in the great exodus event

And each of us who has called upon the Lord
Has likewise been brought out from hard bondage too
When we heard the message of Jesus, the spoken word
He revived our spirit; in Him we have been created anew

Wonderful stories of times gone by
And yet they are relevant to the lives of each one of us
And so with our voices to Him let us shout aloud and cry
All hail the glorious name, the exalted name of Jesus!

Thank You for the new life You have granted to us
Thank You O God, for our Lord, our Savior, our precious Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 12:37-51 (THE EXODUS)

Today we finally come to Israel's wonderful moment of release. For generations they had been afflicted and burdened by Egypt. And for the final year or so, they had seen Egypt suffer great punishment from the Lord in order to weaken their resolve, and also to magnify the Lord in the eyes of the people.

The Passover has come and gone, the firstborn of the Egyptians have died, and now the time to depart has come. A week before typing this sermon, my wife found a ceramic plate that my grandmother made depicting the time of the Passover and the exodus out of the land.

We already have many of her works of biblical art here at the Superior Word, but now we have one more, lost for many years, and yet found just in time to be put on display in His church and among His people during these exodus sermons. In the depiction is Moses carrying his staff in one hand and a lamb in another.

There he stood with a precious lamb that would be the means of their redemption, picturing the true Lamb who redeemed Israel and who continues to redeem His people 3500 years later. Hallelujah to this precious Lamb of God, our Lord Jesus! Through Him, we have been united to the commonwealth of Israel.

Text Verse: *"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."* Ephesians 2:19-22

Our sermon today will be a tad bit longer than most, but just a tad. Everyone will be home in time for dinner tonight. But I hope you will truly enjoy some of the wonderful insights which are given to us in these precious words. And, you can't search out the word unless you open it and read it. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. From Rameses to Succoth (verses 37-39)

³⁷ Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses

Verses 37-42 in our look into the exodus today are so filled with connections to other portions of the Bible, that to fully plumb the depths of what is involved in them would take many long hours and yet we'd still miss much.

This first portion of verse 37 is given to us to show the literal locations of the Exodus until the first stopping point, but the names have been selected by God to show us something more, something future. The entire scope of the plagues on Egypt was given to show us what really occurred in history, but it was also given to show us parallels and pictures of Israel's salvation in the end times.

Now, instead of the name "Goshen" being used, it says the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses. Why would the Lord interchange these names as he has in both Genesis and Exodus unless He is trying to show us a picture of something else?

Goshen means "drawing near" or "approaching." That name is no longer used because it no longer applies. The time is not approaching, it has arrived. Israel is delivered and so Rameses is used. The name Rameses means "son of the sun" or "child of the sun." In Psalm 84, the Lord is represented by the sun –

"For the Lord God *is* a sun and shield;
The Lord will give grace and glory;
No good *thing* will He withhold
From those who walk uprightly." Psalm 84:11

In Malachi 4, Jesus is called the Sun of Righteousness and that passage is one which appears to telescope between His first and Second Advent. Listen to how these verses mirror what occurred during the plagues on Egypt and now their freedom from it –

"For behold, the day is coming,
Burning like an oven,
And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble.
And the day which is coming shall burn them up,"
Says the Lord of hosts,
"That will leave them neither root nor branch.
² But to you who fear My name
The Sun of Righteousness shall arise
With healing in His wings;

And you shall go out
And grow fat like stall-fed calves.
³You shall trample the wicked,
For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet
On the day that I do *this*,”
Says the Lord of hosts. Malachi 4:1-3

Rameses, rather than the name Goshen, is used here because it is speaking of the state of those who have come near to salvation, to those who are now saved. In the end times, God cares for Israel during the tribulation right through until their final reunion with Christ. Israel is the son of the Sun, Jesus.

This is evidenced by the Lord’s declaration of Exodus 4:22 where he called Israel His “firstborn son.” They were called this when Moses, picturing Christ the Redeemer, was told to speak to Pharaoh, the afflicter of Israel. What is being seen here is perfectly detailed, not just of actual events of the past, but of actual events in Israel’s future.

The name Rameses is used here to show us that Israel is the son of the Sun, exactly as the Bible has described them both. Israel the s-o-n of Jesus the S-u-n. The changing of the name from Goshen to Rameses is exacting and purposeful. It is given to help us weave together these amazing patterns of redemptive history.

³⁷ (con’t) **to Succoth,**

The name Succoth means “tabernacles.” In the life of Jacob, after meeting his brother Esau, he traveled to a place with the same name, Succoth, and he stayed there. That was a picture of the sixth dispensation in redemptive history, the age of the gentile church; the age of grace. It pictured God dwelling, or tabernacling, in man.

The mentioning of Israel traveling from Rameses to Succoth is given for the exact same reason. The Israelites have just observed the Passover, having applied the blood of the lamb and been saved from the plague. These people now, and the places they travel to, picture those who have been brought out of the tribulation period.

They are those who have been saved by the blood of the Lamb and are brought out of spiritual Egypt. The Holy Spirit now dwells in them, just as He did for those in the church age. The pictures are exact when compared to the book of Revelation and the names here are given to show us this. This is alluded to in Psalm 105 –

“He also brought them out with silver and gold,
And *there was* none feeble among His tribes.
³⁸ Egypt was glad when they departed,
For the fear of them had fallen upon them.
³⁹ He spread a cloud for a covering,
And fire to give light in the night.” Psalm 105:37-39

The cloud and the fire picture the presence of the Holy Spirit among God’s people. It is where the Lord has “spread His cloud of fire over them for a covering.” (Poole)

³⁷ (con’t) **about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children.**

The numbers here are a general counting, rounded down to the nearest 100,000. This same general number is given by Moses again in Numbers 11:21 when speaking to the Lord. But in Numbers 1, an exact counting of the people is made, there it says –

“So all who were numbered of the children of Israel, by their fathers’ houses, from twenty years old and above, all who *were able to* go to war in Israel— ⁴⁶ all who were numbered were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty.” Numbers 1:45, 46

This number includes those 20 and above who could go to war. However, this didn’t include the Levites of this age. They were counted later in Numbers 4 and were 8580 between 30 and 50 years of age. And so the total number of men of fighting age was about 613,000.

These numbers didn’t include the children, the older people, or the women. In all, many scholars generally reckon them at about 2,000,000 people. Interestingly, there are about 6 million Jews in the land of Israel right now and the Bible shows us what will happen to them in the book of Zechariah –

And it shall come to pass in all the land,”
Says the Lord,
“*That* two-thirds in it shall be cut off *and* die,
But *one*–third shall be left in it:
⁹ I will bring the *one*–third through the fire,
Will refine them as silver is refined,
And test them as gold is tested.
They will call on My name,
And I will answer them.

I will say, 'This *is* My people';
And each one will say, 'The Lord *is* my God.'" Zechariah 13:8-9

The approximate number of Jews who departed at the exodus is essentially the same number who will make it through the tribulation period if it is in the near future as I suspect it will be. God is repeating the numbers of history, just as He is repeating the symbolism of names and places.

The numbers here are in no way unimaginable when compared to the arrival of Jacob which is recorded in Genesis 46 and Exodus 1. In those genealogies, 70 people are named. However, during those sermons, it was noted there were hosts of servants who would have arrived in Egypt with them.

Over the years in Egypt, they would have been assimilated into the group known as Israel, just as was seen in the life of Jacob upon his return to Canaan from Padan Aram with two companies. The faith of Israel constituted the nationality, just as the nationality constituted the faith.

There is abundant precedent for this, both in the Bible and in extra-biblical recorded history. The numbers in growth are not only acceptable, they are exacting. God has recorded them not as hyperbole, but as a fact of history.

Having said this, many liberal scholars do their best to dismiss the biblical record, stating that this exodus account is a dishonest fabrication. Here are what the dolts... I mean the scholars, at Cambridge say –

"The figures do not come to us from eye-witnesses; and tradition, in the course of years, greatly exaggerated the numbers of the Israelites at the Exodus." Dolts at Cambridge

If your commentary reflects this general sentiment, put a big fat red X through it. The numbers are both possible and reliable.

³⁸ **A mixed multitude went up with them also,**

This is a continued fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham all the way back in Genesis 12:3 –

“I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Genesis 12:3

This “mixed multitude” comprises anyone who is not of the stock of Israel. They may have been Egyptians or people of other ethnicities who lived in Egypt, serving Egypt just as the Hebrews did. They saw the opportunity to join with Israel and to follow the God of Israel and they took it.

There are a few possibilities as to their numbers. The first is that they are included in the number of the Israelites in the census I mentioned earlier. This would make sense because Moses will later say that the number of capable males under him is the same as we see in this chapter.

The second option is that they are simply an innumerable number that came along and are not included in the census of Israel. At least in picture of future events, this is a more appropriate fit.

The third option is that they are mentioned separately to picture a separate number, but they are actually counted in the total during the census. Thus, the reality of the numbers is correct for all, but the picture of who they represent is maintained. Whichever is correct, they are mentioned as they are for a reason. But before I give that reason, I want to read you Numbers 11:4 –

“Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: “Who will give us meat to eat?”
-Numbers 11:4

Scholars almost unanimously agree that this group mentioned in Numbers 11:4 is the same group as mentioned here in Exodus. They call them names, say they set a bad example for Israel, and give other generally negative views on them. And these scholars are completely wrong.

The word used to describe the people here in Exodus is *erev*. It means, literally, a mixture. It is the same term used in Nehemiah 13:3 to indicate foreigners. The word in Numbers 11 to describe those miscreants is *asaphsoph*. It means “rabble” and comes from the word *asoph* which means “storehouse.”

From that we get the idea of a collection of like-minded things. There is no reason to assume this “rabble” was the mixed multitude we see here. Instead, it is identified as

containing a group of like-minded people who were whiners, regardless of who they were – whether of Israel or of foreigners.

In picture, this mixed multitude is mentioned now for a specific reason. They are those people who will join Israel during the tribulation period, from all people groups around the world who will enter into the millennial reign of Christ. They are mentioned in Revelation 7 and then again in Revelation 19 –

“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’” Revelation 7:9, 10

The same mixture of people is spoken of in the book of Zechariah –

“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard *that God is with you.*”’” Zechariah 8:23

Their mention here in Exodus in this vague way, and their mentioned as simply a “great multitude” in Revelation, is given to show us that in the tribulation period many will come to a saving knowledge of the Lord by joining with the people of the Lord, Israel. The picture is exact.

38 (con’t) and flocks and herds—a great deal of livestock.

Along with the people, all of the flocks and the herds of the people departed with Israel. It was these animals which Pharaoh refused to let go of and which resulted in the ninth plague, darkness. But after the final plague, Pharaoh simply exhorted the people to go and so they did, with all of their possessions, including the millions of animals they possessed and which he failed to confiscate.

Flocks and herds in the Bible are mentioned a multitude of times to reflect people groups. These animals are probably given here as a picture of the nations who will be gathered together after the tribulation for judgment – the sheep and goat nations who are mentioned in Matthew 25.

³⁹ And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they had brought out of Egypt;

Two different words are used to describe the bread here. The first is *matsot*, which is unleavened bread. The second is *ugot*, which is the cake itself. The International Standard Version does an excellent job of translating these words –

“They baked the dough that they brought out of Egypt into thin cakes of unleavened bread.” (ISV)

In the Middle East, it is common for the people to make bread by simply mixing flour with water and then cooking it. If no oven is available, they will put the cakes into ashes of a wood fire and cover it over with embers for a little while.

³⁹ (con't) for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared provisions for themselves.

The bread had been prepared in advance as it often was, but when the call went out to depart, they simply picked up and left, joining the ranks of the people in the great exodus. The bread was left unleavened and it was carried in the kneading troughs covered by a garment to keep it pure.

The Bible’s specificity in this verse concerns the picture it is making – that of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In the church age, Paul calls us just that, unleavened –

“Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”

-1 Corinthians 5:7

This same picture now extends to those who went through the tribulation period and came out of it through their faith in Christ. Thus, they have become a part of the true Passover and are also a new lump, truly unleavened. Again, the symbolism is exact. That which has been will be again.

History continues to repeat itself, in the exodus, in the church, and in the tribulation saints. It is showing us that God is consistent and His means of salvation, by grace through faith, is a unified concept which transcends all ages and dispensations.

*Israel departed from Rameses to Succoth
Finally free from the bondage of Egypt*

*This first leg of the journey is worthy of note
Because the power of Pharaoh from them is stripped*

*Out from Egypt in the darkness of the night
And yet a full moon to help guide their way
Out from Egypt by the moon's soft light
Continuing their walk throughout the next day*

*At Succoth, unleavened bread they did eat
The people having been purified, acceptable to the Lord
There at Succoth they enjoyed freedom so sweet
Just as was promised, so He kept His word*

II. Precisely Timed (verses 40-42)

⁴⁰ Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.

This is surely one of the most mistranslated and most misunderstood verses in the entire Bible. Listen to the following two translations and see how they differ –

“Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years.” (NIV)

“Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.” (KJV)

If the translation says unambiguously that they dwelt in Egypt for 430 years as the NIV does, the translation is wrong. The KJV uniquely offsets the words “who dwelt in Egypt” and so it can mean something entirely different. The reason why this is important is that they *did not dwell in Egypt* 430 years.

The facts revealed in the Bible show that they actually dwelt in Egypt 215 years. At least the NIV and some other translations footnote that other manuscripts say they dwelt in “Canaan and Egypt” instead of just “Egypt.” And this is the correct rendering. It should say “Canaan and Egypt.”

The reason why these words were changed for the Masoretic text may be sinister – to hide a 215 year period in order to obfuscate the truth that Jesus is the Christ. By hiding

these years, the Jews have hid from the eyes of their people who He truly is. The 430 years goes from the time of Abraham until the Exodus.

An argument against this is that the “sons of Israel” didn’t exist at Abraham’s time and therefore the words cannot mean from him until the exodus. But this is the Bible’s way of using an all-inclusive term for the people of Israel who lived in him even before they were born. These are our difficulties, not the Bible’s.

Following the timeline as we did through Genesis; following the promise made to Abraham; following the patterns laid down in the Bible; and following the words of the New Testament from the hand of Paul all lead to the understanding that it was 430 years from the Lord’s promise to Abraham until the Exodus.

Referring to the promise made to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, Paul in Galatians 3 says –

“Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ. ¹⁷ And this I say, *that* the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance *is* of the law, *it is* no longer of promise; but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.”

That promise was made to him when he was 75, in the year 2084AM. That was 430 years after the Flood of Noah. Paul tells us that another 430 years after that, the law was received at Mount Sinai, which is just 50 days from the exodus.

In the life of Jacob, he traveled with his family to be with Joseph in Egypt exactly 215 years after the promise to Abraham in the year 2299AM. The people of Israel then spent another 215 years in Egypt and are now departing in the year 2514AM.

God has laid history out in the pages of the Bible with absolute perfection, allowing us to feel perfectly secure that we have placed our eggs in the right basket.

⁴¹ And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years—on that very same day—

There is no reason to assume that the term “on that very same day” isn’t speaking of an exact day, meaning that the promise made to Abraham came about on the same day as the Exodus, 430 years earlier. If so, as it seems to imply, then that promise was made to him exactly 154,800 days earlier.

Such precision is found elsewhere in the Bible and so there is no reason to assume that it means anything other than this. The same day that Abraham was given his great promise 430 years earlier, is the same day that Israel was freed, as we see in the continuation of verse 41...

41 (con't) it came to pass that all the armies of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.

The word here for “armies” is *tsaba*. It is often translated as “hosts,” as in armies united for warfare. This is the third time it is used to describe the people of Israel as a united force under the Lord. The people are, in this sense, being portrayed as those who will fight the Lord’s battles.

If one thinks of the Lord as their Head, then it takes on the picture of a great warrior leading His armies as they go. It is not in defeat or fear, but in honor and bravery that they are now leaving the land of Egypt. The picture for the church should be no less wonderful.

The Passover had just taken place, picturing Christ’s death on the cross. In that act, Christ has led His people out of the bondage of slavery, not in defeat or fear, but in a spirit of freedom and honor. Paul alludes to this in Romans 8 –

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’” Romans 8:14, 15

Every time that a person receives the gospel message and trusts Christ, they participate in the same freedom that all others have who have been redeemed by the Lord. We have been brought from bondage into son-ship. We go from being enemies of God to being united with Him as one of His innumerable hosts.

42 It is a night of solemn observance to the Lord for bringing them out of the land of Egypt.

The words “night of solemn observance” in Hebrew are *lel shimmurim*. This word *shimmur* is used only twice in the Bible, both in this verse, and it is in the plural, as in a “night of watchings” or in “much observance.”

These observances are said to be “to the Lord.” And the reason is explicitly given as “for bringing them out of the land of Egypt.” If we can equate these words to a New Testament passage, I would say that Colossians 1 fits this perfectly –

“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Colossians 1:13, 14

Paul’s Jewish heritage allowed him to see with exacting detail the parallels between the Passover feast he had celebrated year after year, and the fulfillment of that observance in Christ. Unfortunately, for the Jewish people in general, this rite has been less about the Lord and more of a cultural observance.

But every time a Jew comes to know their Lord, and when the corporate body of Israel comes to know Him some wondrous day, great things occur as they come to realize the true significance of these mandated observances.

⁴² (con’t) **This *is* that night of the Lord, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.**

There is an emphasis in these words which calls out for remembrance. Everything about them is intended to draw attention to the reader to pay heed. “This *is* **that night** of the Lord.” It is to be “a **solemn** observance.” It is “for **all** the children of Israel” and it is to be “**throughout** their generations.”

And yet, they are words which only find their true meaning in what they picture – the cross of Christ and the freeing of His people from the yoke which has bound them. Ellicott makes the connection simple for us to see –

It is “...when a yoke heavier than that of Egypt was broken from off our necks, and a land better than that of Canaan set before us. That was a temporal deliverance, to be celebrated in their generations; this an eternal redemption, to be celebrated world without end!” Charles Ellicott

*It was a long time, four hundred and thirty years
From Abraham until the exodus out of Egypt the land
But when it came, there were certainly many cheers
As the people beheld the marvel of the Lord’s powerful hand*

*And for all generations thereafter it came to be
That people would each year on that night recall
The marvel of the exodus; and of the Lord's majesty
A Passover Seder each year at the nightfall*

*A solemn observance for the children of Israel
A time to remember the great acts of the Lord
A time to relate the story to the next generation as well
To repeat this marvelous account recorded in His word*

III. One Law for All (verses 43-51)

⁴³ And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron,

From the text, it would appear that these instructions were given at Succoth, after the Passover. However, it could be that they were given at Sinai when the law was received. Or, they could have been given to them prior to the Passover and that foreigners participated **in** the Passover. Thus everything from verse 11 until now has been an insert.

I believe that the last option is correct. It would mean that the mixed multitude that left with Israel was circumcised *before* they partook of the Passover and departed at the Exodus. This would fit with what will be said in the coming verses concerning their status within the corporate body. It would also be another reason why they selected the lamb five days earlier – to allow healing time for those circumcised.

No matter what, the instructions are given to ensure the meal would not be defiled through inappropriate observance.

⁴³ (con't) "This is the ordinance of the Passover: No foreigner shall eat it.

The first instruction is that no foreigner is to eat of it. The term is *ben nekar* or "son of a stranger." It's a general term which includes all who were aliens to the people and to the covenant of Israel. However, if they were brought into the people and the covenant by circumcision, then they were no longer considered strangers.

This is often violated today when Jews invite Gentiles over to share in their Passover. The Passover was intended only for those who are a part of the redeemed of the Lord. This then equates directly to the Lord's Supper.

There is no point in a non-believer coming forward because it has no true significance for them. The intent of the Lord's Supper is to proclaim His death until He comes. If someone hasn't received what His death signifies, and if they don't believe He is coming again, then it makes no sense for them to participate.

⁴⁴ But every man's servant who is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, then he may eat it.

The second instruction concerns servants. If a person obtained a servant with money and became their property, according to Genesis 17:12, 13, they were to be circumcised. There were no exceptions to this. It is implied that if they refused circumcision, they were to be cut off from the congregation.

Once they were brought into the house and circumcised in that manner, they had all of the rights of a citizen of Israel, although they were still the property of their owner. If nothing else, this shows that it is a dedication to the Lord and to the covenant which brings one into Israel, not natural descent from Abraham.

This is especially true in the world today when there are different sects of Jews from different traditions – Sephardic and Ashkenazi in particular. They can both claim title to the nation of Israel. However, they cannot claim to be the true Israel if they aren't circumcised in their hearts to the Lord Jesus.

Therefore, until they call out to Him, they are not truly completed Jews of good standing in Israel in the biblical sense.

⁴⁵ A sojourner and a hired servant shall not eat it.

In contradistinction to an owned slave, a person might have a day-laborer who was a foreigner. Or he may have someone staying at his house as a sojourner for a given amount of time. Such a person was not allowed to participate

⁴⁶ In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not carry any of the flesh outside the house, nor shall you break one of its bones.

The general consensus of the reason for these words is that it points to unity. It is through the lamb that the people were united in the Passover, and it is through Jesus that believers are united in our freedom from the bondage of sin. Therefore, none of the flesh was to be taken outside of the house.

Further, none of the bones were to be broken, again, implying unity. The flesh was eaten, but the bones were to remain whole. This unity of the bones points directly to the unity of the church- universal which is found in Christ and in Him alone.

The Passover lamb of the Hebrew nation was made to correspond to the antitype which He fulfills. The completion of this picture is found anticipating Christ in Psalm 34:20 and realized in John 19 which speak of Him on the cross –

“For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, ‘Not *one* of His bones shall be broken.’” John 19:36

He died prior to the need for the soldiers to break His bones in order to expedite His death. This was anticipated 1500 years earlier in the giving of these instructions.

⁴⁷ All the congregation of Israel shall keep it.

As there is unity in the house pointing to unity in Christ, there was to be unity throughout the congregation, again pointing to unity in Christ. There is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.

⁴⁸ And when a stranger dwells with you *and wants* to keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it.

This is plain on its surface and it follows through in many examples in the Bible. When a stranger sojourned among the Israelites and wanted to participate by keeping the Passover, they were to circumcise any males and they were then allowed to keep it. From that point on, they were to be incorporated into the people of Israel with no further distinctions among them.

In addition to accounts which follow this in the Bible, there is extra-biblical evidence for this as well. Speaking of the descendants of Edom, known as the Idumeans in the New Testament times, we find in the writings of the Jewish Historian Josephus that about 129 BC John Hyrcanus –

“...subdued all the Idumeans; and permitted them to stay in that country, if they would circumcise their genitals, and make use of the laws of the Jews; and they were so desirous of living in the country of their forefathers, that they submitted to the use of circumcision, and of the rest of the Jewish ways of living; at which time therefore this befell them, that they were hereafter no other than Jews.”

If we are to take this in a New Testament context, it shows that we cannot withhold the gospel from any person or group of people and exclude them from Christian fellowship. This follows through in position, status, color, ethnic origin, amount of wealth, or for any other reason. Jesus is the Christ of the nations and He is to be open to all who will receive Him. No non-believer carries the benefits of Christ; no believer is excluded from those benefits which are His alone to endow upon His faithful.

⁴⁹ One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you.”

One law is given for all people within the covenant community regardless of their birth status. Again, it points to the unity of the people which is derived from being joined to the Lord, not from being joined through a birthright. The birthright is from God to His adopted children, without regard to their genetic make up.

There would seem to be exceptions to this which are found in Deuteronomy 7, where it says that certain people groups were to be utterly destroyed and with whom no intermarriages or covenants were to be allowed.

But... people from some of those very groups are found later in the Bible as participants in the provisions of this verse. One, for example, is Uriah the Hittite whose wife, Bathsheba, became a wife of David.

⁵⁰ Thus all the children of Israel did; as the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

The law was given from the Lord and the people complied. The inclusion of these words seems to imply that the instructions were, in fact, given prior to the Exodus, but they have been recorded now to show that those who came out as a mixed multitude were considered as a part of the whole; *all* were now reckoned as Israel.

Thus the counting of the people in the census is inclusive of them as being brought into the tribes. They are one united people.

⁵¹ And it came to pass, on that very same day, that the Lord brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt according to their armies.

This verse repeats the substance of verse 41. It shows us that it is the Lord who brought Israel out. He did it on a precise schedule, that it included His redeemed people, that they were redeemed from the bondage of Egypt, and that they were brought out according to their armies – in other words in ranks and in dignity.

Everything about this closing verse shows that there was a plan and that plan was worked out exactly as it should have been, including the assimilation of non-Israelites into the body of Israel. It is then a picture of the greater assimilation of the church which now exists, and of the assimilation of the tribulation saints of the future. All are one in the body of Christ who is the Lord.

We are, through the blood of Christ, brought into the commonwealth of Israel. We are saved unto the ages of the ages. God's love for His children is an eternal love because we are "in Christ" His Son. He could love us no less than He loves His beloved Jesus.

If you have never received that great love which can only come through God's adoption of you as His child, please give me a moment to tell you how you can participate in it today...

Closing Verse: *"Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—¹² that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."* Ephesians 2:11-13

Next Week: Exodus 13:1-10 (The Feast of Unleavened Bread) (37th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Exodus

The children of Israel then
Journeyed from Rameses to Succoth
About six hundred thousand men on foot besides children
Certainly a host of considerable note

A mixed multitude went up with them also
And flocks and herds—a great deal of livestock with them did go

And they baked unleavened cakes
Of the dough which they had brought
Out of Egypt; for it was not leavened
For in a hurried exodus they were caught

Because they were driven out of Egypt
And could not wait
Nor had they prepared provisions for themselves
Such they did not accumulate

Now the sojourn of the children of Israel
Who lived in Egypt
Four hundred and thirty years was the spell
Before Pharaoh finally flipped

And it came to pass at the end, finally at last
Of the four hundred and thirty years—
On that very same day—it came to pass
That all the armies of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt Surely with great cheers

It is a night of solemn observance to the Lord
For bringing them out of the land of Egypt according to His word

This is that night of the Lord
A solemn observance in participations
For all the children of Israel as they have heard
Throughout their generations

And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron
“This is the Passover’s ordinance

No foreigner shall eat it thereon
You must adhere to this observance

But every man's servant who is for money bought
When you have circumcised him
Then he may eat it as you have been taught

A sojourner and a hired servant shall not eat it
In one house it shall be eaten, there you will partake
You shall not carry any of the flesh outside the house
Nor any of its bones shall you break

All the congregation of Israel shall keep it, according to my word
And when a stranger dwells with you
And wants to keep the Passover to the Lord
Let he and all his males be circumcised too

And then let him come near and keep it
And he shall be as a native of the land
For no uncircumcised person shall eat it
From this law you shall learn and understand

One law shall be for the native-born and also too
For the stranger who dwells among you

Thus did all the children of Israel
As the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron
So they did as the word does tell

And it came to pass, on that very same day
That the Lord brought the children of Israel
Out of the land of Egypt according to their armies
As the Lord in His word did foretell

Great things the Lord has done for His people
Those who are brought into His own fold
They come from every nation to worship under the steeple
We are the redeemed of the Lord as His word foretold

It is because of Jesus! Hallelujah to His name!
God loved us enough to send His Son to rescue us
And now let our lips His holy name proclaim!
Yes, for all the ages of ages, we will proclaim Jesus

Thank You, O God for precious Jesus our Lord
And thank You for revealing Him to us in Your holy word

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 13:1-10

(THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD)

You've heard the sermon text read and you're not looking forward to hearing the same thing preached now that we just heard just four sermons ago. While I was reading, I saw you flipping back to chapter 12 and I heard you mutter, "We just read the same thing in verses 14-20. I mean, there are some differences, but why does the Lord keep repeating the same things?"

Next time, don't mutter so loudly because all of that muttering is going to sound like a plane flying overhead when I put the sermon on You Tube. I hear you. I hear you. And I can almost sympathize with you. I read the Bible front to back once a week or so for a couple years when I owned an import business down the road.

The repetition would make me wonder what was up. Why does the Bible keep saying the same things? Well, there are quite a few reasons. One is that these repetitions often form amazing poetic patterns. Some of you are aware of them – chiasms, parallelism, and so on.

They are useful tools for memorization. They are also a way of revealing wisdom which says, "These words aren't arbitrary. There is design behind them." Scholars who say the Bible is merely a hodgepodge of people adding things in over time must shut up when such patterns are revealed by those who find them.

The repetition also can show the advancement of a thought either through time or in depth. *In time*, sometimes something is said, and then it is stated later in the order of the Bible, but when researched, it is found to be a part of something that actually happened at a different time where it aligns with the previous thought.

Thus there are inserts between repetitions which develop a theme for a specific purpose. *In depth*, repetitions are often used to build a theme in a different way. Information is given, and then information is repeated with slight changes or additions. Thus a command or a precept may start out simple and grow into something more detailed. As an example, you could write a story about an annual celebration called The Beach Party. Friends get together and they celebrate it each year. When writing the story about it, the author wants to develop the theme and so he writes –

“In 2015 we all went to the beach and had a great time. While we were there, we took a lot of pictures, but unfortunately none of the pictures survived the party.”

Sometime later in the story, we read, “In 2015, while at the party on the beach, everyone took photos with their own cameras. It was a great time, but we felt bad about losing the memories because none of the pictures in any of the cameras could be saved.”

This type of addition on the same theme develops the idea. When we get to the *reason* for the loss of pictures, it all becomes clear. “At the end of the party in 2015, everyone posed for a group picture. All the cameras were set on a timer and everyone posed together. As each camera clicked the photo, the camera stopped working. We realized that Charlie had snuck into the photo and his appearance caused all the cameras to break. Thanks a lot Charlie.”

The Lord also develops ideas through repetition and addition at times. We see this in similar and yet somewhat contrasting accounts in the gospels quite clearly. When the stories are combined, a whole picture is realized.

And then of course, there is the fact that we have hard heads. Repetition is often used to beat into our heads a precept, a command, or a doctrine which is of unusual importance. Repetition is one key to memory retention. I’ll say it again – repetition is one key to memory retention. Should I say it again?

All this opening to tell you that this passage is similar to that of Exodus 12, but it also has differences. It has been given to show us a sequence of events, the development of a concept – specifically the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and it has been given to hopefully help us to remember what we have heard a little better.

For these and certainly other reasons, we will take our time and go through these verses in detail. In fact, I have planned to preach this exact same sermon next week too, just to make sure you remember it. Ok... that’s not true. You can get that horrified look off your face.

Text Verse: *“Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, who wrote on it at the instruction of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire. And besides, there were added to them many similar words.” Jeremiah 36:32*

The Lord had Jeremiah write a scroll with words of judgment against Israel, against Judah, and against all the nations. When he did, the scroll was taken to the king of Judah who heard it read. While it was being read, he cut off the portions that were read and threw them into the fire.

Eventually, the Lord instructed Jeremiah to recite the same words to his scribe again and add more words into them. Thus the Lord developed a theme for the king of Judah whether he listened or not. The account is also recorded for us. Even though we only have the one account, we can mentally discern the repetition of the words of Jeremiah.

A theme was developed through this repetition. It has become a memorable passage that is actually hard to forget – if not the details, at least the overall thought which was relayed. When you see repetitions in the Bible, don't let them trouble you. Rejoice in them. Seek to find out why they are there and what the Lord is trying to tell you.

We'll do just that today with the instructions for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It is a feast which has already been partly described and it will be mentioned a few more times in the books of Moses. Each time, something new will come out for us to see.

What a wonder is His superior word. It's waiting there for us to open it and check it out! And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Consecrate to Me All the Firstborn (verses 1-4)

¹Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

As happens from time to time, the words, "Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying..." are set off as their own verse. Normally they are combined with the first thought spoken afterwards, but for whatever reason, they are occasionally made to be their own verse.

As I believe that even verse divisions are inspired, one reason for this could be to have the chapter be a verse longer than it otherwise would have been, thus making some numerical pattern. Or, for whatever other reason, these words are set off by themselves, begging for us to prepare for what lies ahead and also to reflect on the *when* and *where* of their utterance.

The first words are *v'dabber* – "and spoke." The word "then" is the translator's preference for clarity, and it appears acceptable because verse 3 will tell us a time-

frame in relation to the words. It is after the departure from Rameses. The “where” of this passage then is certainly at Succoth as was seen in chapter 12 –

“Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children.” Exodus 12:37

There at Succoth then, the Lord now conveys his message to Moses. “He who draws out” has lived up to his name, having drawn out his flock from their home of 215 years and onto a journey towards the Land of Promise via Sinai. This would be in fulfillment of Exodus 3:12 –

“I will certainly be with you. And this *shall be* a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.” Exodus 3:12

²“Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel,

The first directive of the Lord after the Passover and their subsequent departure from bondage is to “consecrate” to the Lord all the firstborn. Thus it is specifically based on the Passover. “Firstborn” is the word *bekor* and based on the context it indicates a firstborn male.

The words “whatever opens” are translated from the word *peter* – It is the first of 12 times it will be seen in the Old Testament, all in Exodus and Numbers with one exception found in Ezekiel 20:26. It indicates a firstling, open, or such as opens, and can indicate either children or animals. It comes from the verb *patar* – to open, remove, or set free.

The two words together in this one verse are explained by Harris, Archer, and Waltke –

“Regarding the institution of primogeniture in the OT, there are two distinct conceptions. First, there is a socio-legal one which assigns special responsibilities to the first male of the paternal line (*bekor*). Second there is a cultic conception which assigns special responsibilities to the first male issue of the maternal line (*peter*). This one is dedicated to God. If it is a sacrificial animal it must be sacrificed. Otherwise, the firstborn must be redeemed.” HAW

This verse is given now, in connection with the delivery of the people from both the death which occurred in Egypt and from Egypt itself. The firstborn was saved by the blood of the lamb and so the directions are given for their consecration in accord with that. However, this can't be all that is tied up in this.

The reason why is that all of Israel was delivered through the death of the firstborn of Egypt and the saving of the firstborn of Israel. In Exodus 4:22, the Lord called the whole nation of Israel "My son, My firstborn." Israel's election as God's people was a prerequisite for the exemption of the death of the firstborn through the blood of the lamb.

It must be then that the firstborn is declared as belonging to the Lord as representative of the entire nation of people. In this, we can see the Lord Jesus once again. He is the true Firstborn who is the representative of all of God's people.

Another reason Israel is given these instructions just as they depart is so that it will be a memorial of the historical account, firmly to be fixed in the collective mind of Israel. Of course, it is ultimately given to show us a picture of Christ, the Lamb who died to deliver His people from bondage.

When Jesus was born, Luke is careful to show that He was so consecrated to the Lord –

"Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present *Him* to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord')." Luke 2:22, 23

² (con't) ***both of man and beast; it is Mine.***"

It needs to be understood that the firstborn who opens the womb of the mother is speaking of a male. If a female had a female first and then later a male, that male was not considered devoted to God because it wasn't the firstborn. Also, if it was a male that came first, from the woman, it was considered the firstborn of the mother, even if the father had other males from other wives.

This firstborn was not the property of the parents, but of God. If a human, it was to be presented to God and then redeemed. If it was an animal then other directives were to be followed. These will be explained later in this chapter, and then further refined after that.

Because the firstborn was considered the representative of the whole, this setting apart the firstborn is then a picture of the Lord who represents all of His people who are now, like Israel was under the Old Testament, to be considered the firstborn of God. The author of Hebrews gives us the words of this confirmation –

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴ to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than *that of Abel.*” Hebrews 12:22-24

³ And Moses said to the people: “Remember this day

These words show us that the passage was spoken to Moses at Succoth on the first day of the Exodus after their arrival and settling in. It is the 15th of the month and he in turn instructs the people *zakhor eth ha’yom hazzeh* – “Remember the day (the) this.”

^{3 (con’t)} in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage;

It is literally “the house of slavery.” The people were slaves and now they were free. To understand the picture in the greater panorama of redemptive history, we can go to the words of Jesus in John to see how this delivery of Israel from Egypt only mirrors man’s delivery from sin as accomplished by Christ –

“Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. ³⁵ And a slave does not abide in the house forever, *but* a son abides forever. ³⁶ Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” John 8:34, 35

Paul explains what occurred in detail in the book of Romans. In chapter 6, he gives this explanation –

“For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. ⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more.

Death no longer has dominion over Him. ¹⁰ For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God. ¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:5-11

If we can keep mentally inserting Christ and the church into the overall exodus account, we can really get a good grasp of the marvel of what Jesus did for us. We were in bondage and Christ drew us out from it.

^{3 (con't)} **for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out of this place.**

The term “strength of hand” uses the noun form *khozeq* of the more traditional verb or adjective form *khazaq*. This noun is only used 5 times in the Bible and three of them are in Exodus 13. The term here is more emphatic than when the verb or adjective is used. It is always used in the sense of military or conquering prowess. In these three uses in Exodus 13, it is always used in connection with a plural pronoun. We are being given reminders that it is by the hand of the Lord from which our collective deliverance comes.

But the collective is made up of individuals which make up the whole. And so it is a reminder of our own state before Him. We are saved by His grace and not our own works. There is no boasting in what we have done because everything has been accomplished by Him for His people.

And because of this, specific directions are given...

^{3 (con't)} **No leavened bread shall be eaten.**

As a memorial of the work of the Lord and the hasty departure from Egypt, there was no leaven bread eaten. It is again a picture of our position in Christ. In his explanation of our deliverance from sin, Paul told us that as Christ died once for all to sin, we should likewise reckon ourselves “to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:11

⁴ **On this day you are going out, in the month Abib.**

In Exodus 12:2, the Lord told Moses, “This month *shall be* your beginning of months; it *shall be* the first month of the year to you.” The calendar of redemption was to begin at the time of the Passover and now that month’s name is given for the first time – Aviv.

The word Aviv is used only eight times in the Bible, all in the books of Moses. Six times it is used to describe the month and twice to describe fresh ears of grain. It means “greenness” or “fresh” and it indicates fresh young ears of barley grain which come forth at this time of year.

In the Bible, this will continue to be the first month of the sacred or religious calendar, but eventually it will be known as Nissan, using the Aramaic name instead of the Hebrew name. As a mark of grace upon Israel, this month was selected because according to JFB –

“It was the best season for undertaking a journey to the desert region of Sinai, especially with flocks and herds; for then the winter torrents had subsided, and the wadies were covered with an early and luxuriant verdure.” Jamieson-Faucett-Brown

It is the time of year when it is not too hot and not too cold. Instead it would be the perfect weather for the trip.

*The Firstborn of the womb is Mine, He in place of all
For all in My flock have been redeemed in reality
The Firstborn is set apart according to My call
Of your own redemption it is a reminder constantly*

*In My church the Lamb died as your holy Substitute
But He was also the Firstborn of His mother’s womb
And He the Firstborn over all of creation, righteousness He does impute
Because He was also the Firstborn from the tomb*

*Because of Him you have come to Mount Zion
And to the city of the living God
You are the church of the firstborn, who I keep My eye on
I shall watch over you always as in My presence you tread*

II. Seven Days You Shall Eat Unleavened Bread (verses 5-7)

⁵ And it shall be, when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites,

When God promised the land to Abraham in Genesis 15, ten people groups were mentioned. In Exodus 3, when the Lord first spoke to Moses, six people groups were mentioned. Now only five are mentioned. At other times, seven or eight are mentioned.

It isn't certain why the names are stated sometimes and overlooked at other times, but God has His reasons, even if they aren't plainly evident. In the end though, the general word "Canaanite" is used as a metaphor for all of the descendants of Ham who occupied the land of Canaan.

In the words now, it is taken as a foregone conclusion that the Lord will, in fact, bring them into the land of Promise.

^{5 (con't)} **which He swore to your fathers to give you,**

The land was originally promised to Abraham. Isaac was the inheritor of that right, and from him Jacob was given this promise. From Jacob, all of the sons of Israel, including his two adopted sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were included in the inheritance.

God swore and now He is ready to fulfill the promise that was originally made over 400 years earlier.

^{5 (con't)} **a land flowing with milk and honey,**

This is the third of 20 times that this expression will be used in the Bible. The last time will be in Ezekiel 20 where it is also called "the glory of all lands." A land flowing with milk and honey implies richness and fertility.

Milk comes from cows and so it means there will be abundant pasture lands. Honey comes from bees which pollinate flowers and so it implies all sorts of fruit trees, herbs, and flowers. Deuteronomy 8:7-10 describes the land –

"For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; ⁸ a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; ⁹ a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones *are* iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. ¹⁰ When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you."

One more point about the term “a land flowing with milk and honey” is that it isn’t just speaking of the physical abundance of the land, but also of the spiritual abundance. It is the land of God’s word and the people through whom that word has come.

The word of God is said to be sweeter than honey. It is also equated with milk which nourishes. Thus, this is a reference to that as well. The Land would literally flow with milk and honey for sustaining Israel’s physical lives. It would also flow with milk and honey for sustaining their spiritual lives.

⁵ (con’t) **that you shall keep this service in this month.**

This is a close repeat of the words from Exodus 12:25 when the instructions for the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were first given. Moses is repeating the instructions to the people now that their deliverance has come, to remind them of what was expected of them before it had occurred.

The first admonition was in expectation of deliverance; the second is given as confirmation that they have received it. The Lord promised and the Lord fulfilled. The first time, Moses instructed the elders, now he repeats the commandment for all the people.

⁶ **Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread,**

This is explicit. For seven days, unleavened bread was to be eaten. It doesn’t say “You may not eat bread with leaven for seven days.” Instead it says “Seven days you *shall eat* unleavened bread.” This is again repeated in Leviticus 23:6 and elsewhere.

It is not a negative command, which means that they could abstain from any bread as long as they didn’t partake in leavened bread. Instead it is a positive command. They *were to eat* unleavened bread during the entire feast. This goes in picture to what we should actually fulfill according to Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians –

“Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. ⁸ Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.”

-1 Corinthians 5:7, 8

Not only are we to *not* partake of sin, but we are to actively live our lives in “sincerity and truth.” It is not that we can abstain from the whole if we abstain from one; it is that we are to abstain from one while partaking in the other.

⁶ (con’t) **and on the seventh day *there shall be a feast to the Lord.***

In Exodus 12:14, it said that the entire seven days was to be a feast to the Lord. Then in 12:16, it noted that both the first and the seventh days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread were to be “holy convocations.” On those days, no work was to be done. Now, in addition to that, another detail is given concerning the seventh day.

It is to specifically be a *khag*, or a “feast” to the Lord. Israel was to not merely abstain from work, but they were to actively celebrate the work of the Lord. The entire week was to be a feast, but the seventh day was to be a feast unto itself as a festive termination to the entire feast.

Some Christian scholars attempt to align the resurrection of Christ with the day that Israel was conducted through the Red Sea. However, this would not align with the table of stops recorded in Numbers 33. But, the Jewish calendar reckons this seventh day of the Feast of Unleavened bread as that day.

Accordingly, the final day of the Feast would be the day they passed through the waters of the Red Sea. The Bible is not specific that either is the case, but of the two, the Jewish tradition would be correct. And there is a reason for this which will be explained when we get to that passage.

⁷ **Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days.**

The mandate is repeated yet again. This is the fourth time in 2 chapters that they are not only told to “not eat” leavened bread, but that they are “to eat” unleavened bread. Again, this is a positive command in addition to the negatives that are given.

The repetition is not unnecessary, but rather it is critical to fully understanding the New Testament fulfillment of the feast. As we are “in Christ” we are to not only “not eat” of the bread of wickedness, but we are “to eat” of the bread of sincerity and truth.

Otherwise, our abstention from the first still leaves a void in what others see. It is not uncommon to see unsaved people avoid sin. If this is all that is seen in us, it doesn’t

truly set us apart. Only when we act like Christ do we resemble the One who makes us Christians.

^{7 (con't)} And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters.

And yet, the opposite is true as well. Not only are we to act in a positive manner, but we are also to refrain from negative actions. Just as no leaven was to be seen among the people of Israel during their feast, no leaven is to be seen among us in our life in Christ.

*Holy and pure is how you are to conduct your life
Abstaining from all malice and from wicked ways
Keeping yourselves from backbiting and from strife
Instead, living out your lives properly all your days*

*Because you truly are unleavened in My eyes
Having called on Jesus, you are free from your sin debt
You reached out in your need and took hold of the prize
Receiving Jesus as your Savior, all My conditions met*

*Therefore, walk holy just as you are already reckoned
Walk in a manner worthy of your heavenly call
For you responded when My Spirit beckoned
Because My Son Jesus, has broken down the wall*

III. As a Sign and as a Memorial (verses 8-10)

⁸ And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, ‘This is done because of what the Lord did for me when I came up from Egypt.’

In Exodus 12, it was taken as a given that the children would ask what the memorial of the Passover service was for. In verse 26, it said –

“And it shall be, when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’” Exodus 12:26

The same is implied here, after being fed unleavened bread for several days in a row, it would be natural to ask what was going on. The parents were to be ready with their answer. “It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came up from Egypt.”

And one of the most common questions to faithful Christians from their children or those around them who don't know of the works of the Lord is, "Why do you believe and act as you do?" The answer should be your testimony based on "What the Lord did for me when I came up from a life of sin and bondage."

We are to remember His acts of goodness to us so that others may hear about them and believe what has really come about in our lives. They should be able to see a difference in who we were, who we are now, and how we are different than the world around us.

⁹ It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes,

In Matthew 23, Jesus speaks of the scribes and the Pharisees in a most negative light. His words equate their treatment of the common people with that of Pharaoh and Egypt towards Israel. He then notes their ostentatious displays of life, including the wearing of phylacteries. Here are His words concerning them –

"Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, *that* observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. ⁴ For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers. ⁵ But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. ⁶ They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, ⁷ greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' ⁸ But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren." Matthew 23:3-8

The practice of wearing arm bands and phylacteries can be traced back to this verse and verse 16 of this same chapter which repeats and enlarges the thought given here. They and observant Jews to this day, have taken these words which contain a spiritual meaning and have given them a physical application.

They are externally worn symbols for others to see and fawn over. "Oh, look at those observant Jews. They must be the cat's meow to God because of their obvious piety." But what Moses says to the people was meant in an analogous way.

The words, "as a sign on your hand" are meant to show that the active obedience to the Lord through the observance of the mandated ritual was to be as evident as the hand accomplishing a feat. Anyone watching a person at work will see the hand as it carries out its task.

The word “sign” is *owth*. It indicates something which points to something else. The observance is carried out to show obedience to the Lord who mandated the observance. When a person raises their hand in an oath, it is a sign of their faithfulness to the one in whose name the oath is taken. Thus, it is a sign of fealty to the one to whom they have pledged allegiance to.

The “memorial between your eyes” is the personal remembrance of the observance which then points to the personal obedience to the Lord who mandated it. Between the eyes is where the forehead is. It is the symbolic place of memory and it is also the symbolic place of acknowledging and avowing the Lord’s authority over the individual.

One makes the mental assent of being obedient to the Lord and thus a memorial is between the eyes at all times. It is as a personal seal to the higher authority. This verse and verse 16 have nothing to do with external badges of piety which others can see.

Instead, they have everything to do with actual accomplishments of allegiance which can be observed, and by which the individual attests to the authority of the one over him. This is borne out elsewhere in the Bible. Several passages in Proverbs use the same type of terminology as what Moses uses here –

Let not mercy and truth forsake you;
Bind them around your neck,
Write them on the tablet of your heart, Proverbs 3:3

My son, keep your father’s command,
And do not forsake the law of your mother.
²¹ Bind them continually upon your heart;
Tie them around your neck. Proverbs 6:20, 21

These proverbs, along with the fact that nowhere else in the Old Testament are phylacteries actually mentioned, show that the words here are to carry the same significance as a mark either branded or tattooed on the hand or on the forehead.

This then is in contradistinction to the mark of the beast which is found in Revelation 13:16. That is a mark of allegiance to the antichrist of the end times. That verse reads –

“He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, ¹⁷ and that no one may buy or sell

except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” Revelation 13:16

The rejection of that mark is to be a mental assertion that one has allied himself with the Lord. Such an alliance with Him is not an external box upon the head or a wrapping upon the arm. Instead it is a rejection of the mark of the beast and is a sign and a memorial that they have received instead the authority of the Lord over them. All of this is verified in the next words of verse 9...

^{9 (con't)} **that the Lord's law may be in your mouth;**

The sign on the hand and the memorial between the eyes is specifically connected to the fact “that the Lord's law” would then be in “your mouth.” Nobody takes this portion of verse 9 literally. You just don't see observant Jews walking around with scrolls of the Torah in their mouth.

To say that two physical applications then equates to one metaphorical application, or even one literal application where someone continuously repeats verses from the law, does injustice to the intent of the entire verse.

The hand is to act upon, and the mind is to contemplate, the feast so that the Lord's law might be in the mouth of the observer. “This is what you are to do. You have seen it in my actions and my words now confirm that to you, dear son.”

^{9 (con't)} **for with a strong hand the Lord has brought you out of Egypt.**

Again it is repeated that the Lord has accomplished the task. This time, instead of the noun form, “strength of hand,” it uses the adjective “strong hand.” It is as if we are being told in this verse that we were each in a pit and the Lord reached down and pulled us up out of it.

All were in the pit and he reached down, individually, and pulled us out until the whole group was safe. It is a touching note of a personal deliverance by which we have been saved. And because of this we have a personal obligation to respond...

¹⁰ **You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year.**

I should note that in verses 3 and 4, Moses spoke to the people using plural pronouns – in essence “you all.” But since verse 5, he has been speaking in singular pronouns. He

opened his speech to the people as a whole, but he quickly made it a personal lesson for each individual.

Go back later and read these 8 verses again and you can then more fully grasp what this means. There has been a collective work of the Lord on behalf of His people. And with that came a collective command to be obedient to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And yet, there is an individual aspect to this feast as well.

If we look at the church, we can see the same concept. The Lord did a collective work for all of the people who would come to Him. It is He who performed the miracles. It is He who gave the signs. And it is He who did the work, dying for all on Calvary's cross. As a church, we are responsible to observe our lives to Him.

And yet, there are individual responsibilities within that collective whole. His miracles, His signs, and His work were all on behalf of you... just you. Thus the admonitions to act in certain ways and to be responsible towards telling one's child about His deliverance are a personal responsibility.

It doesn't take a village to instruct our children. Instead, it takes our personal, individual lives which include our actions, our obedience, and our teaching about the Lord and His ways. What belongs to the collective church also belongs to the individual.

And the responsibility in each of us individually is to ensure that we act properly and within the confines of what the Lord has done individually and for us collectively. At the beginning of the sermon, I mentioned the similarity between the corresponding passage in Exodus 12. It was verses 12-20, but especially verses 14-20.

Those 7 verses were all addressed using plural pronouns. Despite seeming to be saying the same thing, they weren't. That passage was written to the Superior Word... for all of our ears to collectively hear. The passage we've look at today has been mostly addressed to each person filling a seat... for all of our ears to individually hear.

Let's pay heed to the word, collectively and individually, and let's apply these lessons to our lives, ever striving to be truly unleavened – filled with sincerity and truth and putting behind us the leaven of Egypt – that of malice and wickedness.

And finally, as I do each week, I'd like to tell you in simple terms why Jesus came and how it is relevant to you. If you have never received Him as your Lord and Savior, it is the most important decision you could ever make....

Closing Verse: *“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”*
-Deuteronomy 6:6, 7

Next Week: Exodus 13:11-22 (Their Sign) (38th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
“Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, to you I do tell
Whatever opens the womb, I am relaying
Among the children of Israel

Both of man and beast; it is Mine
This command you shall not decline

And Moses said to the people: “Remember this day
In which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage
For by strength of hand the Lord made the way
He brought you out of this place, all the assemblage

No leavened bread shall be eaten
On this day you are going out
In the month Abib
Is when your deliverance came about

And it shall be, when the Lord brings you
Into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites too
And the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites
Which He swore to your fathers to give you

A land flowing with milk and honey as I have said
That you shall keep this service in this month, as to my word

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread
And on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the Lord

Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days
And no leavened bread shall be seen among you
Nor shall leaven be seen in any ways
Among you in all your quarters too

And you shall tell your son in that day
Saying, 'This is done because of what came about
Of what the Lord did for me which I now relay
When I came up from Egypt; when He brought me out

It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and also
As a memorial between your eyes no doubt
That the Lord's law may be in your mouth wherever you go
For with a strong hand out of Egypt the Lord has brought you out

You shall therefore keep this ordinance
In its season from year to year
When you from Egypt received your deliverance
And so in the Lord alone you shall fear

Great are the stories of the Lord
Of His mighty acts undertaken for His flock
Precious is the holy writ, His superior word
Let us read its contents and its mysteries unlock

Let us cherish it more than our necessary food
And share it with our children and their children as well
So that they too will be imbued
With the wisdom of the bubbling well

And Lord, direct our steps, keep us close to You always
And help us to fix our eyes on You alone all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 13:11-22 (THEIR SIGN)

You've heard the verses for today's sermon. Like other highlights of the book, such as the burning bush, the parting of the Red Sea, and the giving of the law at Sinai, the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire is a truly noteworthy and memorable thing.

Unlike some of the other highlights though, the pillar of cloud and fire was actually prefigured all the way back during the life of father Abraham. In Genesis 15, at the time of the covenant, this was recorded –

Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.”

¹⁷ And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. ¹⁸ On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates— ¹⁹ the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.” Genesis 14:15-21

The smoking oven and the burning torch represented the presence of the Lord at the giving of that covenant, a covenant which involved a set time-frame until his descendants would be returned to the same land in which he dwelt. The pillar of cloud and fire in Exodus represents the presence of the Lord among the Israelites. The time had come and the Land of Promise lay ahead of them.

It would be a reminder to them of the faithfulness of the Lord to His covenant promises, and it would be a sign to them that He would continue to be with them until He had fulfilled all He had said He would do.

The presence of God will continue to be seen at various times in cloud and in fire throughout the Bible. It is recorded as a comforting reminder that God had remained faithful to His people throughout the ages. And it is a sign to us that He will continue to be faithful until the end of the age.

Jesus ascended in a cloud, He will come for us in the clouds, He will come to Israel in the clouds, and with Him is the fire of His purifying judgment. These are just a few instances which speak of His presence in this way. We are so blessed to have this imagery so that we can remember His faithfulness to His people.

Text Verse: *“Moreover You led them by day with a cloudy pillar,
And by night with a pillar of fire,
To give them light on the road
Which they should travel.” Nehemiah 9:12*

We’ll be a few minutes longer than normal in today’s sermon, but these twelve verses are simply filled with interesting information and with wonderful pictures of Jesus – His work for us and in us. It’s all to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... may God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Recounting the Work of the Lord (verses 11-16)

¹¹ “And it shall be, when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites,

Our first verse of today brings us again to the anticipation of the promise that was first made 430 years earlier. The “land of the Canaanites” is an all-encompassing term. Though other groups of people were there, the land was known by this term and it continued to be known as Canaan throughout the Old Testament.

It is this land, known as “the land of the Canaanites” that the Lord promised they would be brought into. Not “if,” but “when.”

¹¹ (con’t) as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you,

After his arrival in the land, in Genesis 12, we read this concerning Abraham –

“Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites *were* then in the land.

⁷ Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I will give this land.’ And there he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.”

-Genesis 12:6, 7

Later in Genesis 13, a more comprehensive explanation of the land grant was given to him –

“And the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: “Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; ¹⁵ for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.” Genesis 13:14, 15

The promise continued to be explained and expanded on both to Abraham and the generations who followed him. The amount of time and the number of generations before it would come about were explained. The chosen son who would receive the land was explained. That the 12 sons of Israel were all included in this was explained. Eventually, the Lord spoke these words to Moses –

“And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” ¹⁵ Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This *is* My name forever, and this *is* My memorial to all generations.’”

-Exodus 3:14, 15

The name of the Lord who would accomplish this is I AM. But His name is also explained as “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” He isn’t just the God of Abraham. Nor is He the God of Abraham and Isaac. He is “the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob.” The land belongs to this group of people.

We cannot go back to Abraham and thus include Ishmael and his descendants. Nor can we stop at Isaac and include the Edomites. These people could come under the umbrella of the larger group if they met the Lord’s requirements, but they don’t automatically have a right to the land, apart from what God will do through Israel.

¹² that you shall set apart to the Lord all that open the womb,

This takes us right back to Exodus 13:1 & 2 –

“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ² ‘Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and beast; it is Mine.’”

At that time, the word for “consecrate” was *qaddash*. In verse 12, the word for “set apart” is *abar*. The idea is that they were to be separated from the rest of the flock so that they wouldn’t be mixed in with those which were “not sanctified.” A picture is being given for us to see.

God is using animals to show us pictures of us as believers. First it was of Israel, later of the people of His church. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6 –

“Therefore
‘Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,
And I will receive you.’
¹⁸ ‘I will be a Father to you,
And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says the Lord Almighty.’” 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18

It needs to be noted that immediately after verses 1 & 2, which detailed the consecration of the firstborn, the instructions for the Feast of Unleavened Bread were given, which we looked at in detail last week.

The instructions in verse 3 & 4 were addressed with plural pronouns, but verses 5-10 were singular. Now, as soon as those verses are complete, we again come back to the setting apart of the firstborn.

The Lord is then showing us that the two accounts are tied together. The sanctification of the firstborn is related to the sanctification of the people who will observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This is obvious, but it will become even more obvious when we arrive at verse 16.

This general expression “set apart to the Lord all that open the womb” will be more fully itemized and explained as well. There will be three distinct categories noted. The first is found in the continuation of verse 12...

¹² (con’t) **that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males *shall be* the Lord’s.**

Although not explicitly stated yet, this first category is considered as the oxen, sheep, and goats which are considered clean domestic animals. Later, animals that are

considered clean or unclean will be specified. However, for now only the general term *behemah* or “beast” is given.

The word for “that comes” as in “every firstborn that comes” is the word *sheger*. This is its first of only five uses in the OT. The other four are all in Deuteronomy. It generally means “increase.” It is this firstborn of the increase which specifically belongs to the Lord. However, there is a qualifier. It only applies to the firstborn which is a male. Later in Exodus 22, it will state that the animal wasn’t to be given to the Lord until the eighth day after the birth. Then in Deuteronomy 15, it will again be modified to state that any animal with any defect, such as being blind or lame or any other serious defect, was not to be sacrificed. Instead, it could be eaten at home.

¹³ But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb;

The donkey here is given as the example of an unclean animal. This is the second distinct category of firstborn. Such a domestic animal was not to be given to the Lord. Instead, in its place a lamb (or a goat – it is a general term that is used here), which is a clean animal, was to be given to Him.

This is the first time that the word *padah*, or “redeem” is used in the Bible. It will be used four times here, three in verse 13 and again in 15. It can mean to rescue, ransom, deliver, etc. It is given as a way of purchasing a life from death or servitude.

The donkey belonged to the Lord, but it was an unclean animal. Nothing unclean was to be given to the Lord and so an exchange needed to take place – a life for a life. If you’re not seeing Christ and the people of the world in the three verses we’ve looked at so far, you’re not looking very hard. An important point concerning this substitution is noted by John Lange –

“The substitution of a sheep or kid for the ass is a proof that the unclean beast signifies not the evil, but the profane, that which is not fitted to serve as a religious symbol.”
John Lange

His words are correct and they strike at the heart of what is known as “original sin.” Just because something or someone isn’t evil, it is still profane. It is unacceptable to be in the Lord’s presence or to be used as a vessel for the Lord. Until something or someone goes from profane to consecrated, it remains profane.

What happens with the land, what happens with the animals, and how these things relate to the Lord and where the Lord's people are heading, are all tied up in the work of Christ. A life for a life is demanded. If that didn't take place in order to redeem, then something else had to happen...

¹³ (con't) **and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck.**

If no lamb was offered as a substitute, it was to have its neck broken. The verb for "break its neck" is *araph* which comes from the noun *oreph*, or the "back of the neck." This is the first of six uses of it in the Bible. It is the root of where the name Orpah comes from. She was one of the principles in the book of Ruth.

Understanding her name and what she did is all tied up in the use of this word in this verse. Seemingly unimportant words carry throughout the Bible and unveil beautiful pictures of the work of the Lord for the people of the world.

In the case of the donkey, breaking its neck might seem harsh to our sensibilities, but there is a reason for it. And if we think about it, the little lamb still had to die in its place if the donkey's neck wasn't broken. The difference between a knife at the throat of a lamb, or the snapping of the neck of the donkey is really irrelevant.

In the end, dead is dead. The owner of the animal was given the choice, "Do I want to keep the donkey and sacrifice the lamb, or do I want the lamb and kill the donkey." A donkey would be considered more valuable than a mere lamb because it was a beast of burden. Again, it is a picture of Christ. What great value is placed upon the soul of a man! Jesus said in Matthew 16 –

"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ²⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matthew 16:24-26

Believe it or not, what we are seeing in these otherwise seemingly obscure verses is the heart of God calling out to us. The words are reflective of a choice every single one of us must make. We will either be redeemed by the Lamb and remain in the Lord's presence, or we will die apart from the Lord. The firstborn is given as a picture of the whole. As Matthew Henry clearly states –

“The firstlings of beast not used in sacrifice, were to be changed for others so used, or they were to be destroyed. Our souls are forfeited to God’s justice, and unless ransomed by the sacrifice of Christ, will certainly perish.” Matthew Henry

¹³ (con’t) **And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.**

If the pictures of the animals aren’t clear enough, these words should be. “The firstborn of man” are the words *bekhor adam*. It is the same word *adam* used to describe the first man, Adam. Of the sons of Adam, or man, the firstborn was to be redeemed. What this implies – what it even shouts out, is that man is unclean and must be redeemed.

This redemption is later clarified in Numbers 3. The Levites were to be taken in place of the firstborn and they were to be dedicated to the Lord. After that, each firstborn beyond the number of Levites was to be redeemed for five shekels according to the sanctuary currency. Here are those directions –

“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ⁴⁵ ‘Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of their livestock. The Levites shall be Mine: I *am* the Lord. ⁴⁶ And for the redemption of the two hundred and seventy-three of the firstborn of the children of Israel, who are more than the number of the Levites, ⁴⁷ you shall take five shekels for each one individually; you shall take *them* in the currency of the shekel of the sanctuary, the shekel of twenty gerahs. ⁴⁸ And you shall give the money, with which the excess number of them is redeemed, to Aaron and his sons.’”

-Numbers 3:44-48

Two key points should be deduced from these words concerning the firstborn male. The first is that the firstborn merely represented all of Israel at their birth. Thus the entire nation was to be consecrated to the Lord and it was to be considered a priestly nation in this firstborn consecration.

The second key point I’ve already given, but it needs to be repeated. Men are unclean by nature. If the firstborn, who represented the whole needed to be redeemed, then it follows that *all men* need to be redeemed. Israel was selected to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, as is anticipated in this chapter. The Lord told them this specifically though in Exodus 19:5, 6 –

“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine. ⁶ And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These *are* the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”

This right transfers to the church, the people of the Lord now. This is noted in these words from Revelation 1 –

“To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Revelation 1:5, 6

Christ, the perfect and unstained Lamb of God redeemed us, fallen and unclean, and set us apart, consecrated us, and even exalted us. Not because we deserve it, but because of His great love with which He has loved us.

¹⁴ So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come,

The word “time to come” is *makhar* – literally tomorrow. It is an interesting way of saying that whenever the question is asked, an answer should be ready, because he may ask “tomorrow.” When the question is asked, the answer is to be ready on the lips...

¹⁴ (con’t) saying, ‘What *is* this?’ that you shall say to him, ‘By strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Listen to the similarity between this and verse 8 from last week –

“And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, ‘*This is done* because of what the Lord did for me when I came up from Egypt.’” Exodus 13:8

Again, a clue and a hint are given tying the setting apart of the firstborn with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The two are inseparable. One will not exist without the other. We must be redeemed in order to be unleavened, and if we are redeemed, then we truly are unleavened. Paul tells us this in 1 Corinthians 5 –

“Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, (1) since you truly are unleavened. For indeed (2) Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”

-1 Corinthians 5:7

Next, he tells us how we should respond because of our status –

“Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.” 1 Corinthians 5:8

In this verse is the second of five uses of the noun *khozeq* or “strength of hand” to be found in Scripture. It is the stronger form of the more commonly used verb *khazaq*. It will be used again in verse 16, and not again until Amos 6:13 which we will get to in the year 2165. So enjoy its two uses today.

¹⁵ And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the Lord killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.’

As is found throughout Scripture, we see in this verse the concept of “recounting the works of the Lord.” What He has done is to be remembered and to be repeated. And then in response to that recounting should be a “therefore.” “Because of what the Lord has done, I therefore...”

A classic example of this is found in Acts 26. Paul first recounted the work of the Lord in his life from verses 12-18. He then gave an “I therefore” from verses 19-23. So it was with Israel, so it was with Paul, and so it should be with each of us.

One other point about this verse, it says here that “Pharaoh was stubborn” about letting the people go. The word here for “stubborn” is *qashah*. It was used only one other time in relation to Pharaoh. That was in Exodus 7:3 which said –

“And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.” Exodus 7:3

This might seem unimportant, but it is one final clue, of the dozens we saw concerning Pharaoh, that the hardening of Pharaoh was a passive one by the Lord and an active one by him. The only reason I bring this up is to remind you again that the Lord hints all the way through this account that free-will in man is a principle and correct tenet of theology.

¹⁶ It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt.”

Again, listen to the similarity of verse 16 to that of verse 9 from the instructions for the Feast of Unleavened Bread –

“It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the Lord’s law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the Lord has brought you out of Egypt.”

This verse explicitly ties the consecration of the firstborn to the consecration of all of the people as is represented by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The firstborn is given for the whole. Of interest though, there is also a contrast to this verse in the Bible.

The word “frontlets” is *totaphoth*. It is the first of only three times it is used in the Bible. It is also in Deuteronomy 6:8 and 11:8. It means “frontlets” as in something which is in front. This word was to be taken as a metaphor, not a literal thing. Now, note that this is verse 13:16. Let’s place it side by side with Revelation 13:16 –

“It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt.” Exodus 13:16

“He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads.” Revelation 13:16

This shows us, with all certainty that these words in Exodus are not to be taken as literal signs and frontlets as the Jews became in the habit of wearing. Rather, they represented the state of the person before the Lord. They are a mental acknowledgment of the work and lordship of Yehovah which is followed by an obedient action.

The words “and it shall be” refer to the words imparted to the son which are, “Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.” That is what the sign and the frontlets were to be.

Likewise, the mark of the beast on the right or on the forehead is an acknowledgment of the work and lordship of the devil which is followed by an obedient action. They have acknowledged him and have taken either a vow, represented by the right hand, or an oath of assertion, represented by the forehead, to the antichrist. The mark may be visible, but it represented the setting apart of the individual to the devil.

*This Lamb has taken my place
His life was given instead of mine
But because of this, I can look upon God's face
In a heavenly land, ever so sublime*

*What a cost, what a high price indeed
That God would pay with the Lamb's shed blood
O God, from the foundation of the earth it was decreed
That I would be a part of that cleansing flood*

*Redeemed! Saved and on the heavenly highway
Where that Lamb I shall finally see
Through His death, my pardon He did pay
And through the resurrection there is joy eternally*

II. So God Led the People (verses 17-19)

¹⁷ Then it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God did not lead them *by* way of the land of the Philistines, although that *was* near; for God said, "Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt."

This verse now takes us all the way back to verse 12:37 where the last note of travel was made. There it said that "the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth." The narrative begins again, but it is still somewhat of a parenthetical thought.

Their first stop being Succoth, it would make sense that if they were heading to Canaan, that they would go by the way of the land of the Philistines because it was such a short, direct way to travel. It was a distance of about 200 miles and they could arrive in around 10 days to 2 weeks.

However, it says that God didn't allow this route. The Israelites had been in bondage for a long period, they probably were not well trained in war, and more probably they had either no weapons or very few with which to wage war. If they were to face war, they would become disheartened and would then rather turn back to Egypt than die in battle.

This is the explicit reason given and it may have been what was communicated directly to Moses, but as we will learn there were more reasons than this which will be forthcoming.

- 1) The people, including Moses, would be tempered through their reliance on the Lord.
- 2) The Lord would be magnified through the events at the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh and his armies.
- 3) They would be brought to Mount Sinai in fulfillment of the promise made to Moses in Exodus 3:12.
- 4) They would be prepared as a commonwealth of people and as a religious nation with a body of law and a tabernacle for worship and meeting with God.
- 5) They would see the consequences of sin and rebellion against God.
- 6) They would be molded and prepared for entry into the Land of Promise.
- 7) They would be able to understand the bounty from personal labor because of the times of dependence on God when they could not work.

For these and certainly many other reasons, the longer and more difficult way through the wilderness was chosen to lead Israel out of the bondage of Egypt.

¹⁸ So God led the people around *by way of the wilderness of the Red Sea.*

It should be noted that the term Lord, meaning Yehovah, is mentioned 15 times in this chapter, but only once in these final 6 verses. On the other hand, the term “God” or *elohim* is used 4 times and *all* are in these last 6 verses. The last time the term “God” was used was back in chapter 10 – 7 times and always in conjunction with the term “Lord.”

There is in this then an indication that what occurs in these verses is by the eternal counsel of God and that it was determined to come about as a part of the redemptive plan before creation itself. God personally supervises the details of this movement with, as we will see, the Lord leading the way.

Instead of being taken by way of the Philistines, it says that they are taken by “the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea.” The Red Sea, or *yam suph*, was first mentioned in chapter 10 during the plague of locusts, but now we are entering into the account of the exodus where it will be mentioned three times.

And so it is a good time to look at the meaning of the words *yam suph*. Many translate this as “the sea of reeds” because *suph* means “reed.” Because of this the account of crossing through the Red Sea is often denied and instead it is said that Israel simply passed through a shallow marsh or one of the bitter lakes.

This is nonsense. The word *suph* as a verb means “end,” such as in the termination of something. Thus, the sea could be known as “the sea at the end,” which could be in relation to the land of Israel where the land ends at one of the fingers of the Red Sea. This is seen in 1 Kings 9:26 which, uses the same term *yam suph* –

“King Solomon also built a fleet of ships at Ezion Geber, which *is* near Elath on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom.” 1 Kings 9:26

The locations Elath and Edom show without a doubt what this means. Further, one would not build a fleet of ships for sailing in the ocean and place them in a marshy sea of reeds. And finally, there is only the simple job of going to the New Testament and reading the account of the exodus in Greek where the term Erythran Thalassan, or Red Sea, is used.

Thus it was *always* understood to be the Red Sea, not a swampy marsh of reeds. And, the name could even be a pun. The plague of locusts ended in the Red Sea and Pharaoh and his army will find their end there as well.

¹⁸ (con’t) **And the children of Israel went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt.**

The wording here is precise – they went up in “orderly ranks.” It is an adjective plural word *khamushim* and it means specifically “battle array.” It’s used only four times in the Bible – Exodus, Joshua, and Judges.

Unlike paintings and movies which depict a hurried bunch of rag-tag people, the Bible actually depicts them as a well-ordered group in lines as if prepared for battle. The picture is marvelous and it gives one the sense of the Lord passing before His armies as they march to His lead.

¹⁹ **And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you.”**

This verse is given in fulfillment of Genesis 50:26 where Joseph prophesied that exactly this would occur. Of all of the notable deeds of Joseph, this was what he was most noted for. In Hebrews 11:22, this was written about him –

“By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.”

The words were spoken in faith, and the words were fulfilled by God who ensured that His people carried out what was spoken. Along with his bones, it appears from Acts 7:15, 16 that the bones of the other sons of Israel were also brought back with his. But the words here are expressly given to show the fulfillment of the oath.

*God, from eternity past had a plan
Even before the world came to be
He would step out of eternity, Jesus the Man
So that the world His love could clearly see*

*He alone has led man out of the bondage of sin
And into the wonder of His glorious light
Yes, it's true; we were all but done in
But He stepped out of eternity to make all things right*

*Such a God! Such a Creator who would do this thing!
How my heart yearns to know Him more
And for all my days, His praises to sing
Someone please start the score*

*Let us sing a song of joy to Him now and forevermore
Won't someone please start that wonderful score!*

III. The Lord Went before Them (verses 20-22)

²⁰ So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Etham at the edge of the wilderness.

At this verse, the parenthetical thought of the previous verses ends and the narrative of the exodus travels continues. From Succoth, Israel went to a place called Etham which is said to be at the edge, or literally “the end,” of the wilderness. The name Etham could

have one of quite a few meanings – with them; their plowshare; fortress; their sign; their strength; and maybe others.

Each scholar has attempted to define the name based on the meaning of the letters as they are structured – either from a Hebrew or an Egyptian context. None I read seemed to connect the meaning to the text itself. However, if we do that, the name seems likely. The name Succoth was given to us for a reason. Etham, like Succoth, doesn't have to be the name of the place at the time of their arrival, but the name given to the place *upon* their arrival.

They went from Succoth, meaning “tabernacles” and its meaning was intended to show the state of Israel at the time. Now Etham is mentioned and it must be for the same reason. If the account drives the meaning, then the next verse explains the meaning...

²¹ And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night.

Albert Barnes says a fire and smoke signals were used by Greeks and Persians in their marches. One ancient papyrus is said to call the commander of an Egyptian army “A flame in the darkness at the head of his soldiers.” As he says, “By this sign then of the pillar of cloud, the Lord showed Himself as their leader and general.”

Israel is at the edge of the wilderness, camped and ready to move on, but now for the first time it mentions this new development. The term “Lord,” meaning Yehovah, is now reintroduced into the narrative instead of *elohim* or “God.” It is with this marvelous description – the cloud and the pillar of fire that He is described.

The introduction of the manifestation of the Lord is being tied to the name Etham. And so Etham means “Their Sign” because it is what is being portrayed. He is their *sign* to move, where to move, and when to move. He is their *sign* of comfort and reassurance, He is their *sign* that He is with them.

If Etham is pointing us to the manifestation of the Lord and it means “Their Sign” then Paul's words in 1 Corinthians take on a much more meaningful sense –

“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ² all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,” 1 Corinthians 10:1, 2

The people were baptized into the cloud as well as the sea. Thus it is a *sign* to the people of the process of their redemption. As always, this is a literal account which is prophetically picturing the work of the Lord Jesus on behalf of His people. This is with all certainty because Paul says in 1 Corinthians that it is Christ who led them in the wilderness.

²² He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night *from before the people.*

Both Numbers and Deuteronomy show that the pillar of cloud and fire remained with Israel all the way through their years of wilderness wanderings. In Exodus 14, it notes that the pillar is both fire and cloud at the same time. The fire would be evident at night and the cloud would obscure the fire during the day.

Psalm 105 shows that the cloud not only directed them, but it also provided a covering for them –

“He spread a cloud for a covering,
And fire to give light in the night.” Psalm 105:39

And this same manifestation is referred to in Isaiah 4 as being there for the people in the millennial reign of Christ, after the tribulation period. Here are those wondrous words –

“And it shall come to pass that *he who is* left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem. ⁴ When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning, ⁵ then the Lord will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there *will be* a covering. ⁶ And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.” Isaiah 4:3-6

Everything about the words today – even all of Exodus 13 – show us, time and again, the work of Jesus Christ on behalf of His people. The people must be redeemed, the people must be consecrated and sanctified, and the people who are will then be accepted by the Lord and will be led by Him.

And to get a better mental picture before we finish, we can again consider the stupid donkey and the innocent lamb. The value of a donkey is figured greater than that of a lamb, and yet a donkey had to be redeemed by a lamb.

The world looks at the value of Jesus as very little, but without the shedding of the blood of that holy Lamb, the greatest man on earth cannot be redeemed. What a great thing God has done for us! How marvelous are His ways! And once redeemed, He is there to lead us every step of the way.

We may feel we are at the edge of the wilderness, or even completely swallowed up in it, but the Lord is there... the Lord is there. Let us not fear! The Lord is there. If you haven't yet committed to this wondrous, beautiful Savior, please let me tell you how you can today – even right now...

Closing Verse: *“Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer,
The Holy One of Israel:
“I am the Lord your God,
Who teaches you to profit,
Who leads you by the way you should go.” Isaiah 48:17*

Next Week: Exodus 14:1-9 (The Lord is Watching) (39th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Their Sign

And it shall be, when the Lord brings **you**
Into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore
To you and your fathers to **do**
And gives it to **you**, these directions do not ignore
That you shall set apart to the Lord
All that open the womb, that is, every firstborn
That comes from an animal which you have, heed my word
The males shall be the Lord's, I now warn

But every firstborn of a donkey
You shall redeem with a lamb
And if you will not redeem it with that fee
Then you shall break its neck according to this program

And all the firstborn of man's bloodstream
Among your sons you shall redeem

So it shall be, when your son asks you
In time to come, saying, 'What is this?'
That you shall say to him, 'By strength of hand it is true
My following words do not miss...

The Lord out of Egypt us He brought
Out of the house of bondage
This great deed He wrought

And it came to pass
When Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go
That the Lord killed all the firstborn
In the land of Egypt, even so

Both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast
From the greatest of them, even to the least

Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord
All males that open the womb, it would seem
According to His divine word
But all the firstborn of my sons I redeem

It shall be as a sign on your **hand**
And as frontlets between your eyes
For by strength of **hand** the Lord brought us out of Egypt the **land**
While Egypt was filled with mournful cries
Then it came to pass on that day
When Pharaoh had let the people go
That God did not lead them by the way
Of the land of the Philistines that was near although

For God said, "Lest perhaps the people their minds do change
When they see war, and return to Egypt
And for freedom, instead bondage they exchange

So God led the people around by way
Of the wilderness of the Red Sea
And the children of Israel went up that day
On orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt, hooray and yippee!

And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him
For he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying
"God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones
From here with you as I am now relaying

So they took their journey from Succoth
And camped in Etham at the edge of the wilderness
And the Lord went before them by day as we note
In a pillar of cloud to lead the way, the means of egress

And by **night** in a pillar of fire to give them **light**
So as to go by day and by **night**, following the glorious **sight**
He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day
Or the pillar of fire before the people by night
The Lord is there to always lead the way
In the path which is just and right

Such a wonderful story God has given to us
To tell of His wondrous redemption plan
And it is all focused on Jesus
And what He has done for each of us, fallen man

Thank You, O God for Jesus Christ our Lord
Our precious Savior, Your eternal word

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 14:1-9

(THE LORD IS WATCHING)

Today's sermon was one of my favorite to type in a long time. It went quickly, it gave me some fun challenges as far as names and such, and it continues to bring us ever closer to that wondrous story that has been told and retold for thousands of years.

Like the Passover, what lies ahead of Israel is something that really identifies them as a people. No other group has ever been brought through the deep waters of an ocean as if on dry land. It is an honor and it is a responsibility. Unfortunately, throughout their history, they have forgotten the honor and they have neglected the responsibility.

But haven't we all? How often do we forget that these stories picture our own process of salvation? And that occurred, obviously, in our own lifetime. And yet, at times we act as if it either never happened, or that it doesn't really have the significance of walking.... through a deep ocean.

But I tell you that the cross of Jesus Christ was infinitely more significant than the death of a mere lamb. And being led to the point where a deep ocean lies in front of us is nothing compared to the span we will travel at the rapture. Let's keep these things in perspective, huh!

One of the places we will hear about today is called Baal Zephon. I will identify that with Lord when we get to that verse. But most people think of baal as a bad word... we can't tie that in with the Lord, can we? Actually, baal simply means "master" or "lord."

And so when we get to that verse, I want to prepare you with another place in Scripture where the word baal is ascribed to the Lord. That way you don't panic when I give you my thoughts.

Text Verse: *"So David went to Baal Perazim, and David defeated them there; and he said, 'The Lord has broken through my enemies before me, like a breakthrough of water.' Therefore he called the name of that place Baal Perazim." 2 Samuel 5:20*

See, that wasn't so tough. David named the place Baal Perazim because it is the Lord, Yehovah who broke through his enemies like a breakthrough of water. Great stuff from another great story! Let's get into today's story now. Times a'wasting and those verses won't evaluate themselves now, will they?

All kind of great stuff is to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Wilderness Has Closed Them In (verses 1-3)

¹Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

Chapter 14 begins with the first thought being divided into two separate verses, offsetting the introduction into its own verse. Although not uncommon, dividing verses this way is the exception rather than the rule. In fact, it is the only time a verse is divided this way in all of chapter 14.

As always, I try to highlight these unusual divisions because they lengthen the number of verses in a chapter and thus the number of verses in the Bible. And yet, looking at patterns which run through the Bible based on verse divisions, it becomes apparent that these offset sections of single sentences were necessary to form those patterns.

It shows wisdom behind the structure of the Bible which is far more than mere chance could ever allow. In this verse, scholars debate as to whether this should say "Now the Lord *had spoken* to Moses," or "Now the Lord *spoke* to Moses."

From the context, it can't really be determined if these words came before their departure or during the journey and it doesn't substantially change the narrative in any way to translate it either way.

²"Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth,

Depending on the map one chooses to believe concerning the route of the exodus, one may say that the crossing of the Red Sea was merely crossing through a shallow marsh in the area of the Bitter Lakes. Or, it could be a crossing of the western finger of the Red Sea between Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula.

Or, more recently others will claim that the travel that we are looking at in this verse would lead us all the way down to the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula and that the crossing is in the east finger of the Red Sea and into where Saudi Arabia is today.

Each trek is adamantly adhered to by those who believe they are right, no matter how wrong they really are. The first option is utter nonsense. It was not a shallow marsh that

consumed the entire Egyptian army. That will become obvious when we get to that sermon.

The third option, although very popular today, is unlikely at best. It is supposedly based on Paul's words of Galatians 4:25 which say that Mount Sinai is in Arabia. However, Arabia of today does not reflect the entirety of the same area known as Arabia in the past.

The Sinai Peninsula is known as Arabia Petraea and so there is no reason to believe that Mt. Sanai is in what is known as Saudi Arabia today, despite many wild claims which are wholly unsubstantiated.

Additionally, the distance from Egypt to the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula is over 200 miles. As only three stops are recorded from Rameses to the edge of the Red Sea, it is *not* to be believed that 2 million people would walk that distance in a mere 72 hours. Rather, the route of these journeys would have taken them down the west side of the west finger of the Red Sea to a point known as Pi Hahiroth. The first route was to the south-east, with the Bitter Lakes to their left, still within the borders of Egypt.

Eventually, the route which we are given in this verse moves them from south-east to heading south, with the Red Sea on their left, but still within the borders of Egypt. As they moved without the Egyptians harassing them, there would have been no reason to worry as they followed the pillar of cloud and fire.

That this route is obviously the correct one is that Pharaoh would know they were still in his territory and were completely cut off from any avenue of escape or even defense. His words later will confirm this and it is the reason why, once again, his heart becomes hard. The Lord is setting up a marvelous miracle to occur.

Understanding this, the words for the children of Israel to turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth are clear. In essence, "Go south along the western edge of the Red Sea to a place called Pi Hahiroth. The Hebrew reads *v'yakhanu liphne pi ha'khiroth* – "and camp in the face of the mouth of Hahiroth."

The word *pi* means "mouth" and *ha'khiroth* means "the gorges." It comes from the feminine plural of a noun which then comes from the word *chor* which means "hole." Thus the picture is that they will camp in the face of the mouth of the gorges.

This then forms an exciting mental picture of what is happening. The Lord has directed the children of Israel south with the Red Sea at their left to a place of encampment that has gorges facing them from the west. In other words, they will be completely hemmed in.

There will be no way to escape to the east, or to the north. Being on foot, continuing south along the Red Sea would only end in futility as it would eventually run into more mountains and garrisons. Should someone come attacking them, they would be literally hemmed in with their backs to the ocean. It appears that only death and destruction would be possible in such a place.

² (con't) **between Migdol and the sea,**

Migdol comes from the word *gadal* which means to “grow up” or “become great.” Thus Migdol means “tower.” The location for the encampment was between the sea and a place with a large natural or man-made tower.

This would probably have been manned as an outpost and word of their travels would have easily been dispatched from there to Pharaoh. It seems intentional that Migdol is mentioned for this very purpose. It is meant to show us that a report made it back to Pharaoh that this giant contingent of people had taken up camp on the shores of the Red Sea.

² (con't) **opposite Baal Zephon;**

Like Pi Hahiroth and Migdol, the location of this place cannot be identified. All three of them are lost to time, but it could be that the names were simply names given at the time that they were used by the Israelites, not as specific names of known locations.

Baal Zephon means either Lord of Darkness, Lord of the North, or Lord of the Watch. The third seems appropriate. The root for this word is *sapa*, which “conveys the idea of being fully aware of a situation in order to gain some advantage or keep from being surprised by an enemy” (HAW).

It is exactly what the Lord is doing here, he is fully aware of the situation and He will certainly gain advantage of it. Further, He is in no way surprised by the coming enemy. In fact, He is merely awaiting their arrival. This place, Baal Zephon, would be on the opposite side of the Red Sea from Pi Hahiroth.

² (con't) **you shall camp before it by the sea.**

The directions here are specific; the Israelites are to camp on the shore of the sea, across from, or “before,” Baal Zephon on the other side of the sea. From a survey of Google Maps, there is a place at the northern tip of the west finger of the Red Sea known today as Ataqah which has a jutting beachhead big enough for several million people to camp.

Across from it is another jutting beachhead, a little to the north and the east of it. It is close to the area where the Suez Canal now ends. But it is also believed that the Red Sea went further north in the past and so it could be that the Exodus occurred in what is now dry land. But that is unlikely because the land is flat with no gorges to the west.

The scholar Lange agrees that this account is in the area of Ataqah. It very well matches the description. From this location, you can see directly across the Red Sea to Sinai. In reality, it is close enough to have been reached in three stops. No matter what, it is enticing to look at real images of the area and to speculate.

³ **For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, ‘They *are* bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.’**

From these words, it is apparent that Pharaoh was instructed by his outposts of the location of the Israelites. It also shows that he knew their position was unfavorable for them to get away. With this verse, we can dismiss the possibility that they were already in the Sinai Peninsula and heading for modern Saudi Arabia.

They were certainly within the borders of Egypt and along the west side of the western finger of the Red Sea. The word for “bewildered” is *buk*. It’s used only here, in Esther, and in Job. It means “confused.”

The “wilderness” of this verse is speaking of the area between the Nile valley and the Red Sea. It is, even today if you look at it on Google Earth, a vast, empty wilderness. Even at Pharaoh’s time there would have been a highway along the sea, but with the mountains and wadis, deserts, and garrisons it would be impossible for such a group of people to easily head west.

What he sees as confusion is actually a trap for his hard heart to be ensnared by. The temptation is too great for this hardened fool.

*Baal Zephon is on the other side of the sea
Why did the Lord even mention that to me?
Here we are at Pi Hahiroth, and between us is plenty
And I mean plenty of water, an entire sea*

*I was told to camp here, between Migdol and the sea
Opposite Baal Zephon is the place that He instructed me
The folks in that watchtower don't have intentions so friendly
But we are here because we were told to camp before it by the sea*

*Trust and obey, this is what the Lord has directed me
And so here we are, camping by the sea
The Lord is Watching, I say that quite confidently
As we sit across from Baal Zephon just as the Lord instructed me*

II. I Will Gain Honor Over Pharaoh (verses 4 & 5)

⁴Then I will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he will pursue them;

Again, as has been seen in every mentioning of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in the exodus account, it is obvious from the context that by the things the Lord has caused to occur the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is only passive by the Lord.

The previous verse shows us this with clarity. It said, "For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, 'They *are* bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.'" The *events* have been orchestrated by the Lord, Pharaoh has hungrily lusted after the events, and Pharaoh has *willingly* yielded to his lusts.

We have not found one instance of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart where the hardening has been active by the Lord. It would be good to remember this as a guide and a lesson to each of us concerning our theology. We are responsible for our actions, even if the events around us prompt us to make them.

In the end, through good times or evil, we must be willing to keep our hearts soft to the things of God and ready to accept His divine will for us, even if we find it contrary to what we desire.

⁴ (con't) and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army,

We have to remember and not forget that these words are being spoken to Moses. He may not yet know what will occur, but he knows that whatever the Lord has in mind, it will come to pass. He has already seen Egypt defeated and now he is given a promise that the Lord will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army.

The term for “and I will gain honor” is *v’ikabedah*. It is a verb which signifies heaviness or weight. In the context of the Lord’s action then, it means that He will be glorified over Pharaoh by His actions.

4 (con’t) that the Egyptians may know that I *am* the Lord.”

Verse 4 is a close parallel to what the Lord said to Moses in Chapter 7, just prior to his first meeting with Pharaoh. There we read these words –

And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. ⁴ But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies *and* My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. ⁵ And the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them.”

Unfortunately, this concept of someone *knowing* that He is the Lord carries with it an often sad connotation. The book of Ezekiel in particular shows us what it really means. Around 60 times in that book, He says that so and so will “know that I am the Lord.” Almost always it is in conjunction with just one of two thoughts – divine judgment or divine mercy. In the case of Egypt, they will come to *know* that He is the Lord through the former when they are destroyed in the Red Sea. The implication is that they will know who He is only after their fate is sealed. The reality of that occurrence becomes assured with the final words of verse 4...

4 (con’t) And they did so.

Knowing the obstinate nature of the man, the ploy worked. Report came to Pharaoh that the Israelites were apparently lost and hemmed in, and so he followed his natural instinct, taking along with him his forces. As Adam Clark comments on this verse –

“...without any farther restraining grace, God permits him to rush on to his final ruin, for the cup of his iniquity was now full.” Adam Clarke

⁵ Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled,

This is the first time that Pharaoh has been called “the king of Egypt” since Exodus 6:29, 22 sermons ago. From that verse until now, the title “Pharaoh” has been used 72 times. Now he is again called “king of Egypt.”

During all of those verses the Lord gives the stubborn individual a marvelous display of His power and majesty, showing him who the true King is. However, as soon as the displays are behind him, he once again reverts to his previous arrogance, and the Bible portrays him as attempting to bring himself up to the level of the true King.

The contrast is being made between the two peoples, Israel and the Egyptians. He is the king of Egypt, but he is not the king of Israel. However, this verse implies that he thinks he is because they are called “the people,” not “the children of Israel.”

Only in the second half of the verse do we come to see Israel named and it is in the context of their service to Egypt. It is following simple words like this that we find wonderful hidden nuggets of gold in the Bible’s pages.

^{5 (con’t)} and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people; and they said, “Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?”

Almost all scholars look at this as Pharaoh realizing that Israel would not come back to Egypt after their sacrifices which entailed a three-day journey into the wilderness. They say that when Pharaoh made this realization, he then pursued after them.

This is entirely incorrect. A three-day journey into the wilderness implies a 7-day trip if only one day were to be for sacrifice and worship. Israel has had three stops – Succoth, Etham, and now Pi Hahiroth – seven days haven’t passed yet. Pharaoh had simply dismissed Israel and now he had simply changed his mind.

After a couple of days of seeing the loss of labor by several million people, it would have suddenly become apparent to him that they had made a mistake. As he says with his own mouth, “Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?”

Also, the NKJV makes it sound like the hearts of Pharaoh and his servants were turned against their own people. This isn’t the intent. Rather, it was changed towards Israel. The NIV makes a clearer translation in this matter –

“When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, ‘What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!’” (NIV)

Pharaoh and his officials had not only let Israel go to sacrifice, but they had let them go, period. Now they have had a change of heart in that decision. Matthew Henry gives us a good look into their pitiful state –

“They who never truly repented of their sins, now heartily repent of their only good action.” Matthew Henry

*Why have I let Israel go? I must have been nuts for sure
With my son buried, right reason has returned to me
For sure one thing I know, this situation cannot endure
And I hear that Israel is out camping by the sea*

*This time I can whoop up on them; I am Egypt’s god!
Yehovah has spent His last arrow, now I will find victory
This land is mine, everywhere that I may tread
And that includes Israel’s camp, there beside the sea*

*After I’m done with my whooping up on Israel
I know what I will do, and it just tickles me
Before heading back, this to my troops I will tell
Well done guys! Let’s all take a swim in that sea...*

III. And the Lord Hardened the Heart of Pharaoh (verses 6-9)

⁶So he made ready his chariot and took his people with him.

The Hebrew is more descriptive than the English here. Using the word *asar*, it says that he “bound” his chariot. It means that the chariot was bound to horses and prepared for battle. The English simply makes it sound like he checked the air pressure in the tires, made sure the windshield was clean, and was then ready to go.

This is only the second time this word for chariot has been used. The first was at the burial of Jacob in Genesis 50. There in the 9th verse, it says that chariots and horsemen went in attendance as his body was taken back to Canaan for burial.

The word for “chariot” is *rekev*. It comes from the verb *rakav*, meaning “to ride.” In modern lingo, we could say that “he readied his ride.” And along with him, he took his people. All would be prepared for intimidating Israel back to their home in Rameses at the least. Should that be refused, they would be prepared for battle.

The Pulpit Commentary gives a description of the chariot Pharaoh would have used –

“The Egyptian monarchs, from the time of the eighteenth dynasty, always went out to war in a chariot. The chariots were, like the Greek and the Assyrian, open behind, and consisted of a semicircular standing-beard of wood, from which rose in a graceful curve the antyx or rim to the height of about two feet and a half above the standing-beard. The chariot had two wheels and a pole, and was drawn by two horses. It ordinarily contained two men only, the warrior and the charioteer.” Pulpit Commentary

⁷ Also, he took six hundred choice chariots,

In verse 7, there is a distinction being made which isn’t apparent in many of our translations. These first six hundred chariots are called “choice chariots.” These were probably the king’s special guard. Nothing more is said about them to describe their style or their function. However, the second group is more descriptive...

⁷ (con’t) and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them.

These would be the rest of the army of chariots. These would have had three riders in each. Adam Clarke details their make-up –

“According to the most authentic accounts we have of war-chariots, they were frequently drawn by two or by four horses, and carried three persons: one was charioteer, whose business it was to guide the horses, but he seldom fought; the second chiefly defended the charioteer; and the third alone was properly the combatant.”

Adam Clarke

The way we can know that this is a correct evaluation is that the term “captains” in Hebrew is *shaliyshim*. It is the first use of the word “*shaliysh*” in the Bible and it comes from the word *shalosh*, or three. This word *shaliysh* is used then as an officer of the third rank. He would be the highest over the chariot.

As you can see, it is not “just” 600 chariots going after Egypt. It is 600 choice chariots and an unknown number of troop-carrying chariots. Flavius Josephus, the Jewish

historian says that along with them went fifty thousand horsemen, and two hundred thousand foot-men, all armed. Whether this amount is true or not, it still would be an imposing force hurtling towards Israel.

⁸ And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt,

This is the last time that the full title “Pharaoh king of Egypt” will be used when speaking of this man. He is being set in direct contrast to the Lord who is the King of Israel. The people are separated by the distance and a battle will ensue between them.

But more to reality, it will be the Lord who fights against Egypt and it will be He who will prevail. As we will see in the coming verses, Moses will tell the people –

“Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. ¹⁴The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” Exodus 14:13, 14

In anticipation of that awesome moment, we are told again that the Lord has hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt. All of the events have unfolded for this marvelous purpose. The Lord is not only the Redeemer and Deliverer of His people, but He is also the Destroyer of those who fight against Him.

As the Lord does not change, it is with all certainty that the world of today has miscalculated this particular role of Jesus. Yes, He is our Redeemer and Savior. He is the One who will also *deliver us*. But while He does those things, He will also come with a strong and punishing hand to *destroy* those who have not pursued Him.

^{8 (con't)} and he pursued the children of Israel;

This portion of the verse is not to be taken as one group running as another chases it. It simply means that Pharaoh left his domain in pursuit of Israel. They are already at Pi Hahiroth and the message has already been transmitted to him. He is simply heading there to recapture the people who had departed.

^{8 (con't)} and the children of Israel went out with boldness.

Unless these words are being used in the past tense to show what happened on the night of the Passover, the translation doesn't make any sense. In the coming verses, it will show that Israel is more than fearful when they see the Egyptians coming.

What makes much more sense would be one of two other translations. The ISV says –

“The LORD made the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, stubborn, and he defiantly pursued the Israelis as they were leaving.” ISV

This makes the defiance an act of Pharaoh. The only other translation that would make any real sense is that of the Douay-Rheims Bible which says –

“...and he pursued the children of Israel: but they were gone forth in a mighty hand.” Douay-Rheims

In other words, it would be speaking of the strength of the Lord in contrast to the multitudes who are now coming against Him. It is not speaking of the confidence of Israel. Either way, this has much less to do with their confidence than it has to do with the showdown between the Lord and Pharaoh, as is evidenced by the next verse...

⁹ So the Egyptians pursued them, all the horses *and* chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army,

One thing about this verse is that it confirms that not only chariots went to recapture Israel, but the cavalry and the army followed them as well. The force Pharaoh had mustered would normally be sufficient to handle whatever lay before it, knowing that the Israelites would not have been well armed and that they were encamped in an area which was impossible for them as a defensive battleground.

However, there is more than an arm of flesh to defend Israel. During the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came against Jerusalem. Probably remembering this very account of the exodus of Israel, he spoke these words to encourage the people who had to defend against the overwhelming Assyrian force –

“Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid nor dismayed before the king of Assyria, nor before all the multitude that *is* with him; for *there are* more with us than with him. ⁸ With him *is* an arm of flesh; but with us *is* the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles.” 2 Chronicles 32:7,8

In response to the boastings of Sennacherib and his attack against Jerusalem, we are told that the Lord went out and in a single night killed 185,000 Assyrians. Because of this, the Assyrian king packed up and left. Like Pharaoh and like Sennacherib, Matthew Henry provides wise words for those who fail to give the Lord the honor He is due –

“All men being made for the honour of their Maker, those whom he is not honoured by, he will be honoured upon.” Matthew Henry

^{9 (fin)} **and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon.**

Exactly where they were told to camp, Israel stopped and made camp. One can see the children splashing in the ocean and picking up curious rocks or shells. The majority of them had probably never seen the ocean in their life. Instead of the hard bondage of Egypt, they could sit and relax, enjoying the cool breeze of the spring winds off the sea.

Instead of hands and bodies agonizingly covered in mud, there would be bodies joyfully covered in sand. The harsh sun beating off the dull-colored mud flats would be replaced with the wonderful, blissful sun reflecting off the beautifully blue waters.

There they were... the multitudes of Israel, camping and relaxing in the presence of a new aspect of God's splendor, even reveling in it. And yet, they didn't know that danger was heading in their direction. The carefree attitude of freedom and ease would soon be replaced with another dreadful moment of fearful angst.

They had not had long to cherish their freedoms and so they would not know how to handle the feelings of trepidation they were soon to encounter. But if you think of it, even this fits so marvelously into God's plan. One can only truly rejoice in deliverance when they have tasted the contrast between the bondage and the ease.

A couple sermons ago, I mentioned that some Christian scholars attempt to align the resurrection of Christ with the day that Israel was conducted through the Red sea. However, this would not align with the table of stops recorded in Numbers 33. But, the Jewish calendar reckons the seventh day of the Feast of Unleavened bread with that day.

Accordingly, the final day of the Feast would be the day they passed through the waters of the Red Sea. If this is so, and it most probably is, then it means that Israel was camped at Pi Hahiroth for several days. It was surely a merry moment in the life of Israel and it would fit well with a seven-day feast which was ordained for the generations to come.

Here we have a serene picture of Israel camping for several days by the Red Sea, not suspecting that amazing things lay ahead of them, culminating in their seventh day of what would be true freedom – a day which would be remembered for all time.

It is the Lord who brought them into a place from which no known human power could deliver them. But the Lord could. The name Pi Hahiroth means “mouth of the gorges” and it gives the sense of their being swallowed up by something massive and overwhelming.

But on the other side from them was a place called Baal Zephon – “The Lord is Watching.” Nothing would swallow His treasured possession, Israel. Instead, He would lead them right through Yam Suph, “the Sea of the Ending” and into a new beginning. A beautiful picture of the rapture of the church is seen in this crossing.

Oh! How the Lord loves His people. Those who have called out to Him for salvation, He will in fact save. He will deliver them from every trouble and woe and into a marvelous new beginning. We who are the redeemed of the Lord, be assured and know this. It is as certain as the air we breathe.

But someone listening today may not know the joy of this certain hope. You may still have a wall between you and the Creator; an infinite wall which is impossible to pass. Let me tell You about how to overcome even the impossible. Let me tell you about Jesus...

Closing Verse: *“Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the Lord.” Ezekiel 38:23*

Israel forgot the great deeds of the Lord and they twice went into captivity for their forgetfulness. But the Lord has returned them, and Ezekiel 38 and 39 shows us that they will come to know their Lord as will the nations which surround them.

Here we are, waiting on the next big moment in redemptive history for Israel and for our next big moment at the rapture. I can tell you with all certainty that for those who know the Lord now, and who will be spared the great battles prophesied for our future, that we have the better deal. Your faith is worth more than fine gold.

Hold fast to it and be willing to share it with others. Our time is short and the church age is coming to its end. Pray for Israel, pray for the lost, and let the redeemed of the Lord say so.

Next Week: Exodus 14:10-20 (Stand Still and See the Salvation of the Lord) (40th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Lord is Watching

Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

“Speak to the children of Israel

That they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth as I am relaying

These instructions to you I do tell

There between Migdol and the sea

Opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp there

Before it by the sea, I tell you plainly

Worry not; in your heart have not a care

For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel

‘They are bewildered by the land

The wilderness has closed them in, very well

I intend to go down there and make a stand

Then I will harden Pharaoh’s heart

So that he will pursue them as I said

And I will gain honor over Pharaoh, as stated from the start

And over all the army of that knucklehead

That the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord

And they did so, according to His word

Now it was told the king of Egypt

That the people had fled

And the heart of Pharaoh and his servants

Was turned against the people; and they said

“Why have we done thus?

That we have let Israel go from serving us?

So he made ready his chariot and took his people with him
Also, he took six hundred choice chariots too
And all the chariots of Egypt
With captains over every one of them, a very large crew

And the Lord hardened the heart
Of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and as we would guess
He pursued the children of Israel
And the children of Israel went out with boldness

So the Egyptians pursued them
All the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, a great company
His horsemen and his army so many men
And overtook them camping by the sea

Beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon
He probably thought such luck would go on and on

What a tragic thing to have a hardened heart!
Terrifying it is, to the bone's very marrow
One should look for a different path and thus depart
From the horrendous mistakes that we see in Pharaoh

God has shown us in His precious word
That being obstinate toward Him can only harm us
Instead, we need to bow to our glorious Lord
Giving honor and respect to Christ Jesus

Help us in this Lord, this we implore
Our hearts are so easily turned away
Give us of Your Spirit to overflowing and even more
So that we will bring honor to you always, yes every day

And to You we give all of our highest praise
And to You we shall look for eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 14:10-20
(STAND STILL AND SEE THE SALVATION OF THE LORD)

In America, at least to this point, Christians have been safe and secure in their religious life. We have been allowed to worship freely, believe in the exclusivity of Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation, and to openly proclaim that anywhere and everywhere.

Now of course, with our current leadership, that is quickly changing. Our president is hostile to our faith and he is hostile to the values which established this country which are based on our faith. For us, the road will probably become difficult and we may face times of great trouble if we are willing to continue in our walk with the Lord.

His treasonous acts aside, this has been the standard for many of the world's Christians all along. They have had to choose between Christ and death and between the kingdom of Christ and that of the world. And for many the choice was easy – "I choose Jesus."

For others, their religion is only as strong as the next threat they face. In the movie, The Kingdom of Heaven, the Bishop and Patriarch of Jerusalem was faced with death as the muslim forces under Saladin came against the city. His words to the knight defending the city were, "Convert now, repent later." The knight's response was, "You've taught me a lot about religion, your Eminence."

Today's verses partially encompass a chiasm I found about seven years ago. The middle, or anchor, of that chiasm contains the words, "Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians." Israel had seen the ten plagues, they had received release from their bondage, they had been directed by a pillar of cloud and fire, and yet, as soon as they start to face a minor threat in comparison to the works they had seen, they lose faith and begin to accuse Moses.

Is this the strength of your faith? To what extent are you willing to stand up for Jesus Christ? Millions and millions of Christians have been willing to die for Him and they will receive their reward. They continue to be slaughtered even now around the world due to the outright negligence, and belligerence against the Christian, by the president of the US.

And if he gets his way, we will soon face the same under him in our own land. What will be your answer? Will you be like the Bishop of Jerusalem and say, "Convert now, repent

later?” Or will you be like Clint Eastwood and say “Go ahead, make my day!”? Me, “Send me home to Abba! Go ahead, make my day!”

Text Verse: *“Salvation is of the Lord.” Jonah 2:9*

Salvation is of the Lord – from the beginning to the end. This is what the Bible proclaims. He saves us despite ourselves, and He continues to save us despite ourselves. And... He will carry us to His heavenly home. All who come to Him will be saved. Have faith in that and should your faith be tested, even to death, tell them to “Bring it on – I have a promise which is found in God’s superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Salvation of the Lord (verses 10-14)

¹⁰ And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them.

The last verse we looked at last week said –

“So the Egyptians pursued them, all the horses *and* chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon.” Exodus 14:9

This then explains the layout of the situation to us. They are at the Sea at a place called “the mouth of the gorges.” What this means is that there was a body of water too large to traverse to the east. There were gorges to the west, implying a mountain range. And even if there was a highway which continued down along the banks of the Red Sea, it would have been narrow.

A flight for 2 million or so people would have meant that they would be cut down by the pursuing Egyptians as they fled. Further, there are eventually mountains which come right up to the sea along the coast. And so they would be blocked from a further flight south. This is the setting and the battle conditions in which they found themselves.

In all ways, they had their proverbial backs against the wall and the Egyptian army was coming. In other words, under normal circumstances, it is an impossible situation. There would be no exit and there would only be the expectation of death or re-capture.

¹⁰ (con't) **So they were very afraid,**

One question that some scholars have thrown out in order to diminish the truth of the Bible concerning the recorded numbers of people that the Exodus accounts claim is, “How could a group of people consisting of 603,550 fighting aged men be ‘very afraid’ of an army which could be no more than a third that size?”

Supposedly, there would actually be no comparison in the size of the force and it would seem that Israel would easily overcome and destroy Egypt. There are a multitude of reasons why this is more than an unsound attack against the narrative.

First, it is Israel who is boxed in with no real means of escape. Secondly, Israel is hampered by the fact that they have children, the aged, women, animals, and supplies to deal with.

Third, Israel would have been unarmed, Egypt would have been heavily armed, wearing military garments, and possessing chariots. Fourth, Israel was unaccustomed to battle; the Egyptians were highly trained soldiers, prepared for war.

The history of warfare is replete with smaller forces destroying larger forces because of training, available weapons, and experience. As I said, under any normal circumstances this was an impossible situation. But these were not normal circumstances as the next words show us...

¹⁰ (con't) **and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.**

The very fact that Israel “cried out to the Lord” shows that they felt these were not normal circumstances concerning their plight. Rather, they were normal circumstances concerning their faith. Their plight was completely under control; their faith was completely out of control.

Those who knew that the Lord was capable of helping took advantage of the moment to call on Him. Those who didn't cried out to Him in anguish. As Matthew Henry says about this –

“Some cried out unto the Lord; their fear led them to pray, and that was well. God brings us into straits, that he may bring us to our knees.” Henry

Crying out to the Lord doesn't always mean that strong faith is present. It simply means that there is nowhere else to cry out to. It is no different than the atheist who cries out

“O God” when their child is dying at the scene of a car accident. Sometimes, the straits we face are a means of molding the little faith we do have.

Apparently though, Israel did not learn this, but instead redirected what should have been faith in God into anger at God’s messenger.

¹¹ Then they said to Moses, “Because *there were* no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness?”

There is an irony in these words which needs to be considered. Egypt was steeped in the worship of the dead. The bodies of the Egyptians were mummified as a means of obtaining eternal life. The graves of the Egyptians then were considered the place where life continued.

Egypt was a land full of tombs, and there was a necropolis in every city. Rather than such a place of burial in the “land of the tombs,” Israel felt they would perish in the wilderness. It shows a forgetfulness of the promises made to the patriarchs and those which were repeated to them by the Lord through Moses.

It also shows the absurd nature of having brought up the bones of the patriarchs from Egypt. If it was the great place of hope and promise that they are implying, then it would have been better to leave the bones there.

Further, it cannot be said that they have faith in the Lord but lacked faith in Moses because of his bad choice of leading them to their present location. Scholars attempt to find this a reasonable explanation, but it is not. In Exodus 13, it said –

“And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. ²² He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night *from* before the people.” Exodus 13:21, 22

In just a few more verses, it will acknowledge that the pillar is still there with them at this time. The Lord is leading Moses and Moses is following Him ahead of the people. An attack on Moses then is an attack against the leading of the Lord.

Although a seeming diversion from the present plight, it is not unjustified to say that those who rebel against the properly taught word of the Lord are really only rebelling against the Lord. If for no other reason than to ensure that you know your Bible, it is a good enough one there to soberly consider doing so.

¹¹ (con't) **Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt?**

These words show a complete failure to remember the events of the previous days. They observed the Passover; they were entirely spared and yet Egypt collectively suffered and mourned. While they were leaving the land in the moonlight, the shrieks and howls of death would have permeated the night air.

At that time, the joy of ending the pain, toil, and bondage was fresh on their minds. Now, just a couple days since then, they have forgotten that they willingly marched with Moses and did so with all their possessions and with the promise that the Lord would be with them. And He was, as evidenced by the pillar they followed.

¹² **Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'?**

Lange says, "The exaggeration of their recollection of a doubt formerly expressed reaches the pitch of falsehood."

In other words, the people are mis-remembering and even lying concerning the situation. In Exodus 4 when Moses presented himself to the people with the signs from the Lord, this was recorded –

"So the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped." Exodus 4:31

It is true that after that, times became difficult, but there is no record at all of them asking Moses to leave them alone in order to serve the Egyptians. There were times when they wouldn't heed Moses. Another time, the officers were angry with him, but they are never recorded as desiring to continue to serve the Egyptians.

As a point of interest, this portion of verse 12 is obviously very important to understand because a chiasm centers on its words. I came across this one in 2008 and it shows a picture of those who would rather serve the world than the Lord.

In other words, it is a classic picture of those who are called, who turn back to the world, and yet whom the Lord still delivers because of His immense love and mercy –

Exodus 13:21-14:20 – In the Wilderness (4/23/08)

Miracles and Complaints

- a. 13:21, 22 The pillar of cloud/fire led the way.
- b. 14:4 Harden Pharaoh's heart to gain honor over him.
- c. 14:9 Israel lifted their eyes and were very afraid.
- d. 14:11 ...to die in the wilderness
- e. 14:11 Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt?
- f. 14:12 Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians**
- e. 14:12 It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians
- d. 14:12 ... we should die in the wilderness.
- c. 14:13 Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD.
- b. 14:17 Harden Egyptians hearts to gain honor over Pharaoh and all his army.
- a. 14:19, 20 The pillar of cloud went behind them.

¹² (con't) **For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."**

For those who do not know Christ, service to the devil appears better than death in obscurity. The Lord needs to remove this from them. If His miracles and wonders on Egypt were enough to convince them of who He is, then bringing them to their present straits would not have been needed.

But the people still lacked resolve in following the Lord because they still lacked sound faith in Him. When one knows the Lord, even death in obscurity is but a sweet moment of rest. Better to die in the wilderness than to continue life in Egypt. But the Lord intends neither for these people at this time...

¹³ **And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid.**

In contrast to the cries and complaints of the people, Moses stands firm and provides a series of thoughts which resonate throughout the rest of Scripture. He first gives words of fortitude, *al tirau* – "Do not be afraid."

The first time these words were spoken was by the Lord to Abraham in Genesis 15:1. They are spoken time and again throughout both Testaments, and are spoken the last time to John when he received his vision from the Lord in Revelation 1:17.

Throughout the Bible, the people of God are admonished to not be in fear, but to trust the Lord. Moses repeats these words now to the fearful masses of Israel.

13 (con't) Stand still,

hityasvu – “stand still.” The words here are intended to refocus the individual away from self to something or someone else. Instead of necessary action by the person, there will be peace for them while action is taken for the person. There was no need to flee away or to move towards action. They could simply stand fast...

13 (con't) and see the salvation of the Lord,

ureu eth yeshuat Yehovah. This is now the second time in the Bible that the word *yeshua* has been used. The first time was in Genesis 49 during Jacob’s blessing of his sons. There, after blessing Dan and before blessing Gad, he cried out –

“I have waited for your salvation, O Lord!” Genesis 49:18

Jacob anticipated Yeshua, now Moses promises Yeshua. Salvation would come and it would come from the Lord. The word Yeshua is the Hebrew name of Jesus. Thus, this verse is both a prophetic picture and a prophetic pun.

In picture, the Lord would work salvation for Israel – a salvation which Paul explains in 1 Corinthians pictures the work of Christ. In prophetic pun, these words say, “...and see the Jesus of Yehovah.” It is an anticipation of the incarnation of Jesus Christ when the Lord came to dwell among men.

13 (con't) which He will accomplish for you today.

The promise is made – there would be no defeat in a hopeless battle, there would be no long siege against the people, and there would be no putting off for later what was coming. The Lord would act and it would be *hayom* – “today.” The act would come and it would be complete in its scope...

13 (con't) For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever.

The promise here is better worded as Young’s translates it – “As ye have seen the Egyptians to-day.” In other words, “You shall never see the Egyptians in the same way” again (Barnes). The reason for this is that they will see the Egyptians again. They will see

them dead on the shores of the Red Sea, and they will encounter Egypt in the future, but they will never see them in this manner again.

Israel will be perfectly delivered from Egypt once and forever, and it would be without any further delay.

The faith of Moses in this verse is repeated by King Jehoshaphat of Judah many hundreds of years later. In fact his words to the people before a great army which was coming against them are so similar to those of Moses that it seems he was recalling this very account of the Exodus to inspire the people. These are his words –

“You will not *need* to fight in this *battle*. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!’ Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord *is* with you.”

-2 Chronicles 20:17

Jehoshaphat trusted the Lord with the same faith as Moses and he was rewarded for that faith. The enemies were destroyed and the people of Judah, without having engaged in the battle at all, were able to plunder the dead of an immense amount of wealth.

¹⁴The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.

Moses promises that while Israel stands still, the Lord will act on their behalf. The Hebrew word for “shall hold your peace” signifies not just silence in speech, but a complete cessation of action as well. Everything about the words in verses 13 and 14 shows that salvation is of the Lord, from the beginning to the end.

Moses has shown them that they will not participate in their salvation, and that the Lord will work independently of any help of any kind. There is no part in the honor of what happens to be ascribed to the people. Instead it is a work of the Lord alone.

These two verses for Israel picture the process of salvation in the individual believer in Christ. They can be summed up perfectly in the words of Paul found in Ephesians 2 –

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Ephesians 2:8, 9

Israel did nothing to merit the favor of the Lord and they did nothing to secure their salvation from the bonds of Egypt. Instead, He did everything, thus setting the pattern of salvation for all of humanity.

Israel seemed hemmed in by land, sea, and Pharaoh and yet the Lord delivered them. Humans are hemmed in by sin, corruption, and the devil and yet the Lord is there to deliver us. As Matthew Henry says about this –

“If God brings his people into straits, he will find a way to bring them out.” Matthew Henry

*Moses, why have you brought us out here?
We have nowhere to go and the enemy is on his way
This is the end of us now we fear
Yes, our end has come this very day*

*Were there no graves left in Egypt for us to die there?
Did we need to come to this place to be buried?
We’re stuck at this spot by the sea and you don’t seem to care
Are there ships coming by which we can be ferried?*

*Don’t not be afraid, instead stand still
See the salvation of the Lord; a marvelous work indeed
The sight you see will be bring the greatest thrill
He shall deliver you and He shall do it with speed*

II. So I will Gain Honor Over Pharaoh (verses 15-18)

¹⁵ And the Lord said to Moses, “Why do you cry to Me?”

The words here perplex scholars because there is no prayer or anguish noted as stemming from Moses. And yet, these words suddenly appear. And so scholars insert an “unspoken prayer” of Moses, or even a spoken prayer while he was alone talking to the Lord. But I believe this is unnecessary.

There is no reason to assume that the Lord is speaking to Moses about Moses. The word “cry” is singular and so it appears to be Moses who is crying to the Lord, but Moses is the representative of the people. Therefore, their cumulative cry of verse 10 is equated to the singular cry of Moses.

In Joshua 7, something similar appears. One of the people of Israel had committed a transgression and because of it all of Israel was judged through defeat in battle. In verse 6 it says,

“Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads.” Joshua 7:6

Later in verse 10, the Lord spoke to Joshua as the representative of the people –

“So the Lord said to Joshua: “Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face?”
-Joshua 7:10

Though all of the elders were on their face before the ark, the Lord only spoke to Joshua; it is in the singular. And in order to get them to act, we read this in verse 13 –

“Get up, sanctify the people, and say, ‘Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the Lord God of Israel: “*There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you.*”’” Joshua 7:13

The Lord directed Joshua to turn the petitions of the elders into action. The same was true with his predecessor Moses. The two accounts are similar and yet they have contrasts. One was based on a lack of the faith of the people concerning the ability of the Lord. The other was based on disobedience to the word of the Lord.

One was prior to their salvation from the Egyptians and the giving of the law. The other was after their reception of the law and being brought into the covenant. The people’s lack of faith could be compared to Peter’s lack of faith before the crucifixion. And the willful act of the offender in Joshua could be compared to Ananias and Sapphira after the giving of the Holy Spirit.

Joshua was there to witness both in the Old Testament; Peter was there for both in the New. The two accounts contrast and yet they confirm that when action is necessary, action is expected. Thus the Lord tells Moses to act, just as He will say the same to Joshua later.

¹⁵ (con’t) **Tell the children of Israel to go forward.**

The explanation for these words will be realized in the next verse. The congregation was to pack up its camp and march to the very shore of the sea. It is as if they were to expect a fleet of ships to come and pick them up, taking them to safety.

But if that is what they thought, they would be wrong. What would occur would be much more marvelous than the assistance of a fleet of ships from a distant land.

¹⁶ But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it.

The rod, or *matteh*, is the rod of God which Moses has carried with him all along. It was there on the sacred mountain with him, it was later presented to the Israelites and then to Pharaoh. It was used to strike the land, the waters, and the heavens with plagues against Egypt. And now he is asked to stretch it out once again.

This time, it would be over the sea. The rod symbolizes the power of God because it bears the authority of the one it represents. Moses represented the Lord because he bore His rod. Thus the power to effect the miracle was present with him.

In stretching the rod over the sea, the sea would then be divided. The word of the Lord will become a reality through the action.

^{16 (con't)} And the children of Israel shall go on dry *ground* through the midst of the sea.

Of these words, Benson says –

“The same power could have congealed the waters for them to pass over, but infinite Wisdom chose rather to divide the waters for them to pass through, for that way of salvation is always pitched upon which is most humbling.” Joseph Benson

Although I agree that the Lord could have congealed the waters so that they could have been walked over, I don't fully agree with his reasoning. It wasn't just more humbling to walk through the waters than over them. It was a miracle 1) which would be remembered more poignantly; 2) it would require more faith to walk between walls of water than over a solid mass; and 3) it is intended to make a picture of the work of Christ. As Paul notes in 1 Corinthians –

“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ² all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” 1 Corinthians 10:1, 2

Above all, baptism is an act of faith – “I believe Christ died for me and I am following Him in His burial.” The people required faith in the Lord’s continued sustaining power over the walls of water on either side of them.

They were to engage in a type of baptism by walking through the sea as they did. And there is also a parallel here to the creation account itself. The word for “dry ground” is *yabbashah*. It was first used in Genesis 1:9 where it says –

“Then God said, ‘Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry *land* appear’; and it was so.” Genesis 1:9

Out of the chaos of the seas would come the order and firmness of the dry ground through an act of creation. Likewise, out of the chaos of the sea would come order and firmness of the dry ground in an act of redemption. As always in the Bible the pattern is consistent, there is creation and then there is redemption.

17 And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them.

This is the last time that the term “harden” is used in the Exodus account. The last time it was used only of Pharaoh in verse 8, but now it is being applied to the hearts of the Egyptians as well. The Lord is stating that He will be the one to harden their hearts.

However, the means of that hardening has to be drawn out from the context of the passage. And it is a context which shows that it is the form of the miracle by the Lord which drew the Egyptians into following Israel.

In other words, it will be an act of the Lord which passively draws Egypt in. They will exercise their own free will, heading into the waters of destruction. The Lord simply knew that they would follow this avenue. And there is a specific reason for this which is again repeated...

17 (con’t) So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen.

The word for “honor” here is *kaved*. It indicates honor, glory, or acclaim, but it comes from the idea of weight or heaviness. In this then, there is a certain pun going on. The Lord will receive glory over Pharaoh and his people, but it will come from the crushing weight of the seas that come down upon them

18 Then the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.”

This verse takes us first back to Exodus 7 –

“And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. ⁴ But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies *and* My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. ⁵ And the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them.” Exodus 7:3-5

This was later further defined earlier in this chapter –

“Then I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I *am* the Lord.” And they did so.” Exodus 14:4

The logical progression of what has been spoken is coming to its fulfillment. The Lord has incrementally worked through these many chapters to slowly reveal His glory. It is a marvelous study of wisdom. In fact, it is brilliant. But what else could one expect from the mind and the secret counsels of the Lord!

*Moses, get the people up and tell them to go!
Forward! Even to the edge of the sea
There a marvelous miracle to you I will show
A mighty deed which will set the people free*

*They won’t have to swim or sail on a boat
Nor will they walk on the water, that is reserved for Me
But they will cross over... No not with a rubber ducky float
Just lift up your rod and stretch it out over the sea*

*The waters will be divided and they will pass through
It will be as if on dry ground, don’t you believe Me?
A marvelous thing for Israel I will do
By the strength of My hand I will divide the Red Sea*

III. From Guide to Guard – Safety in the Lord (verses 19-20)

¹⁹ And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them;

In Exodus 13:21, it said that the Lord, meaning Yehovah, went before the people in the pillar. Now He is called *malakh ha'elohim*. Literally, he is called the Angel of "the" God. There is a definite article in front of God which hasn't been seen for 10 chapters.

There is specificity which is asking to be considered, not passed over. In Exodus 3:2, the Angel of Yehovah appeared in the burning bush. Then in Exodus 3:6 and 3:11 He is called *ha'elohim*, "the God." The words are not random, but are particularly used to highlight that the Angel of Yehovah is the Angel of *the* God and that He is Yehovah and that He is God. And finally, we are shown that there is only one God and He is it.

With Israel now placed directly in front of the sea, and with their inability to go forward any further at this time, the "Angel of **the** God" who is the Lord, now moves behind the camp to protect them from their enemies. When the seas are parted, they will not need Him to lead them as it will be the only means of egress. And instead of their front guide, He now becomes their rear guard.

The same type of interchangeable names and concepts for the Lord are found in the words of Isaiah –

For you shall not go out with haste,
Nor go by flight;
For the Lord will go before you,
And the God of Israel *will be* your rear guard. Isaiah 52:12

Then your light shall break forth like the morning,
Your healing shall spring forth speedily,
And your righteousness shall go before you;
The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Isaiah 58:8

In those Isaiah verses, He is called both the Lord and the God of Israel, and He is both the One who goes before the people and the One who is their rear guard. In picture, He is Jesus who went before us in death and who will come behind us until we have

reached our heavenly shore. We are always cared for as protected people of God because of the presence of the Lord.

¹⁹ (con't) **and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them.**

Some scholars try to distinguish the Lord from the pillar of cloud by separating the two clauses of this verse. This is not correct. The two clauses are parallel and the entities are synonymous. The Lord is represented by the pillar of cloud.

When the invisible Lord moves, the visible manifestation of His presence moves with Him. This is comparable to the burning bush which Moses beheld. The light which emanated from it was intended for Moses to see and understand. The same is true with the pillar *for* Israel and *against* Egypt.

²⁰ **So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel.**

The word “it” should not be used here. The Lord is not an “it” and the context shows that both the Lord and the pillar are being referred to. Rather, the word *v’yabo* simply means “and came.” That may sound nitpicky on my part, but context drives translation and the context is that this is the Lord revealed in the cloud.

It must have been an incredible sight for the Israelites to see the cloud move from the sea to their rear guard and come to rest between them and the Egyptians, but it was another saving grace as they are being prepared for their final step of the exodus.

²⁰ (fin) **Thus it was a cloud and darkness *to the one*, and it gave light by night *to the other*, so that the one did not come near the other all that night.**

This entire verse can be translated without the word “it.” Young’s does an excellent job in his literal translation of it –

...and cometh in between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, and the cloud and the darkness are, and he enlighteneth the night, and the one hath not drawn near unto the other all the night.” YLT

Young’s thoughtful translation of these words shows both a sense of the splendor of the Lord and His ability to use the same medium to work for the benefit of one group and to the detriment of the other. John Lange shows a spiritual connotation to the physical description of the words of this verse –

“That which gives light to the believers constitutes nocturnal darkness for the unbelievers; and that is the irremovable barrier between the two.” Lange

This is a truth which is seen more and more in the world today. As the end times have certainly arrived, there is a spiritual darkness which permeates the mind of the unbelievers and yet it is the same thing which provides light to believers. It is the word of God. The dividing line is set and it is found in the word of God – the Bible, which reveals the Word of God – Jesus.

Matthew Henry further explains this thought –

“The word and providence of God have a black and dark side toward sin and sinners, but a bright and pleasant side toward the people of the Lord. He, who divided between light and darkness, Ge 1:4, allotted darkness to the Egyptians, and light to the Israelites. Such a difference there will be between the inheritance of the saints in light, and that utter darkness which will be the portion of hypocrites for ever.” Matthew Henry

It is good to know the Lord, to be familiar with His word, and to understand the spiritual darkness which is all around us. But lest we think that we somehow accomplished this salvation on our own, or that someone around us doesn't deserve it, we can look to the words of Paul in Colossians 1. There he tells us that it is the Lord who delivered us –

“giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Colossians 1:12-14

Because this is so, we need to remember that we were also once in darkness. The world around us maybe be offensive and gross, but the world around us needs Jesus. Let's remember this and pray for the lost, be willing to share the good news, and always be prepared with a defense for why we believe what we believe.

And just in case you have never received the Lord Jesus as your Savior, I would ask for just another moment to share with you how you can move from the spiritual darkness which encompasses you and into His marvelous light...

Closing Verse: *“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), ¹⁰ finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. ¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.” Ephesians 5:8-11*

Next Week: Exodus 14:21-31 (The Parting of the Red Sea) (41st Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Salvation of Lord

And when Pharaoh drew near
The children of Israel lifted their eyes
And behold, a sight that brought fear
The Egyptians marched after them, it seemed their demise

So they were very afraid of the coming sword
And the children of Israel cried out to the Lord

Then they said to Moses, in their duress
“Because there were in Egypt no graves
Have you taken us away to die in the wilderness?
Is this how a leader behaves?

Why have you so dealt with us? Our hope is stripped
Since your intent was to bring us up out of Egypt?

Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt... what nerve!
Saying “Let us alone that we may the Egyptians serve

For it would have been better for us to serve without duress
The Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness

And “Do not be afraid” Moses to the people did say
Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord
Which He will accomplish for you today
I pronounce to you now a prophetic word

For the Egyptians whom you see today
You shall see again no more forever, their trouble will cease
The Lord will fight for you, in a glorious way
And you, you shall hold your peace

And the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me?
Tell the children of Israel to go forward, get out by the sea

But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand
Over the sea and divide it
And the children of Israel shall go on dry land
Through the midst of the sea without getting wet

And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians
And they shall follow them in
So I will gain honor over Pharaoh
And over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen

Then the Egyptians shall know
That I am the Lord
When I have gained honor for Myself in a marvelous show
Over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen; this is my word

And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel
Moved and behind them went
And the pillar of cloud went from before them
And stood behind them; a marvelous event
So it came between the camp of the Egyptians
And the camp of Israel
Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one
And to the other light it did dispel

So that the one did not come near the other all that night
The Egyptians had darkness, but Israel had light

And such is true with the world, and me and you
If you have Jesus, you have the light
But if you don't unfortunately it's true
You only have darkness; pitch black as the night

But if you call out to Him for His saving grace
Upon you the light will arise and it will shine
The light of God is revealed in His face
Call out to Him now... Say "Jesus is mine!"

In Him there is no darkness, not at all
In Him there is only God's wondrous glory
So on His name, today be sure to call
And be a part of God's glorious gospel story

And we shall as the redeemed praise Him for eternal years
With joy and shouting of heartfelt cheers!

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 14:21-31 (THE PARTING OF THE RED SEA)

Does anyone here know how many times waters are parted for people to cross over in the Bible? The idea of parting something, be it a body of water or a mountain, is given to show the power of God in a unique way. Whether God does it through a natural means or through a miracle which transcends nature, there is always the miraculous associated with it.

The reason is that when the Bible records such an event, it is done in connection with a need or desire of His people, and it is done at a time when it was necessary for that need or desire to be realized. Like the plagues on Egypt, God causes things to occur at specific times to show that He was behind it and it wasn't just arbitrary.

The Red Sea's parting is such an event and it points to other such marvelous events in redemptive history as well. These have been recorded in advance so that when they happen, the people will know that the Lord was behind it. This is the beauty of the Bible. It is a self-authenticating book, filled with wisdom and glory!

Text Verse: *Then the Lord will go forth*

And fight against those nations,

As He fights in the day of battle.

⁴ *And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives,*

Which faces Jerusalem on the east.

And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two,

From east to west,

Making a very large valley;

Half of the mountain shall move toward the north

And half of it toward the south.

⁵ *Then you shall flee through My mountain valley,*

For the mountain valley shall reach to Azal.

Yes, you shall flee

As you fled from the earthquake

In the days of Uzziah king of Judah.

Thus the Lord my God will come,

And all the saints with You. Zechariah 14:1-5

The Red Sea is parted; the Mount of Olives will be rent asunder; and even the great chasm which stood between God and man, opposing our fellowship with Him, has been bridged. A highway has been made for God's people to once again enter His presence.

Marvelous things keep repeating themselves in the Bible to show us that God had it under control, has it under control, and will continue to have it under control for all the ages which lie ahead. Oh,,, and the answer to the parting of waters is four – the Red Sea, the Jordon when Israel finished its wilderness wanderings, the Jordon for Elijah, and the Jordan for Elisha. Just so you know!

All of this wonder is to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Parting of the Waters (verses 21-25)

21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea;

In obedience to the word of the Lord in verse 16, Moses complies and stretches out his hand over the sea. In his hand would be the rod of God which symbolized the power and authority of the Lord. As during the other plagues, the hand here is being used as the principle cause, whereas the rod is used as the instrumental cause.

In the intervening verses since the Lord told him to do this, there was no questioning the Lord or seeming hesitation in his actions. Instead, Moses simply complied. It shows a complete confidence in the fact that the Lord would do exactly as He said He would.

21 (con't) and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night,

There is both the sense of the natural and the miraculous in this account. The natural however does not diminish the miraculous at all. And whatever the true location of this event by today's maps, it was an event which cannot be as liberal scholars try to say. They say that it was merely a shallow lake that was crossed.

It very well could be in the region of the Bitter Lakes of Egypt today if they were truly once a part of the Red Sea. Or it could be at a place where the Red Sea itself is today. Either way, it is the Red Sea which was parted, not a shallow sea of reeds.

When the rod was stretched out, a strong wind began to blow, as it says, from the east. However, this could mean anything from a NE to a SE wind. The Greek translation of the

passage says it was a southerly wind. Therefore, it was possibly a SE wind which pushed the waters away from a shallow area at Pi Hahiroth and which extended all the way to Baal Zephon.

This same effect can be seen out my back door a few times a year when cold fronts come through in the winter. The wind blows from the north and almost completely drains the bay behind us. What is normally a deep bay which is a mile across can be traversed without getting more than a foot or two deep. Under the right circumstances, an even more complete drying of a sea could occur.

There is no reason to think this account didn't literally happen exactly as stated. The most miraculous part is that there is Israel, hemmed in from all sides and ready to face destruction, but a pillar of cloud and light kept the Egyptians away from them, the wind started blowing exactly when it was supposed to, the location where they were made it possible for the event to occur, and Israel was escorted to safety while Egypt was destroyed.

Regardless of how God does something, the circumstances around the event are often more miraculous than the event itself. But yet, as this account shows, it was miraculous in both the event and its surrounding circumstances. The wind parted the waters to the point where the grounds became dry. It is as if the winds licked up even the moisture from the sandy bottom as we now see...

21 (con't) and made the sea into dry *land*, and the waters were divided.

The word "divided" here is *baqa*. It is a common word meaning "to split" but it is often used in the most *uncommon* of passages. So far it has been used in the breaking open of the fountains of the great deep in Genesis 7 and in the splitting of the wood by Abraham in preparation for burning his son Isaac on the altar of sacrifice in Genesis 22. Now it is used in this third remarkable passage in the dividing of the waters of the Red Sea.

In the use of this word for the biblical events such as the one we are seeing come about, the HAW says, "...the burden of these passages is not simply that God is possessed of such terrible power as to split rocks and waters, etc., but that the possessor of such power is able to redeem a lost creation."

And in fact, each of these accounts so far has shown just that. Noah was *redeemed* from the destruction of the earth by water; Isaac was *redeemed* from the destruction of fire

and a substitute was given in his place; and now Israel is *redeemed* from destruction by Egypt by the dividing of the waters and Egypt being destroyed in their place.

It is fascinating how even one word, like this word *baqa*, can carry such immense theological importance in the overall biblical account. In this one, the waters have been divided, the land has become dry, and a highway has been opened for God's redeemed to march through unto safety and freedom.

²² So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground,

Jewish tradition has it that Nahshon, the leader of the tribe of Judah, was the first one to enter into the path through the Red Sea and that the tribe of Judah was the first tribe to enter, leading the rest. However, Josephus, the great Jewish historian says that –

“When Moses had thus addressed himself to God, he smote the sea with his rod, which parted asunder at the stroke, and receiving those waters into itself, left the ground dry, as a road and a place of flight for the Hebrews. Now when Moses saw this appearance of God, and that the sea went out of its own place, and left dry land, he went first of all into it, and bid the Hebrews to follow him along that divine road, and to rejoice at the danger their enemies that followed them were in; and gave thanks to God for this so surprising a deliverance which appeared from him.” Flavius Josephus

Regardless of the truth, the Bible itself refrains from saying what occurred. It simply says that “the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea.” However, in this verse a different word for “dry” is used than in the previous verse.

In verse 21, the word was *kharavah*. It would indicate ground which is free from water, or drained. In this verse, it is *yabashah*. This comes from the word *yabesh*, meaning “dried up” or “withered.” Hence, it is saying that the ground was literally free from moisture, or completely dried.

The words have been used in a progressive sense to show the complete preparedness of the path for the children of Israel to make the journey. Not only would the ground be free of water as if walking on a beach, but it would be completely dry as if walking on a desert path.

²² (con't) and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

Care needs to be taken on this portion of the verse to not diminish what it says, or to not make an unfounded deduction concerning what is said. The liberals at Cambridge note in their commentary that this is “A very summary poetical and hyperbolic description of the occurrence.”

In other words, they are saying this is just merely an exaggeration, nothing more. However, other scholars take it in another direction and say that the water of the sea “gave up its nature, formed with its waves a strong wall, and instead of streaming like a fluid, congealed into a hard substance” (Kalisch).

This adds into the account something that isn’t said. And if in fact the waters were hardened to ice, it would have said just that. The word translated as “wall” here is *khomah* and it means exactly that, a wall – such as in the wall of a city. However, it can also be metaphorically used to mean “protection.” One of many examples is found in 1 Samuel 25 –

“Now one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal’s wife, saying, ‘Look, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master; and he reviled them. ¹⁵ But the men *were* very good to us, and we were not hurt, nor did we miss anything as long as we accompanied them, when we were in the fields. ¹⁶ **They were a wall** to us both by night and day, all the time we were with them keeping the sheep.’”

-1 Samuel 25:14-16

Because of this type of metaphorical use of the word *khomah*, other scholars say that the waters were a metaphorical defense for Israel. To further strengthen their stand, Exodus 15:8 speaks of this same occurrence in the Red Sea, and says that the waters stood up “like a heap” using another word, *ned* which means a mound.

However, the fact that the word *ned* is used there doesn’t diminish what is said here. Instead, it bolsters it. There was no need for protection or defense on either side of Israel except for protection *from* the waters! The only defense they needed was taken care of by the pillar which stood between them and the Egyptians.

Therefore, unless one just dismisses this account as an outright fabrication, the only logical deduction is that the waters were actually a wall, exactly as described. They were supernaturally being held in place, not by a mere natural occurrence, but by that which transcends the natural.

The Lord has taken nature and worked within nature to a point to execute this miracle, but His work transcends the natural after meeting that point. It is truly a work of God in its most marvelous sense. And this brings us to the reason for this display.

In our sermon on the Feast of Unleavened Bread, it was noted that there are two holy convocations which bracket the Feast. One occurs on the first day of the feast and one on the seventh. They stand as representative of the entire period of the feast.

And this feast stands as representative of our time in Christ, from the day of our adoption until we go home to glory, this passing through the Red Sea on the seventh day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread symbolizes our passage from this life into the next.

There is an impossible gulf for us to cross over and yet the Lord has made that way possible. He has taken the natural and combined it with the miraculous in order to allow His redeemed to cross over to safety on the other shore where our heavenly home awaits. This is the symbolism we are given here.

It should be noted that by this time, the full moon of the first day of the feast has become a waning moon. The darkness would have been more pronounced, just as it is in our deaths, but there was still a brighter light to lead them. Matthew Henry notes that "...where God leads us, he will light us; while we follow his conduct we shall not want of his comforts."

The path for our full and complete redemption has been paved through that impossible gulf, every drop of water has been lifted off it and despite the walls which will stand on each side of us, there will be safety as we pass through into His glory. Remember that on the other side of where Israel now stands, and to where they are heading, is a place called Baal Zephon, we can rest in ease. Baal Zephon means "The Lord is Watching." And in fact He is.

The rapture is coming and He is carefully watching over His flock until that day. When the time is right, the infinite gulf will be parted and we, His redeemed, will pass through with ease and safety. However, there is another aspect to this path which will not end with the same results for all people...

²³ And the Egyptians pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

Since the beginning of Exodus, this dynasty of Pharaoh has pictured both the devil and the antichrist of the future. Egypt has pictured the world of sin. This wicked ruler wanted nothing more than to destroy Israel, the devil wants nothing more than to destroy God's people, and the antichrist of the future – filled with the power of the devil, will want nothing more than to again destroy Israel.

The patterns of history repeat to let us know that the things which lie ahead have already been seen in the past. The army of Egypt now pursues Israel, even into the midst of the sea. There is a marvelous story of redemption which follows the same pattern, time and again.

In the case of Egypt, they foolishly decide to pursue Israel into the midst of the sea. The entire army of Pharaoh has failed to recognize the glory of the Lord who has thus far been slow to anger and even filled with patience and mercy towards the objects of His wrath.

²⁴ Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the Lord looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled the army of the Egyptians.

In verse 19, it said it was “the Angel of God” in the pillar. Now it says that it is the Lord. These words are used with specificity to show that the Lord is the Angel of God – He is the Messenger of God who works God's miracles and wonders.

With a proper analysis of the Bible, one can come to no other conclusion than the fact that Jesus is God. Time and again, specific terminology is used to show us God's progressive revelation of Himself, finally being realized in Jesus Christ. What a sad thing that people miss this, either through deceit or simply a lack of caring about spending time in His word.

From this verse, unless you understand that the Lord knows everything and is in control of everything, it might sound like the Lord wasn't aware of the pursuing Egyptians until the morning time, but that isn't the case at all. Rather, the Bible is including us in the narrative of the events as they unfold.

He has purposely allowed the Egyptians to pursue Israel into the sea. At the right moment, we are told that He “looked down” on them. This is a way of saying that their time of judgment had come. The Lord is in an elevated place and He can look down in favor or in condemnation. In Egypt's case, it will be the latter.

This is called the “morning watch” which would be between the hours of 2am and 6am. It says at this time that He “troubled” the army of the Egyptians. The word here is *hamam*. It means “to throw into confusion” and this is its first use in the Bible. The confusion being spoken of here is described in the 77th Psalm –

The clouds poured out water;
The skies sent out a sound;
Your arrows also flashed about.
¹⁸ The voice of Your thunder *was* in the whirlwind;
The lightnings lit up the world;
The earth trembled and shook. Psalm 77:17, 18

Along with this confusion from the Lord came more trouble...

²⁵ And He took off their chariot wheels, so that they drove them with difficulty;

This is one of those wonderful verses that comes up from time to time where translators seem to find pleasure in thinking up new ways of describing what occurred. The NKJV says, “He took off their chariot wheels.” Others versions say jammed, twisted, clogged, caused to swerve, took off, made wobble, overturned them grievously, overthrew, or turneth aside.”

The word is *sur*, which means “to depart.” It doesn’t seem that “took off” would fit here because of the next words – “so that they drove them with difficulty.” Rather, it is probable that the water from the rains described in the Psalm saturated the ground causing them to get muddy so that they veered off course because of it. What was a perfectly dry and easy passage for the redeemed has now become a impossible journey for the Egyptians.

^{25 (con’t)} and the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians.”

With the din of the noise and the pursuit getting completely bogged down because of the situation they faced, the Egyptians are no longer the pursuers. Instead they realize that they are now on the defensive. The Lord defended Israel while at the same time He began an awesome work of war against those who wished them harm.

*While the Lord protects His people
He troubles those who come to attack and destroy
Be confident you who worship under the steeple
That the Lord will deliver, great weapons He will employ*

*And though we may die in this temporary jar of clay
We have the surest hope of all, to be raised anew
The Lord will come for His at the rapture, some wondrous day
The Lord who is ever faithful and true*

*For those who wait for Him, the sea of death will part
And He will lead His people, guiding the way
On the other shore our new life will start
Oh! Even so, come Lord Jesus! Yes, make it today!*

II. Not so Much as One of Them Remained (verses 26-29)

²⁶ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea,

Just as he had been instructed at the beginning of this great event, he is now instructed at its end. God allows Moses the honor of being seen as the human redeemer of his people. It was thus intended that in their eyes he would be magnified and treated with the due respect he deserved.

^{26 (con't)} that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen.”

These words form the center of a chiasm which spans verses 21-31. First, the Lord troubled Pharaoh’s army in verses 23-25, here Moses is told to take action which will result in their destruction. And finally, it will be fully realized in verse 28.

Exodus 14:21-31 – Stretch Out Your Hand Over the Sea (4/23/08)

The Great Miracle

- a. 14:21 LORD produced miracle through Moses.
- b. 14:22 Through sea on dry ground, the waters a wall to their right and left.
- c. 14:23-25 Army of Pharaoh troubled
- d. 14:26 “Stretch out your hand over the sea.”
 - The waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen.
- d. 14:27 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea
- c. 14:28 Army of Pharaoh destroyed.
- b. 14:29 Through sea on dry ground, the waters a wall to their right and left.
- a. 14:30, 31 Israelites saw the miracle and feared the LORD and Moses.

The attention to these verses is given for us to contemplate our own safety in the Lord. Think of the progression of thought. There was the Passover, and then there was the exodus and the Feast of Unleavened Bread with its beginning and ending convocations.

In Christ, there is our being passed over because of the blood applied to our lives. In that, our Exodus from the world of sin and death is granted. We begin our adopted life in Christ, symbolized by the first-day convocation, and we are brought out fully – with the enemies destroyed behind us, at the end of our time on this earth, pictured by the seventh-day convocation.

Everything fits because it is from the mind of God for His people to see and have confidence in. Chiasms like this short one give us hope that our trust in the Lord isn't futile, and no matter how the devil rages against us, we are safe, secure, and cared for by Him. At the same time, the devil and his minions are destined for doom.

²⁷ And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth,

Another portion of the miraculous is seen in these words. Moses stretched out his hand and the waters parted and he stretched them out again and they returned to their place. No ebb tide is so obedient as this, even though they are timed by the movement of the earth and the moon. This was a fitting end to a true miracle.

It must have been a long night for all concerned, but all would be freed from the anxiety of its events. Israel could camp on the other side of the sea, resting and rejoicing in the

astonishing deliverance they had participated in. The Egyptians on the other hand would face a different type of rest... that of death.

When they are awakened from that, it will be for judgment and condemnation. That day is still ahead, but it is as sure to come as was the complete deliverance which Israel was granted.

²⁷ (con't) **while the Egyptians were fleeing into it.**

This isn't the best translation of these words. The idea is that they were fleeing from the sea, not into it. The waters simply caught up with them and overwhelmed them. With a slight change or two, these words could be tidied up a bit. The idea when translating words like this is to add clarity of thought, not confusion. Read several other translations and you will see a better rendering of it.

²⁷ (con't) **So the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.**

Moses was asked to stretch out his hand over the sea in order to bring the waters back to normal. He did as instructed, and yet here it says, "So **the Lord** overthrew the Egyptians." It shows a remarkable harmony between the two descriptions. Moses was given the honor in the sight of his people and yet the Lord is given glory over the entire account.

This is seen repeatedly in the Bible and in church history as well. Billy Graham preached the word of God according to the call of the Lord on his life, and yet it is the Lord who is glorified through the word that has been preached.

There is a harmony between the Lord and His chosen instruments where both are honored. It shows the amazingly gracious nature of the Lord upon those whom He favors.

²⁸ **Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, *and* all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained.**

Flavius Josephus gives his commentary on what happened here –

"Showers of rain also came down from the sky, and dreadful thunders and lightning, with flashes of fire. Thunderbolts also were darted upon them. Nor was there any thing which used to be sent by God upon men, as indications of his wrath, which did not

happen at this time, for a dark and dismal night oppressed them. And thus did all these men perish, so that there was not one man left to be a messenger of this calamity to the rest of the Egyptians.” Flavius Josephus

Many scholars claim that only the chariots and horsemen went into the sea and they argue over the wording of the Hebrew which seems to say this. They say that both the army and Pharaoh were actually excluded from the destruction of the waters, but this is probably incorrect.

The psalms seem to show that Pharaoh and all his army were destroyed. Psalm 106 says that the waters covered their enemies so that not one of them was left. Psalm 136 says that the Lord overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea. Therefore, there is no reason to doubt that this is not the case.

The reason why this is relevant is because of what it pictures later in the Bible. During the tribulation period, Daniel explains what will come concerning the antichrist –

“At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm *them*, and pass through. ⁴¹ He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many *countries* shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon. ⁴² He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. ⁴³ He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the Libyans and Ethiopians *shall follow* at his heels. ⁴⁴ But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many. ⁴⁵ And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.” Daniel 11:40-45

Like Pharaoh and his armies, the anti-Christ will also go out to destroy and to annihilate, but he too will come to his end, and no one will help him. Revelation gives more insights into his end –

“And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. ²⁰ Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and

those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. ²¹ And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.” Revelation 19:19-21

In Chapter 20 of Revelation, the end of the devil is noted with his being cast into the Lake of Fire. Like the destruction of Pharaoh, both the anti-Christ and the devil will be destroyed while the people of the Lord will be saved. History repeats itself, and each of those who think they can defeat God’s plans is, in the end, himself defeated. As Matthew Henry says about this –

“Men will not be convinced, till it is too late, that those who meddle with God’s people, meddle to their own hurt.” Matthew Henry

This is a truth which will be seen more and more in the world as we head into the end times, both those who persecute Christ’s church, and those who come after His people Israel, will find that their actions ultimately harm themselves.

²⁹ But the children of Israel had walked on dry *land* in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

Repeated again in order to close out the chiasm of these verses, we are told here that Israel was kept safe on *yabashah* or perfectly dried ground and yet right in the midst of the sea. All the while the waters remained a wall on their right hand and on their left.

*Judgment will come on all who have not received Jesus
God has offered terms of peace, but the time will run out
It is up to each and every one of us
To receive Him and His forgiveness, by faith – having no doubt*

*For those who fail to take hold of this offer
Only judgment and death is the option that remains
By nailed scarred hands the Lord has made the proffer
No other way will allow for the heavenly gains*

*And so learn the lesson of the armies of Pharaoh
Call out to Jesus and be saved by His blood*

*The path to the other side is exceedingly narrow
For those who refuse, over them will come the destructive flood*

III. So the People feared the Lord (verses 30 & 31)

³⁰ So the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians,

Though they had observed the Passover and began their exodus from Egypt, it cannot be said that the Israelites were actually saved until this day. Both the Passover and the exodus implied that they were saved, but until they passed through the bonds of the Red Sea and the enemies of Israel were destroyed, there was still a work of salvation ahead of them.

And this is exactly where we are right now. We have observed our Passover in the death of Christ as noted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 5. We are living in our Feast of Unleavened bread as he notes there as well, but we are still in this body awaiting our final deliverance which he speaks of in 1 Corinthians 15.

We are still living in the land of Egypt and we are affected by the spirit of Pharaoh as the world comes against us, but the Lord is with us and our day of deliverance is ahead. This is why Paul so often writes of our salvation as a done deal and yet he writes of it as a future event as well.

In the Lord it is a done deal, but as we wait on the Lord, we look forward to a future event with eager anticipation. This day of being saved out of the hand of the Egyptians was on the seventh day after their departure. It is the day the Lord set aside as their holy convocation to end the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Our day of departure is pictured in that feast, and may it be soon for all of the people of the Lord.

³⁰ (con't) and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.

Like salvation, judgment belongs to the Lord. There are those who are His, and there are those who are not. The world needs to wake up to the fact that these ancient stories are given to show us what lies ahead, not just what happened in the past.

Death will come on a global scale someday for those who have harmed and harassed the Lord's people and for those who have failed to give Him the glory He is due. According to Isaiah, man will become rarer than fine gold on that day.

In this verse, the fact that the dead Egyptians were seen on the seashore provides another level of credibility to the eyewitness nature of the account. It made enough of an impression upon Moses to include the fact which would otherwise be omitted by a later writer of the account. In an interesting portion of the writings of Josephus concerning this event, we read these words –

“On the next day Moses gathered together the weapons of the Egyptians, which were brought to the camp of the Hebrews by the current of the sea, and the force of the winds resisting it; and he conjectured that this also happened by Divine Providence, that so they might not be destitute of weapons. So when he had ordered the Hebrews to arm themselves with them, he led them to Mount Sinai, in order to offer sacrifice to God, and to render oblations for the salvation of the multitude, as he was charged to do beforehand.” Flavius Josephus

The reason we should pay heed to this as probably factual is that in the coming pages of the Bible, Israel will go to battle and they will continue in battles until and after they enter into the Land of Promise. It is these weapons which they would be able to use during those battles.

³¹ Thus Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt;

This sentence must certainly be a fitting summary of the entire period of Moses' leadership, from the time he first presented himself to them in Exodus 4 until this moment when the multitude of Egypt's army lay dead at their feet.

Moses had shown them the three signs given to him by the Lord at the burning bush. He had taken them through 10 plagues which utterly destroyed the land. He had marched them out under the full moon while cries filled the homes of the Egyptians.

And yet, they had waffled, they had lost faith, and they had even cast accusations at Moses and thus implicitly upon the Lord. But with the parting of the Red Sea to deliver them and then its closing to destroy Egypt, they saw the “great work” or as the Hebrew reads, *ha'yad ha'gedolah* – “the mighty hand” of the Lord.

And with the events they saw, a new resoluteness came to them...

³¹ (fin) **so the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.**

The “fear” spoken of here is not fear as in dread. Rather, it is a reverential fear. This idea of fearing the Lord in this reverential way is repeated numerous times the Bible. It is saying, “I know He loves me, but I know that His grace and mercy are unmerited. I receive that and return reverence to Him.”

It is like our own father. Even if we know he loves us, we will fear to let him down through disobedience. If we do, we would shame the one who loves us. This is the attitude that the Israelites now feel. They have previously let down both the Lord and Moses, but now they have learned to fear the Lord.

Further, they have come to believe in Him. Not only is He given the reverential fear of their hearts, but they have come to know that when He speaks, His words are true and reliable; they can be counted on. Likewise, because Moses is his servant, they have come to know that they can believe him as well.

Before, the two were mentally disconnected by the Israelites. The Lord was “a god” to them and Moses was a person claiming to represent Him, whether that was the case or not. Now, Yehovah is “the God” to them and Moses is His representative.

The entire process has been one which was intended to bring about this result. If only the people would stay as resolute in their thinking at this high point in their history at all other times. But Israel, like many today, believed for a while and then fell away. What we need is to ground our belief deeply in our souls so that we never fail to trust the Lord at all times.

But all trust must have a starting point. And maybe you have never taken the time to simply trust Jesus to deliver you from your present predicament. If not, today’s passage is simply a small reflection of a much greater story of redemption, one which you may participate in as well. And all it takes is a simple act of faith.

This is even what the ancients were noted for. In the great hall of fame of faith in the Bible, Hebrews 11, we are told that stepping onto a path in the middle of the Red Sea took real faith –

“By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry *land*, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned.” Hebrews 11:29

In this act, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10 that Israel received their baptism –

“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ² all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea...” 1 Corinthians 10:1, 2

If you haven't yet placed your faith in Christ Jesus and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, let me tell you why you should and how you can, even right now...

Closing Verse: *“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Colossians 1:13, 14*

Just so you know. Another parting of waters is anticipated in Israel's future. Isaiah tells us about it –

“The Lord will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt;
With His mighty wind He will shake His fist over the River,
And strike it in the seven streams,
And make *men* cross over dry-shod.

¹⁶ There will be a highway for the remnant of His people
Who will be left from Assyria,
As it was for Israel
In the day that he came up from the land of Egypt.” Isaiah 11:15, 16

Great stuff from a great God!

Next Week: Exodus 15:1-10 (The Song of Moses, The Song at the Sea, Part I) (42nd Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

So the People Feared the Lord

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea
And the Lord caused the sea to go back as if derided

By a strong east wind all that night, one so mighty
And made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided

So the children of Israel went
Into the midst of the sea on the dry ground
And the waters were a wall to them, one heaven sent
On their right hand and on their left, waters all around

And the Egyptians pursued and went after them
Into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen

Now it came to pass, in the morning watch
That the Lord looked down upon the army
Of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud
And He brought the army of the Egyptians some real harm
(Yes, I made that word up)

And He took off their chariot wheels
So that they drove them with difficulty
And the Egyptians said,
"From the face of Israel, let us flee

The Lord for them against the Egyptians He fights
For them this is their most terrifying of nights
Then the Lord said to Moses
"Stretch out your hand over the sea
That the waters may come back upon the Egyptians
On their chariots, and on their horsemen, so let it be
And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea
And when the morning appeared
The sea returned to its full depth
While the Egyptians were fleeing away, its waters over them reared

So the Lord overthrew the Egyptians completely
There it happened in the midst of the sea

Then the waters returned and covered the chariots
The horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh
That came into the sea after them
Not so much as one of them remained to shoot an arrow

But the children of Israel had walked
On dry land in the midst of the sea
And the waters were a wall to them
On their right hand and on their left, protecting them completely

So the Lord saved Israel that day
Out of the Egyptian's hand
And Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore... hooray!
A mighty deliverance; ever so grand

Thus Israel saw the great work, promised by His word
Which the Lord had done in Egypt as the account closes
So the people feared the Lord
And believed the Lord and His servant Moses

What will it take for you to believe?
What is it that you have to see?
In order for the Lord Jesus to receive
When will you say, "It is sufficient for me?"

God has shown us so much love and care
Throughout the world His power is seen
His wisdom is on display everywhere
In the skies of blue and in the fields of green

And even more sure is His prophetic word
It is there for us to pick up, study, and believe
It tells us about our great and awesome Lord
Please search it out and then Jesus receive

He is coming again to bring His people home
To a place where there shall no more tears be
We will be content, never from His presence to roam
But walking in His glory for all eternity

Let us pursue Him now and give Him praise from our heart
Let it be today! Yes, it is a good day for us to start

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 15:1-10

(THE SONG OF MOSES - THE SONG AT THE SEA, PART I)

I generally have a pretty good idea of how many verses I will use for any given sermon. I look over the passage, find a logical place to stop, and then start preparing those verses to delight your ears with treasures from the word. And so, on the 13th of July, which is the day I started typing this one, I chose Exodus 15:1-19.

Mom had come by that morning to pick someone up and take them to the airport and I told her that today would be a tough sermon to type. She blew me off, knowing that it would go fine, but I told her, "It's the song of Moses. It's in poem form. I'm not sure what I'll get out of it."

I started organizing it into sections – I chose four. That is rare, but four sections would mean three poems, one before each subsequent section. That would take up a lot of space to make a full length sermon. But by the time I finished the first verse, I had to cut off verses 11-19 and cut it from four sections to two.

The Song of Moses has taken on a whole new meaning to me because of what is tucked away in it. I hope you will enjoy this first half of it as much as I enjoyed studying it. And be advised – this sermon is not 22 or 23 pages long as normal... it is 25.

Text Verse: *"But I have trusted in Your mercy;
My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.
⁶I will sing to the Lord,
Because He has dealt bountifully with me." Psalm 13:5, 6*

David said that his heart would rejoice in the Lord's salvation. Moses says something similar in His song today. I would trust that by the time we finish, you will rejoice in Him as well. Just hearing the words of the Bible come alive as they do in this song is enough to make me want to jump out of my seat.

Great stuff from a wonderful God to the objects of His affection! It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Lord is His Name (verse 1-5)

¹Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying:

Although not the first poetry recorded in the Bible, it is the first song recorded here. In fact the verb *sheer* or “sing” is used for the first time in Scripture in these words. And not only is this the first song in the Bible, it is also by some hundreds of years the first recorded song in human history.

The structure of it will be followed closely many times in Scripture after this and, though I’m no specialist on these things, it apparently “bears a close resemblance to the Egyptian religious poetry, with which Moses—and probably no other Israelite of the time—would have been familiar from his early training” (Ellicott).

Because of this, there is absolutely no reason to assume that anyone other than Moses is the true author of the song. And yet, he humbly doesn’t take credit for it. Instead he simply says that he and the children of Israel sang it to the Lord.

The song is written entirely in hemistiches, meaning half-lines, which is the normal form of Hebrew poetry. The poem actually divides in a few ways. The first is that from verses 1-12, the words are retrospective. They look *back* on the deliverance of the Israelites by the Lord.

From verses 13-18, they are prospective, meaning that they look *forward* to the future results of their deliverance. And yet, even though future, they are written in a past-tense, mission-accomplished style.

But, the first retrospective section logically divides into three subsections – from verses 1-5, then verses 6-10, and then verses 11-12. Each of these divisions begins with a note of acknowledgement to the Lord and each ends with a note of judgment on the Lord’s enemies.

But there is more to consider than just the song before us. Even at this early point of chapter 15, and without having entered into the song itself, it needs to be noted that this song is later comparable to the song of the redeemed of the Tribulation Period.

Thus this is a complete confirmation of the many previous sermons which equated Pharaoh first with the devil and later as the antichrist of the end times; Egypt with the world; and the Lord, Yehovah with the Lord Jesus.

Therefore, all three redemptive scenarios follow logically – Israel from Egypt, the church from the world, and the tribulation saints from the Tribulation Period. This Song of Moses is in Exodus 15 and the last is found in Revelation 15 – a nice pattern having been established between the two 15s. There we read these words –

“And I saw *something* like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark *and* over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. ³They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying:

‘Great and marvelous *are* Your works,
Lord God Almighty!

Just and true *are* Your ways,
O King of the saints!

⁴Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name?

For *You* alone *are* holy.

For all nations shall come and worship before You,

For Your judgments have been manifested.” Revelation 15:2-4

The words of this Revelation song follow the same pattern as that of the Exodus song. They open with acknowledgement to the Lord of His greatness, and they end with a note that the judgments of the Lord have been manifest.

Further, in these two songs we can see that the mark of the Passover is to be equated with refusal to take the mark of the beast, standing by the Red Sea is to be equated with standing by the sea of glass, and the timbrels of the women of Exodus 15:20 are to be equated with the “harps of God” in Revelation 15:2.

Throughout the Bible, we are progressively being shown what will come about in the future by looking at what has occurred in the past. And in that progressive revelation is the truth that God has slowly and methodically revealed Jesus as the Lord who is to be exalted above all else. If we fail to see this, or if we simply refuse to acknowledge it, it is to our own detriment.

The songs of the Bible are recorded to show us the very heart of God in how we are to honor Him, exalt Him, and glorify Him. This being the first, we should attend to it carefully and completely, savoring each line as a cherished possession which will lead us to the very throne of God and the Lamb. And so let us look into this first such expression of the magnificence of God’s redemptive workings with a sense of delight and joy.

1 (con't) **"I will sing to the Lord,**

ashira l'Yehovah – This begins the first subsection which recounts the works of the Lord. It is individual and personal rather than as a group – “I will sing.” It is the true calling of each individual within the whole to acknowledge the Lord and sing to Him. Some of us, like me, should probably sing quietly as to not hurt the ears of the Lord or our fellow man, but let us sing! And the reason why is...

1 (con't) **For He has triumphed gloriously!**

ki-gaoh gaah – literally, “He is gloriously glorious,” or “He is exceedingly exalted.” This word, *gaah*, is used only 7 times in the Bible and the first four of them are found in this chapter. The root of the word means “to rise.” For emphasis, the word is repeated twice here *gaoh gaah*. It is first in the finite form and then in the infinitive absolute.

The idea here is that the Lord has “risen up like a wave” (HAW) over His enemies. Therefore, I can't see any reason not to think of these words as, “He rising has risen.” It would then make a perfect picture of, and parallel to, exactly what Christ did when He triumphed over His foes in the resurrection.

1 (con't) **The horse and its rider**

sus v'rokevoh – The “horse and its rider” implies the chariots of the Egyptians. They followed the Israelites in but they were destroyed.

1 (con't) **He has thrown into the sea!**

ramah b'yam – This is a contrast to the “rising like a wave” from a moment ago. He rose like a wave; they were thrown into the sea. It is reflective of the words of Paul which say—

“When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, ¹⁴ having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He

made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.”
Colossians 2:13-15 (NASB)

²The Lord *is* my strength and song,

azzi v'zimrat Yah – “My strength and my song is Yah.” There is a lot in these few words for us to pull out. Instead of the full name Yehovah, this has the contracted form Yah. It is the first time this poetic form is used in the Bible and it was used to maintain the rhythm of the words.

But, this name, Yah, is not just a nickname or a reason for a poetic matching of sounds. In itself it is a full name. We know this because it is used in conjunction with the full name Yehovah by Isaiah on two separate instances. One is found in Isaiah 12 and it is almost a mirror of the words we now see here in Exodus –

“Behold, God *is* my salvation,
I will trust and not be afraid;
'For Yah, the Lord, *is* my strength and song;
He also has become my salvation.” Isaiah 12:2

Adam Clarke notes that the name Yah indicates “He who Is, simply, absolutely, and independently.” It is the very basis of the name “I AM” and it is what Jesus was certainly alluding to in John 8 when He said these words –

“Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” John 8:58

Despite this being the first use of Yah as a name, the compound form was used earlier in Genesis 22:2 in the name Moriah, or “Bitterness of Yah.” It is also the form of His wonderful name that we use every time we say “Hallelujah” or “Praise Yah.”

Moses acknowledges here that it is Yah who is *azzi v'zimrat* “my strength and my song.” And if He is our strength and our song, then that will naturally lead to Him being something else...

² (con't) **And He has become my salvation;**

v'hi-li lishua – “And he has been to me my salvation.” The Lord is our strength, our song, and our salvation. Nothing could be more wonderful to consider. We could pull up

a thousand verses on this concept. And as you read the Bible, take time to ponder them as your eyes alight upon them.

When we are weak, He is our strength. When we are downtrodden, He becomes the song on our lips to restore our souls. When we are overjoyed with His goodness, He is our song of praise and thanks. And when we need a Savior, He is there to save. This is now the third of seventy-seven times in the Bible that the word *yeshuah* is used. The first was in Genesis 49 during Jacob's blessing of his sons. After blessing Dan and before blessing Gad, he cried out –

“I have waited for your salvation, O Lord!” Genesis 49:18

Jacob anticipated Yeshua. It was next used just before the parting of the waters when Moses said –

“Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord” Exodus 14:13

Moses promised Yeshua. Salvation would come and it would come from the Lord. And now in this verse, it says that Yeshua had come. There is a logical progression of the introduction of this word, Yeshua, to show us the coming of Christ – He is anticipated, He is promised, and He has come. It is a picture of the incarnation.

In essence, the words say, “My strength and my song is Yah, and He has become to me my Jesus.” It is ancient reference to what the Lord would do in history. He would step out of His eternal realm and become the Man, Yeshua; the Lord Jesus.

Along with Isaiah 12:2, these words are also quoted one more time in Psalm 118:14. We are being given, time and again, hidden references to what God would do in the sending of His Son to redeem man. The Lord is Yah and Yah is Jesus. Such is the wisdom of God to show us these things in advance!

² (con't) **He is my God, and I will praise Him;**

zeh eli v'anvehu – The term “my God” or *Eli* is used here for the first time in Scripture. It is a personal touch acknowledging that the Lord is God and not only “a god,” but “my God,” and because this is so, *v'anvehu* – “and I will praise Him.

This word, *navah*, is only used two times in the Bible and it means “home.” And so some older translations say “...and I will prepare Him a habitation.” However, the root of the

word means “beautiful” and so other translations say something like “I will praise Him” or “I will glorify him.”

This is most probably the correct sense because the poem is constructed of parallel verses. The next portion says, “I will exalt Him” and so in order to be parallel, the words “I will praise Him” are certainly a better choice than “I will build Him a home.”

² (con’t) **My father’s God, and I will exalt Him.**

elohe avi v’aromemenhu – “My father’s God” means “the God of my ancestors.” In other words, it is speaking of the everlasting nature of God who was there before and who is there now. He is the God his fathers called on and now it is his honor to call on this same God. This takes us right back to the words of Exodus 3 –

“Then He said, ‘Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand *is* holy ground.’⁶ Moreover He said, ‘*I am* the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’”

-Exodus 3:5, 6

This same God who received the praises of the fathers is the God who Moses and all of the children of Israel now exalt. There is no gap in the praise of God from generation to generation. When Jesus appeared to His people, His praises continued on in a new group of people who are sons of Abraham because they possess the faith of Abraham. Paul writes this to us in Galatians 3 –

“Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying*, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.”⁹ So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.”

-Galatians 3:7-9

³ **The Lord *is* a man of war;**

Yehovah ish milkhama – The sappy, impotent picture that modern theologians make concerning God is false. From the beginning to the end, God is the one who takes to the battlefield and engages in the battle. It is He who receives the victory as His enemies are destroyed. In the previous chapter, we read these words –

“The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” Exodus 14:14

In seemingly countless times throughout Scripture, the Lord is shown to be a mighty warrior and one who doesn't shrink from the battle. In Isaiah 42 we read this –

“The Lord shall go forth like a mighty man;
He shall stir up *His* zeal like a man of war.
He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud;
He shall prevail against His enemies.” Isaiah 42:13

And in Isaiah 63 there is a description of the Lord that is so striking and terrible that if its words are properly considered, they would fill the mind with absolute horror at what they picture. There the prophet writes this most vivid description –

“Who *is* this who comes from Edom,
With dyed garments from Bozrah,
This *One who is* glorious in His apparel,
Traveling in the greatness of His strength?—
'I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.'
² Why *is* Your apparel red,
And Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?
³ 'I have trodden the winepress alone,
And from the peoples no one *was* with Me.
For I have trodden them in My anger,
And trampled them in My fury;
Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments,
And I have stained all My robes.
⁴ For the day of vengeance *is* in My heart,
And the year of My redeemed has come.
⁵ I looked, but *there was* no one to help,
And I wondered
That *there was* no one to uphold;
Therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me;
And My own fury, it sustained Me.
⁶ I have trodden down the peoples in My anger,
Made them drunk in My fury,
And brought down their strength to the earth.'” Isaiah 63:1-6

And lest we make the same error as many modern church-folk that this is just the “wrathful God of the Old Testament” and not the same as the “peaceful and loving God of the New” we have to see the fulfillment of Isaiah’s words in the book of Revelation –

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³ He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵ Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶ And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written:

KING OF KINGS AND
LORD OF LORDS.
Revelation 19:11-16

The terrifying vision of the Lord that Isaiah saw is actually fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It is He who will stomp out the blood of His enemies, spattering His garments with their blood in the full righteous rage of God who defends His people. Surely the words *Yehovah ish milkhama* are true – Yehovah is a Man of war.

^{3 (con’t)} **The Lord is His name.**

Yehovah shemo – It is actually unfortunate that the name Yehovah is replaced with “the Lord” in most translations of this poem. We probably use the term “the Lord” to show the obvious connection between the two testaments of Yehovah the Lord and Jesus the Lord. However, we lose some of the sense of the poetry when we substitute the name with the title.

Yehovah is a proper noun, not a title, and so the words *Yehovah shemo* means, “Yehovah is His name.” He is the One who appeared to Moses at the burning bush and explained to him His very nature by the giving of the name.

In our sermon on Exodus 3:14, we went through many long pages of explanation concerning this divine name. Without going into so much detail, we should recall some

of its significance now because Moses is tying the victory of the Lord over His enemies to the One whom he met at the bush.

The name Yehovah which is often translated as LORD is derived from the word *ehyeh*. It means to fall out, to come to pass, to become, or to be. In this, God confirmed that He was to be known to His people by the name Yehovah specifically.

This name Yehovah carries just that meaning – Being, He Is, or He Will Cause to Be. Abraim notes that to a Hebrew audience the name Yehovah may have looked very much like “He Who Causes ‘That Which Is’ To Be.” As He is uncaused, then all things that exist were caused by Him.

He then is the First Cause of all things; the unmoved Mover; and the Giver of existence. In that He is self-existent, and that all things come from Him, then that means that all things are actually encompassed by Him. There is no place where we are, or could be, which is outside of His Being.

The name I AM, or its form Yehovah, implies an absolute uniqueness. If He is the Giver of existence, then there is none other that gives existence and therefore none other like Him. The name also implies eternity.

He is outside of time, having created it, and therefore though He interacts with it, it has no effect on Him, rather it is affected by Him. Yehovah is His name and the promises which He makes will never fail to come to pass. Moses realized this in his words of this song. Yehovah promised to bring Israel out and Yehovah delivered. Yehovah is His name.

⁴ Pharaoh’s chariots and his army He has cast into the sea;

markevot parah v’khelow yarah b’yam – The word used here for “cast” means something like “to hurl.” It is a verb which often is used to describe “the hurling of a javelin or the shooting of an arrow” (Pulpit). Such is the nature of the mighty Man of war described in the previous verse. By His hand, he took them and cast them to their deaths – both chariots and army in one fell swoop. But for intensification of the imagery, Moses continues...

^{4 (con’t)} His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea.

umiv-khar shalishav tubbehu b’yam suph – Not only were the lesser warriors destroyed, but even the chosen captains. The word *miv-khar* means “the choicest.” It is the same as

the word used in Genesis 23:6 when Abraham looked for a tomb for Sarah. At that time, the Hittites said –

“Hear us, my lord: You *are* a mighty prince among us; bury your dead in **the choicest** of our burial places. None of us will withhold from you his burial place, that you may bury your dead.” Genesis 23:6

The word now shows that those who were personally selected by Pharaoh himself as the finest of all of the armies were not spared. They along with the lowest of foot soldiers all perished. If you have been paying attention to these four verses, you may have seen the amplification of the scope of the victory.

It started with the general words “horse and rider” in verse 1. From that, verse 4 broke it down into first his chariots, then his army, and then his chosen captains. It seems Moses was purposely raising the intensity of the words as if he were stepping up to a new level with each description.

The word translated as “drowned” here is *taba*. It is the first of ten uses of it in the Bible. It specifically means to “sink.” It is the same word which is next used in 1 Samuel 17 when the rock from David’s sling *sunk* into the forehead of Goliath. Down went the choice captains of Egypt – a watery grave was their final lot.

With such a massive scope of destruction, particularly the choicest leaders having been removed, Moses could actually have turned around and probably subdued all of Egypt. But the sea behind them was closed and the Lord had no intention of leading them around it and back into that miserable place again.

Instead, He wanted them to share in His glory in another way. In fact, Deuteronomy 17 says that He instructed them to *never* return that way again. Israel was *never* to return to Egypt; we are *never* to return to the world of sin. Jesus Christ has utterly defeated the foe who stands against us, and so why would we go again to trust him or ally with him? Instead, we are to take a new direction and always follow the Lord where He goes.

One final note on this verse is that this destruction occurred in the Red Sea – *yam suph*. In an earlier sermon, I explained the meaning of *suph* as a noun means “reeds” but as a verb it means “end.” The verb is translated elsewhere as “to be swept away.” Thus, there may be somewhat of a play on words here. The armies of Pharaoh sunk in the sea which consumes. They were swept away.

⁵The depths have covered them;

tehōmōt̄ yekas-yumu – The word for “depths” is a word often used in a poetic sense as if an unfathomable abyss. One of the most memorable uses in Scripture is found in the 42nd Psalm –

“**Deep** calls unto **deep** at the noise of Your waterfalls;
All Your waves and billows have gone over me.” Psalm 42:7

The tense of the words in Hebrew are as if the floods were covering them in Moses’ mind *as* the poem was being written – “...the floods covering them...”

⁵(con’t) They sank to the bottom like a stone.

yaredu vimsolowt kemow-aben – “They went down into the abyss like a stone.” The word “bottom” or “abyss” is different from “the depths.” Taken together, the two lines read, “The floods covering them, they went down into the abyss like a stone.” It is a great mental parallel to what we read about the antichrist of the future –

“And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. ²⁰ Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. ²¹ And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.” Revelation 19:19-21

The Lord judged Pharaoh and his armies and the Lord will judge the antichrist and his. The finality of the words is given to show the terrible end to these wicked foes of the Lord and of his people.

This ends the first subdivision of the poem with the words of judgment upon Pharaoh and his host. It is at this time in the song that the women would probably pick up the refrain found recorded at the end of the song in verse 21 –

“Sing to the Lord,
For He has triumphed gloriously!

The horse and its rider
He has thrown into the sea!"

When the refrain was finished, Moses and the men would continue with the next stanza.

*Great and glorious is the Lord our God
He has cast the horse and the rider into the sea
He is my strength and my song in this life as I trod
And He has even become Salvation to me*

*He is my God and I will praise Him forever
My father's God is He, the One who ever lives
He is a Man of war, from the battle retreating never
Yehovah is His name, and upon us His favor He gives*

*He is the same One who then stepped out of the eternal realm
Uniting with flesh and living as a Man to redeem us
He is our Mighty God! Ever at the ship's helm
There to bring us to our heavenly shore; He is Jesus!*

II. The Right Hand of the Lord (verses 6-10)

⁶“Your right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power;

yeminikha Yehovah nedari bakoakh – This is a second anthropomorphism used to describe the Lord. The first was in verse 3 when He was called a Man of war. Now an attribute of a man is given to Him – the right hand.

It is the first time this phrase is used in connection with the Lord in the Bible, but it will fill Scripture from here on out, especially in the psalms and in the prophets. The New Testament will continue on with the analogy as well. Also, the word “glorious,” which in Hebrew is *adar*, is used for the first of only three times in the Bible. Some translations use “majestic” to translate this word, showing the superlative nature of the right hand of the Lord.

The right hand of the Lord is the place of power, of favor, of divine blessing, and of divine judgment. It is expressive of the finest qualities of tender care, or the harshness

of the outpouring of wrath. How the right hand is used in relation to the subject is what determines what the outcome for the subject will be.

It is a lesson from the Bible. We should consider being on the good side of the Lord before the hand is raised. In the case of His enemies, the consequences of being in His disfavor are realized in the following words...

⁶ (con't) **Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy in pieces.**

yeminikah Yehovah tirats owyev – The word translated as “dashed” here is *raats*. It means “to afflict” and it is only used twice in the Bible. The other time is in Judges 10 –

“So the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon. ⁸ From that year they **harassed** and oppressed the children of Israel for eighteen years—all the children of Israel who *were* on the other side of the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, in Gilead.” Judges 10:7, 8

Knowing the human heart, and seeing it daily in the treatment of people by, for example the muslims of today, we can know for sure that “dashed” is a good word. The Israelites were more than harassed. They were crushed. In like manner, the Egyptians were literally crushed by the right hand of the Lord.

Translators vary on what verbs to use in this verse – “has become glorious/has dashed the enemy,” “is glorious/dashes the enemy,” and so on. The ESV skips the verb in the first part and makes the second verb present tense. In doing so it gives what I think is proper sense of the verse –

“Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power, your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy.” ESV

The verb is in the present but it is of continuance. His hand wasn't just glorious in power in the past, it is simply glorious in power. And Moses wasn't just looking back on what happened, but to what the Lord is capable of at all times. He shatters the enemy as the enemy comes against Him – past, present, and future; always.

⁷ **And in the greatness of Your excellence
You have overthrown those who rose against You;**

u'verov geownkha taharos gamekha – “Your excellence” is another word used for the first time in the Bible – *ga'own*. And it is immediately followed up in the Hebrew with another first-time word *haras*, or “overthrown.”

It is a completely different word than that used in chapter 14 where it says the armies of Pharaoh were overthrown. This word gives the idea of picking something up and shattering it to pieces, like a pot of clay being smashed on the ground.

Moses is holding nothing back as time and time again he introduces new or superlative words to describe the Lord and to convey the magnificence of what his eyes had beheld. This Song of Moses is merely the beginning of such majestic poetry about the Lord, but it is an amazing start to it.

The Lord in all of His greatness and majesty overthrows those who rise against Him. Like the previous verse, the verbs indicate something on-going. This is not merely a description of what occurred, but it is an acknowledgement of what occurs in connection with the work of the Lord.

^{7 (con't)} **You sent forth Your wrath;
It consumed them like stubble.**

teshalah kharonekha yokelemow kaqash – Again, a new word is introduced into the Bible, *kharon*, or “wrath.” It literally says, “Your burning.” It is as if a fire went out to consume them, hence the words, “It consumed them like stubble.”

Stubble in this verse is the same word, *qash*, that was first introduced in Exodus 5 when the people went out looking for stubble to make bricks. That which was useless was used in the brick-making process and those who are useless to the Lord are burnt up like stubble in the eternal fires of judgment.

⁸ **And with the blast of Your nostrils
The waters were gathered together;**

u'veruakh appekha neermu mayim – The imagery here is astonishing. It is as if the Lord put His face down to the water and blew with his nostrils, causing a mighty wind to drive the waters where He wished. With the mighty east wind, the waters were gathered and a highway was made.

The word for “gathered” is *aram*. It is used only here in the entire Bible. It comes from a primitive root meaning “to pile up” or “to gather together.” Moses is using exceptional words to describe the most exceptional of events. The fact that he uses a word such as this shows that this was not a mere ebb tide, but a truly miraculous event which they beheld. And the imagery continues...

**8 (con't) The floods stood upright like a heap;
The depths congealed in the heart of the sea.**

nit-sevu kemow-ned nozelim qaphe-u tehomot b'lev-yam – Again, three words are used here for the first time in the Bible. *Ned* or “heap,” *nazal*, meaning “to flow,” and *qapha*, meaning “to congeal” have all been introduced into the poem and into Scripture.

Under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, Moses’ words reflect the magnificence of the event. The waters were brought to a state of animation as if they were in fear. They stood up at attention as if facing a drill sergeant, and poetically they were said to congeal to a hardened state as if blasted until frozen by a polar wind.

The elements reacted to the prompting of the Lord in order for the people of the Lord to pass through. And surely, no bride ever traversed down the hallway of a church with awed eyes gazing upon her as the people of God did as they passed through the admiring waters of the Red Sea. There went Israel, marching towards their marriage to Lord.

**9 The enemy said, ‘I will pursue,
I will overtake,
I will divide the spoil;**

amar oyev erdoph assig ahalek shalal – In what is a departure from the form of poetry thus far expressed, Moses enters directly into the thoughts of the enemy with words which are both extremely beautiful and yet terrifying in their original intent.

He makes abrupt and almost gasping utterances, leaving off the word “and” in between each. It is as if the intent of mind in the Egyptians was set on the goal, leaving no time to even coherently tie the thoughts together.

They were eager to regain the plunder of which they had been plundered. They were eager to take the flocks which would replace those lost in the plagues. They were eager

to steal away the women, kill the men, and enslave the children. “I will pursue. I will overtake. I will divide the spoil.”

It is the most magnificent of poetry because we can enter into thoughts and feelings which had enticed otherwise rational men to go between walls of water which were as unnatural as a glowing green sky or cat which could fly. In complete disregard to the God who had proven Himself greater than any of their gods, they have become consumed with self. I will, I will, I will...

⁹ (con't) **My desire shall be satisfied on them.**

**I will draw my sword,
My hand shall destroy them.'**

timlaemow naphshi ariq harbi towrishemow yadi – The maniacal thoughts of the enemy continue... “My, I, My!” My desire – the lusts of my angry and coveting heart will be turned against them. I will draw out my sword from its place of rest and I will loose it upon the Hebrews. It will leave its sheath at my side and find a new place of rests in their hearts.

Those who have destroyed my firstborn will be paid double and more. They shall be utterly destroyed by the power of *my* hand and the rage flowing through *my* veins. The terrifying thoughts made them ready to act as they drew nearer with each step through the long tunnel of water. But those angry, lusting thoughts became their own undoing. The Lord was ready to act and the end drew near. Anger would be replaced with horror...

¹⁰ **You blew with Your wind,
The sea covered them;
They sank like lead in the mighty waters.**

nashaphta v'ruakh-a kisamow yam tsalalu ka-o-pheret b'mayim addirim – The first wind was one of divine favor upon Israel. It parted the waters and it brought them out of bondage. The second wind was of divine wrath and it closed the mountainous passage, destroying the afflicters of His people. They were covered in the waters and started their journey to the bottom of the sea.

The word “sink” here is *tsalal*. This is its only use in Bible. It comes from a root meaning to tumble down or settle by a waving motion. However, two other identical words used

elsewhere mean 1) grow dark, and 2) tingle. And so it could be that the intent is that they darkened the waters as they sank, and all that was left was a gurgling sound. The word *ophereth* or “lead” is used for the first time in the Bible here. To me, it is striking that instead of again saying they sank like a stone, lead came to Moses’ mind. He is celebrating on the shore of the Red Sea with stones as far as the eye could see, and yet he says “lead” instead of “stone.”

Two things come to mind because of this. First, Moses was aware of the dense nature of lead. The word shows intent and it shows high intelligence concerning its nature. Secondly, there must be another connection for the Lord to so inspire him to use this word. The word for lead, *ophereth*, comes from another word, *aphar*, which means “dust” due to its dusty color.

It is the word used at the creation of man when God took the dust of the earth and created him by blowing the breath of life into his nostrils. Now Moses saw these men of dust, created by God, sinking as if lead, there to return to the dust from which they came. The breath of God gave, and the breath of God has taken away.

It is the most beautiful of symbolism that God is absolutely sovereign. Even a word such as “lead” instead of “stone” shows immense wisdom in the construction of the greater magnificent themes found in the Bible. What a book!

And one last word in today’s verses is used for the first time. It is used to describe the waters – *addirim*. *Addir* means “majestic” but here it is plural, *addirim* – “majestics.” It is “the mighty proof of the Creator’s glory which is furnished by the waves as they rush majestically along.” Keil and Delitzsch

Like noble warriors having won a great battle, the waves roooooo along proudly, having prevailed over the foes of the people of God. Every word has been carefully selected by the great man of God while under inspiration of the Spirit to delight the senses and to show forth the majesty and splendor of the Lord as He worked His mighty miracle for His redeemed people.

With the ending of this second stanza, Miriam and the women of Israel would have again picked up their timbrels and sang –

“Sing to the Lord,
For He has triumphed gloriously!

The horse and its rider
He has thrown into the sea!" (15:21)

What a marvelous beginning to this most magnificent of songs. What treasure and beauty has been hidden in these words for us to read and to delight in. And if this song was written for the redemption of mere temporary physical life, how much more should we endeavor to sing to the Lord for the redemption of our eternal spiritual souls!

Can we really sit and withhold our joy, praise, and exultation from the Lord knowing that we have crossed over a greater chasm than Israel passing through the Red Sea; knowing that a far greater foe has been defeated for us than a mere army of flesh; and knowing that even now we are seated in the heavenly places with Christ because of what He has done for us?

Sing to the Lord! Surely He has triumphed gloriously! The devil is defeated, eternal life is granted, and we are the redeemed of the Lord! And with the mere possibility that you are listening today and have not yet received Jesus, please let me tell you how you can, even now...

Closing Verse: *"He sent from above, He took me;
He drew me out of many waters.*

*¹⁷ He delivered me from my strong enemy,
From those who hated me,
For they were too strong for me.*

*¹⁸ They confronted me in the day of my calamity,
But the Lord was my support.*

*¹⁹ He also brought me out into a broad place;
He delivered me because He delighted in me." Psalm 18:16-19*

Next Week: Exodus 15:11-21 (The Song of Moses) (The Song at the Sea, Part II)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

I will Sing to the Lord

Then Moses and the children of Israel in joyous praying
Sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying:

“I will sing to the Lord,
For He has triumphed gloriously!
The horse and its rider
He has thrown into the sea!
The Lord *is* my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation;
He *is* my God, and I will praise Him;
My father’s God, and I will exalt Him.
The Lord *is* a man of war;
The Lord *is* His name.
Pharaoh’s chariots and his army He has cast into the sea;
His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea.
The depths have covered them;
They sank to the bottom like a stone.
“Your right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power;
Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy in pieces.
And in the greatness of Your excellence
You have overthrown those who rose against You;
You sent forth Your wrath;
It consumed them like stubble.
And with the blast of Your nostrils
The waters were gathered together;
The floods stood upright like a heap;
The depths congealed in the heart of the sea.
The enemy said, ‘I will pursue,
I will overtake,
I will divide the spoil;
My desire shall be satisfied on them.
I will draw my sword,
My hand shall destroy them.’
You blew with Your wind,

The sea covered them;
They sank like lead in the mighty waters.
How wonderful to read the marvelous song
And to contemplate the greatness of the Lord
May we together for eternal ages sing along
And praise Jesus, God's eternal word

Splendid and wondrous things He has done
He has brought us across the great divide
In our Lord the victory is won
And He has brought us to Himself to forevermore reside

We praise You Lord, Yes! Hear the praises from each of us
We exalt You O God, for our Lord, our Savior, our precious Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 15:11-21 (THE SONG OF MOSES - THE SONG AT THE SEA, PART II)

There is some of the worst artwork on the face of the planet on display in downtown Sarasota. I don't think a person here would disagree with that. Abstract art for the most part isn't art and almost all of the stuff that is along the bay front cannot be called "art" in any real sense.

The metal sculptures would look better as sports cars. Those made of fiberglass would look better as surfboards. And those made of resins of some sort would look better as children's Lego blocks. If any of them are made of wood... well, even a shipping pallet is more pleasing to look at than the junk down there.

But there is one exception, isn't there. Who here knows the name of the one piece of artwork that has true value downtown? That's right... it's the Kissing Statue! It is the one that every person who visits Sarasota loves to see and, of course, it is the only one that the stupid liberals – including the stupid liberal art commission – want to see removed.

And why is this? It is because it brings out the past that they don't want to consider. They hate the nation in which we live and they hate what the Kissing Statue stands for – victory over the enemies of World War II. It was a battle of Good versus Evil and liberals always want evil to win.

Today we will finish the Song of Moses, the Song at the Sea. The Lord won a great victory over Pharaoh and his army. But this victory only pictures a much greater victory in redemptive history. It is the victory over the devil and sin.

Text Verse: *"O Lord God of hosts,
Who is mighty like You, O Lord?
Your faithfulness also surrounds You.
⁹ You rule the raging of the sea;
When its waves rise, You still them." Psalm 89:8, 9*

When we see the Kissing Statue downtown, we have a reminder of the once great thing that America accomplished in their triumph over the evil axis powers which threatened the world. There was joy and jubilation in the land as the people wildly celebrated what had been done.

Miriam did some wild celebrating with the other women as they danced and played the timbrels and exalted the great victory the Lord had accomplished for Israel. Let's look at this marvelous celebration together, analyzing it's wonders as we look into God's superior word. It's all to be found there. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Who is Like You, O Lord? (verses 11 & 12)

¹¹ "Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods?"

mi kamoka ba'elim Yehovah – With these words, we now enter the third stanza of the Song of Moses. It is shorter than the first two, but it is marvelous in its form and detail. Moses, as if completely overwhelmed by the thoughts which he has so far penned, turns from narration to question.

It is as if he had to pause and contemplate the utter majesty of the Lord and His wonderful work. His first of two rhetorical questions is "Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods?" This question is parallel to the words of 15:2, 3 –

"The Lord *is* my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation;
He *is* my God, and I will praise Him;
My father's God, and I will exalt Him.

³The Lord *is* a man of war;
The Lord *is* His name."

In those verses, he described the Lord. Now in this question, he asks who is like Him. The answer is implied in the question, "No one!" All of the gods of Egypt, the greatest nation on earth at the time, were rendered impotent against the hand of the Lord. None could compare to him and all were shown to be false.

Only the Lord was to be exalted because only the Lord is the true God. The words are as valid today as they were when Moses wrote them – allah, buddha, krishna, and on and on... Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? The answer stands – "None are like the Lord!"

In this question is the germ of the name of the archangel Michael, which means “Who is like God?” You can hear the similarity – *mikael* and *mi kamoka*? Who can compare to the Lord?

11 (con’t) Who is like You, glorious in holiness,

mi-kamoka nadar ba’qodesh – This portion of the verse is parallel to 15:6 which said – “Your right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power;”

He asked the question based on these words and the reply again is implied in the question. “Surely there is no one like the Lord who is glorious in holiness!” In all ways, He is far above every being because He is the Creator of them all. Therefore, He alone is holy.

The word “glorious,” which in Hebrew is *adar*, is used for the second time both in this poem and in the Bible. In all, it will only be used three times in the Bible. Some translations use “majestic,” thus showing the superlative nature of the One who is “glorious in holiness.”

This is the first time that the idea of holiness is ascribed directly to the Lord. Three other times the word *qodesh* or “holy” has been used. The first was at the burning bush where the Lord told Moses to take off his shoes because he was standing on holy ground. It implied that the Lord is the One who made the ground holy.

The other two times it was used came in conjunction with the Feast of Unleavened bread, where the first and the last days of the feast were to be considered “holy.” Now, in the fourth use of the word, holiness is ascribed to the Lord who is “glorious in holiness” by asking this rhetorical question.

11 (con’t) Fearful in praises, doing wonders?

nowra tehilot oseh pele – This is the second half of the second question. It is parallel to verses 6-8 –

“Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy in pieces.

⁷ And in the greatness of Your excellence

You have overthrown those who rose against You;

You sent forth Your wrath;

It consumed them like stubble.

⁸And with the blast of Your nostrils
The waters were gathered together;
The floods stood upright like a heap;
The depths congealed in the heart of the sea.”

Moses described the great works of the Lord and now, in question he asks, “Who else is like this?” Again, the answer is implied in the question. “There is none like the Lord who is fearful in praises, doing wonders!”

He uses three new words in this portion of the verse. The first is *emah* and is translated as “fearful.” It means “terror.” The second new word translated as “praises” is *tehillah*. It means “praise,” or a “song of praise” and thus a psalm. It comes from the word *halal* which means “to shine.”

And the third new word is translated as “wonders.” It is the word *pele*. It is the first of 13 uses of this word in the Bible. It is a word found mostly in the psalms to describe the Lord in a manner similar to this song of praise, but probably the most famous use of it is found in Isaiah 9:6 where it describes the coming Messiah –

“For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

Again and again Moses draws out new and exceptional words from his Hebrew dictionary to describe the majesty of the Lord who has performed works never seen before. He is to be held in awe, but not just as in an impressive mountain scene. Rather, we are to be in fearful awe of His glorious splendor. He is all powerful and therefore He alone is fearful in praises.

The Lord’s wonders in the creation itself as well as how He works through the creation are magnificent. And beyond this, He has proven that He can work beyond the natural order. The final plague, that of the firstborn, transcended the natural. And the parting and closing of the Red Sea did as well.

The Lord is able to suspend nature in order to accomplish his great wonders. It is He who is wonderful in all ways. Moses first recognizes this in written form for the people of the world to reflect on ever since. The author of Psalm 86 appears to have used his words here as a pattern for his own reflections on the Lord –

“Among the gods *there is* none like You, O Lord;
Nor *are there any works* like Your works.

⁹ All nations whom You have made
Shall come and worship before You, O Lord,
And shall glorify Your name.

¹⁰ For You *are* great, and do wondrous things;
You alone *are* God.” Psalm 86:8-10

**¹² You stretched out Your right hand;
The earth swallowed them.**

yatita yeminikha tibraemow arets – These words are parallel to verse 10 which said –

“You blew with Your wind,
The sea covered them;
They sank like lead in the mighty waters.”

But though parallel, there is an addition to what we have seen so far. It says that “the earth swallowed them.” It could be as many scholars believe, that this is speaking of the sea as a part of the earth and that Moses is using poetic license in his description.

However, it could be that this implies more than just the waters covering them, but that the earth was rent asunder as well. The 77th Psalm, which details this event, seems to confirm that along with the sea closing, there was also an earthquake –

“The voice of Your thunder *was* in the whirlwind;
The lightnings lit up the world;
The earth trembled and shook.

¹⁹ Your way *was* in the sea,
Your path in the great waters,
And Your footsteps were not known.

²⁰ You led Your people like a flock
By the hand of Moses and Aaron.” Psalm 77:18-20

The earth and all of its elements are under the complete control of the Lord. The Egyptians failed to see this and they perished. Israel failed to heed Moses' words and they were twice exiled. And the world has forgotten that the Lord is in control and they too will suffer His judgments because of this.

*Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods of the world?
Who is like You, glorious in holiness?
You are fearful in praises, Your wonders unfurled!
Only to You shall my soul bless*

*You stretched out Your right hand
The earth swallowed the peoples
You in Your mercy have led forth your redeemed as planned
So that they can gather to praise You under church steeples*

*The people whom You have redeemed and brought out
You have guided them in Your might
To Your holy habitation, and with a resounding shout
They have been brought into Your glorious light*

II. The Lord Shall Reign Forever and Ever (verses 13-18)

**¹³ You in Your mercy have led forth
The people whom You have redeemed;**

nahita ba-khash-dekha am zu gaaleta – This is the concluding verse of the third stanza, but it is also the first verse of the second major section of the song. The first 12 verses were retrospective, looking back on the deliverance of the Israelites by the Lord. Now from verses 13-18, they are prospective; they look forward to the future results of that deliverance. And yet, even though future, they are written in a past-tense, mission-accomplished style. Moses acknowledges that it is the Lord's *khesed*, or divine favor, which made Him select and covenant with Israel.

In other words, it was a merciful act and not because they had merited His lovingkindness. It is an important point which Moses has incorporated into the song. The Lord covenanted with Abraham and made a promise to his seed. Even in their unfaithfulness, He has remained faithful to the people He redeemed.

And the words of this verse are exactly what the Lord promised all the way back in Chapter 6 –

“Therefore say to the children of Israel: ‘I *am* the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.” Exodus 6:6

Just as the Lord promised, so He also fulfilled.

¹³ (con’t) **You have guided *them* in Your strength
To Your holy habitation.**

nahalta b’azzekha el neveh qad-shekha – The form of the Hebrew indicates that the guiding of which Moses speaks is on-going. In other words, Moses is looking forward to where they are being led even though it is written as if they are already there.

The Lord had guided them, was guiding them, and would guide them by the power of His strength to His holy habitation. It could be, and it probably is, that this is speaking of Canaan, the Land of Promise, but verse 17 is more specific than that.

Not only would the people be brought into the Land of Promise, but there would be a place in that land where the Lord would dwell. In the end, this is still not only a historical account, but also a picture of those redeemed through the tribulation period of the future who would partake of the millennial reign of Christ as spoken of by the prophets many times.

It is also a picture of the redeemed of the Lord who will eventually be guided even to His heavenly habitation. This is described in Hebrews 12 –

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,…” Hebrews 12:22, 23

In both the temporal and in the spiritual, it is the Lord who guides His redeemed until they arrive at the destination which He has prepared for them. It is marvelous to see how history repeats itself so that we can know that the Lord’s hand is involved in what occurs.

¹⁴ “The people will hear *and* be afraid;

sha-me-u ammim yir-ga-zun – The word “people” in the Hebrew is plural. It is speaking of the various people groups in the land of Canaan, many of which have been named already in the Bible.

They are groups such as those mentioned in Exodus 3 when the Lord spoke to Moses at the burning bush. These included the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. These many groups, and others as well, would hear and would fear.

This became a reality when Israel finally entered Canaan. When the spies first entered the land, they came to the house of Rahab the harlot and she said this to them, thus confirming Moses words –

“I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who *were* on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. ¹¹ And as soon as we heard *these things*, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He *is* God in heaven above and on earth beneath.” Joshua 2:9-11

¹⁴ (con’t) Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia.

khil akhaz yo-shev-e pelasheth – In Moses’ words now though, he specifically singles out the inhabitants of Philistia. He says that “sorrow” would take hold of them. The word “sorrow” in Hebrew is *khil*. It is the first of seven times it will be used. It specifically means “agony” or “anguish.”

The Philistines have been mentioned several times in the Bible, but the territory known as Philistia is now mentioned for the first time. They are thus not just a group of people, but they are a people who have a portion of land identified with them.

It is the coastal area which is still occupied today by a rebellious group of people known as the Palestinians – a term which comes from the Hebrew word used to describe this

ancient people. However, the modern Palestinians are actually Arabs with no connection to this group. Thus they could more rightly be called Fakestinians.

Just as the Philistines trembled at Israel in the past, the modern Palestinians do so once again in the present. History continues to repeat itself and the enemies of God and of His people follow the same pattern again and again.

¹⁵ Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed;

az nivhalu aluphe edowm – The *alluphey*, or chiefs of Edom, are mentioned dozens of times in Genesis 36 and then again in the genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1. However, by the time Israel finished its wilderness wanderings, these chiefs were replaced by a king. Despite being under a kingdom and having become belligerent towards Israel, Moses still warned the people just prior to their movement towards Canaan that despite their fear of Israel, they were to be left alone –

“You *are about to* pass through the territory of your brethren, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. Therefore watch yourselves carefully. ⁵ Do not meddle with them, for I will not give you *any* of their land, no, not so much as one footstep, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau *as* a possession.” Deuteronomy 2:4, 5

**¹⁵ (con’t) The mighty men of Moab,
Trembling will take hold of them;**

ele mowav yokhazemow raad – These words are perfectly described as being fulfilled just as Moses wrote them. In Numbers 22, we read this –

“Then the children of Israel moved, and camped in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan *across from* Jericho.

² Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. ³ And Moab was exceedingly afraid of the people because they *were* many, and Moab was sick with dread because of the children of Israel.” Numbers 22:1, 2

The story which follows this goes from Numbers 22-24 and concerns the story of Moab and Balaam the prophet. It has been a favorite of God’s people ever since.

¹⁵ (con’t) All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away.

namogu kol yo-shev-e kenaan – Along with the words of Rahab that I read a couple minutes ago, this prophecy of Moses is exactly fulfilled in the words of Joshua 5 –

“So it was, when all the kings of the Amorites who *were* on the west side of the Jordan, and all the kings of the Canaanites who *were* by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel until we had crossed over, that their heart melted; and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the children of Israel.” Joshua 5:1

¹⁶ Fear and dread will fall on them;

tippol alehem ematah v'pakhad – For the second time in both the song and in the Bible, Moses uses the word *emah*. The first time was in verse 11 to describe the Lord who is “fearful in praises.” Now he says that *emah*, or fear along with dread, will fall on the inhabitants of Canaan.

Though they were more numerous than the people of Israel, they would be no match for them because they knew of His mighty arm which was set on destroying her enemies. Because of this, they would be in both fear and dread of the crushing flood which would come upon them.

**¹⁶ (con't) By the greatness of Your arm
They will be as still as a stone,**

bigdol zerow-akha yid-demu ka-aben – In Exodus 6:6, the Lord had promised to bring Israel out with an outstretched arm. That same symbolism is now used again to show that the arm of the Lord is not shortened. He would go on wielding it for His redeemed against the people they would continue to encounter.

And because of the display of strength His arm would show forth, Moses says that their enemies would be as still as a stone. Again, he brings a new word into the Bible's pages, translated as “still.” It is the word *damam* which means to “cease.” The idea is that because of astonishment they would at once be motionless and hushed just like a stone. It is a beautiful metaphor to consider.

**16 (con't) Till Your people pass over, O Lord,
Till the people pass over
Whom You have purchased.**

ad-yaabor amekha Yehovah ad-yaabor am-zu qanita –

This section of the verse isn't speaking of either the trip out of Egypt, nor passing through the Red Sea. It continues to be prospective, looking forward to the journey into Canaan. In Deuteronomy 29:16, Moses speaks of the nations they passed by during the wilderness wanderings.

They encountered many peoples, passing them by on the way to a better place, a place which had been promised to them over 400 years earlier. The repetition of the words in this verse are used to highlight and magnify the fact that all of those nations remained as still as a stone while Israel passed through them.

It is true that some came against them in battle, but those who did were crushed by Israel, becoming as still as a stone in death. The Lord allowed nothing to impede their march forward except the stubbornness of their own hearts as they rebelled against Him. But even that didn't cause His forward motion to cease entirely.

And the reason is in the word "purchased." Israel was *purchased* though the destruction of Egypt and the slaying of the Passover. Because they were bought back, He would continue to lead them and fight for them. They had become His possession and therefore the only One who had a right to discipline them was Him.

**17 You will bring them in and plant them
In the mountain of Your inheritance,**

t'bi-e-mow v'tita-e-mow b'har nakhalatekha – Moses, taking the rest of the journey toward, and into Canaan, as an accomplished fact, says that the Lord will not only bring them in, but that He would plant them. And the word he uses means exactly that, as if to plant a tree. It conveys the idea that they will be firmly fixed in the land.

However, even before they arrive, they will be given advanced warning that just as a tree can be planted, it can also be uprooted. In his warnings to the people, he again spoke to them in a prospective manner, telling them that as certainly as they were to be planted, they would likewise be uprooted when they failed to live up to the standards He set before them –

“Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against this land, to bring on it every curse that is written in this book. And the Lord uprooted them from their land in anger, in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as *it is this day.*” Deuteronomy 29:27, 28

And the reason for both planting them and uprooting them is found in the words, “the mountain of Your inheritance.” The land of Israel is equated to a mountain, as it is several times in the Bible. Because it is the Lord’s inheritance, meaning the Lord’s land, it is up to Him who may live there.

The Lord gave the Land to Israel as their inheritance as well. And so when they remain obedient to the Lord it is their land and they may use it. When they are under the punishment of the Lord, it is their land and they may not use it.

Either way, it is the Lord’s land, He has given it to Israel, and He decides when they may dwell in it. This is no different than a father giving to a son a bicycle or a car. Just because it belongs to the son it doesn’t mean that he can always use it. Israel is the Lord’s child and so He governs the rights of the child.

**17 (con’t) *In the place, O Lord, which You have made
For Your own dwelling,***

makon l’shivetekha paalta Yehovah – Again, for the umpteenth time in this marvelous song, Moses introduces a new word to us – *makon*. It is a fixed or established place; a foundation. The idea is “permanence,” and this word, which is used 17 times in the Bible, almost always refers to some aspect of the Lord’s earthly temple or His heavenly throne.

Moses’ words here put that idea into motion and it will be repeated many times as the idea of permanence is affixed to the Lord’s dwelling place.

17 (con’t) *The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established.*

miqedash adonai konnu yadekha – Interestingly, the name Yehovah or LORD is used ten times in this Song of Moses, but in this one verse the title Lord or *Adonai* is used instead. Why Moses deferred to the title rather than the name is a puzzle, but having done it this one time makes the song all the more exceptional.

The only commentator I read who even mentioned this change was John Lang who said–

“The centre of this mountain is, on the one hand, the dwelling-place of Jehovah; on the other, the sanctuary of the Lord (יְדֻתָּךְ) for His people.” John Lange

But this isn't correct. The lines of the verse are formed in parallel and are simply conveying the same idea with different words. To me, it is probably because of the meaning of the number ten in Scripture which is that of “...*the perfection of Divine order*... it implies that nothing is wanting; that the number and order are perfect; that the whole cycle is complete.” (Bullinger)

As ten signifies completion and the perfection of Divine order, Moses chose to include this address *to* the Lord with a title rather than *as* the Lord with His name.

Again in this verse, we are introduced to a new word – *miqedash* or “sanctuary.” It carries the same meaning as the word *qodesh* or “holy,” but it is applied to the dwelling *of* the Lord. However, it is the Lord who makes the sanctuary holy. Therefore, Moses notes that it is “The sanctuary, O Lord, *which* Your hands have established.” The words of Moses, if understood and heeded by Israel, would have saved them from an immense amount of grief throughout their generations.

If the Lord is the one who sanctifies the sanctuary, then those who are disobedient to the Lord will defile it. This occurred throughout their history and twice He saw fit to destroy the very place where He dwelt among them. Ezekiel 5 gives the charges to the people before its first destruction –

“‘Therefore, *as* I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘surely, because you have defiled My **sanctuary** with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will also diminish *you*; My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity. ¹² One-third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst; and one-third shall fall by the sword all around you; and I will scatter another third to all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them.’”

-Ezekiel 5:11-12

All of this could have been avoided if the people just kept their hearts and their minds directed towards the Lord. But Israel is just a microcosm of the greater world. Like them, the world has failed to pay heed. What came upon Egypt and what came upon Israel will also come on a global scale. All because we fail to pay heed to the word of the Lord.

¹⁸ “**The Lord shall reign forever and ever.**”

Yehovah yimlok l'olam v'ed – The Song of Moses ends with these words of glorious affirmation. They are amazingly simple and the substance of them will be repeated and built upon many times in Scripture, even into the New Testament where we read these words in Revelation 11 –

“Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’” Revelation 11:15

Thus, Moses’ words here are to be taken as a statement concerning the redeemed throughout all dispensations and even throughout eternity itself. To show that this is a thought which is actually beyond comprehension, He introduces one last new word into the Bible with *the very last word* of the song – *ad* or “forever.”

By adding it to the word *olam*, or forever, it adds a superlative sense to its meaning. This dynasty of Pharaoh had come while Israel was in Egypt and it had ended before their very eyes. The waters of the ocean which consumed him dated back to the moment when the Lord created them, and those same waters saw his final end.

Other kingdoms would arise and they too would fall. History would continue on year by year, century by century, and even throughout the millenniums, but the Lord who was there at the beginning will still be there when all earthly kingdoms have passed into oblivion. Only He will reign forever and ever because only He is the Lord.

*How great are Your deeds O Lord our God!
Wonderful! Splendid! Majestic! We cry to You
Our eyes have seen glory as our feet have trod
You have brought us out to a life brand new*

*And You will bring Your people in and them You will plant
In the mountain of Your inheritance
There people will dance and to You they will chant
Of Your great deeds for their deliverance*

*In the place, O Lord, which You have furnished
For Your own dwelling we too shall dwell, leaving never*

*The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established
The Lord shall reign forever and ever*

III. He has Triumphed Gloriously! (verses 19-21)

¹⁹ For the horses of Pharaoh went with his chariots and his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them. But the children of Israel went on dry *land* in the midst of the sea.

This verse is given as a summary of what was said in Chapter 14. With more details there, it said –

“So the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. ²⁸ Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, *and* all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained. ²⁹ But the children of Israel had walked on dry *land* in the midst of the sea, and the waters *were* a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.” Exodus 14:27-29

This then is not a later insert as so many scholars claim. Rather, it is a recounting of why the song was written. The words begin with a conjunction *ki* which means “for” or “because.” The last words of the song said that “The Lord shall reign forever and ever!” The “for” or “because” is explaining that thought.

Pharaoh is no longer a threat to the people of God because the Lord has proven Himself above all gods. This then is a prophetic picture of the comparable redemptive battles to come. From Christ defeating the world of sin and the power of the devil at the cross, to His final defeat of the devil and his demons when they are cast into the Lake of Fire, it is all pictured here.

Because of this marvelous work of the Lord, a spontaneous act came about by Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron...

²⁰ Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

Miriam is formerly introduced by name into the Bible at this time, even though she was seen on the banks of the Nile when her younger brother Moses was placed in the ark made by his mother. Now, some eighty years after that, she has witnessed another

miracle of the Lord as that same brother raised his staff to first open the waters of the Red Sea and then to close them over the enemies of Israel.

She is called “the sister of Aaron” rather than Moses, possibly because Aaron is the elder of the two, but more probably because both she and Aaron are considered subordinate to Moses in the narrative before us.

In this verse, she is called a “prophetess.” She is the first of five women who are given this designation in the Old Testament. There is also one in Luke 2. Other women are noted as prophesying in the book of Acts.

Here she sets a precedent in the Bible which will be followed by other women. She takes a timbrel, meaning a tambourine, and goes out in dance before the Lord in victory. Other women will follow in this same manner when kings or others come home from victory in battle. They will dance and play the timbrel for the victor.

One of the most noted instances is found in Judges 11 where the daughter of Jephthah came out with timbrels and dancing to welcome home her father after his victory. Unfortunately, things didn’t go so well for her after that. It is a sad story despite the victory of Jephthah.

Unfortunately, the meaning of the name “Miriam” is not well agreed upon. However, one possibility for introducing her by name here comes from two separate words *marar* which means either “bitter” or “strong” and *yam* which means “sea.” And so her name may mean “Waters of Strength.” That would certainly explain *why* the name is given at this time. The Red Sea crushed the enemies of the Lord as He directed them back to their natural state.

This can only be speculation, so if you make a brain squiggle on that, please include that it is only one possible meaning to her name which happens to correspond with the introduction of her name. And the meaning does fit well with our final verse of the day...

²¹ And Miriam answered them:

“Sing to the Lord,

For He has triumphed gloriously!

The horse and its rider

He has thrown into the sea!”

The word for “them” in this verse is masculine. Because of this, it is believed that after hearing the first words of the Song of Moses, she picked up that refrain and answered them after each stanza as they went through the song. As she and the other women sang, they played the timbrel and danced.

This is the first time that dancing is mentioned in the Bible and it is almost sad to read Elizabethan era commentaries on this verse. They either say that it was only appropriate in the past, as if somehow dancing should never be allowed among Christians, or they might say something like she and the other women moved “gracefully through a stately and solemn dance” (Ellicott).

Personally, I would imagine the *last thing* they would be doing is having a slow, solemn dance. Instead, they would be leaping for joy at the work of the Lord. I can’t think of anything duller and more boring than a congregation of people who would sit still in an almost catatonic state, quietly playing harps, after seeing what they had seen. In 2 Samuel 6, it says that David danced before the Lord with all his might as the Ark was brought into Jerusalem. He did this because he understood the greatness of the Lord who had delivered him from all his foes.

And certainly Miriam and the entire congregation of Israel danced their hearts out before the Lord as well. If you’re not too old to break something, I don’t think the Lord would fault you a bit for doing the same. And considering that Miriam is somewhere around 90 years old at this time, you’re probably not too old to do so.

Rejoice before the Lord because He has done great things for us. He has done far more for us than merely bringing us through a deep body of water and crushing an army who was set and determined to destroy us. More than that, He has brought us beyond an eternal chasm, an infinite divide between us and our God.

In the process, He destroyed the power of the devil over us and He has brought us to the safe shores of a heavenly inheritance. That is, assuming that you are one of His redeemed. And how did He accomplish this? Let me tell you in case you have never made a decision to follow Jesus Christ...

Closing Verse: *“He has shown strength with His arm;
He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
⁵² He has put down the mighty from their thrones,
And exalted the lowly.” Luke 1:51, 52*

Next Week: Exodus 15:22-27 (The Sweetened Waters) (44th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Lord shall Reign Forever and Ever

“Who *is* like You, O Lord, among the gods?

Who *is* like You, glorious in holiness,

Fearful in praises, doing wonders?

You stretched out Your right hand;

The earth swallowed them.

You in Your mercy have led forth

The people whom You have redeemed;

You have guided *them* in Your strength

To Your holy habitation.

“The people will hear *and* be afraid;

Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia.

Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed;

The mighty men of Moab,

Trembling will take hold of them;

All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away.

Fear and dread will fall on them;

By the greatness of Your arm

They will be *as* still as a stone,

Till Your people pass over, O Lord,

Till the people pass over

Whom You have purchased.

You will bring them in and plant them

In the mountain of Your inheritance,

In the place, O Lord, *which* You have made

For Your own dwelling,

The sanctuary, O Lord, *which* Your hands have established.

“The Lord shall reign forever and ever.”

For the horses of Pharaoh went
Into the sea with his chariots and his horsemen
And the Lord brought back the waters
Of the sea upon them

But the children of Israel went
On dry *land* in the midst of the sea
Surely it was a marvelous event
Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister
Took the timbrel in her hand
And all the women went out after her
With timbrels and with dances, the celebration was grand

And Miriam answered them: "Sing to the Lord,
For He has triumphed gloriously!
The horse and its rider
He has thrown into the sea!"

The Lord won the victory over the armies of Pharaoh
Casting them into the deep waters of the Red Sea
But He delivered Israel; His greatness He did show
And so the Israelites shouted out in victory

The people danced and sang to the Lord
Because of the marvelous display they did see
And we too should feel free to act the same toward
Our great Savior Jesus, who from sin and death has set us free!

Don't just sit there like you're dead in your seat
Instead raise your hands and move those feet

Shout out to Jesus with voices that have truly been set free
Shout about the wonderful things that He has done for you and me

Shout out people! The Lord has won the victory!

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 15:22-27

(THE SWEETENED WATERS)

For every sermon, one must think up an introduction... a little piece of information to make a smooth transition from the previous events of the day into the sermon itself. Today's was easy. On 15 July, just 12 days before I typed this sermon, Jim sent me an email and asked about an account from the Old Testament.

It is found in 1 Kings 6 and it was a part of Jim and Linda's Bible reading for the day. They wanted to know what it was there for. As he said, "Nothing is in the Bible that doesn't belong there, but these few verses sure raise an eyebrow. Can you give me a little insight on what this is telling us....aside from the obvious that Elisha was gifted through God."

I had never really considered those verses in detail, but I looked them over a bit and nothing came to mind. And so for night after night, I read them and thought about them as I slept. Then when I got to this passage in Exodus, I decided to do a detailed study of the account and add the story in with this sermon because the two accounts are so similar.

We'll get to it at the end of the Exodus verses today. For now though, we'll look at how the bitter waters of Marah became sweet...

Text Verse: *And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.*

-Revelation 21:6

As always, there are pictures of Christ and His work all the way through the Bible. God uses the natural to reveal the spiritual. Water is given as a picture of life and even of Christ Himself, the true Life of us all. Someday, we will have a perpetual fountain of the water of life bubbling over in us for all eternity.

It is ours now if we but receive it, and it will be realized in us some wonderful day when Christ comes for us. What a great hope we have! What a sure and glorious promise to place our faith in! It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Bitter Waters made Sweet (verses 22-25^{1/2})

²² So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur.

It seems as if a pun is being made in these first words of the day. Moses' name means "He who draws out." And so we are reminded after the great song of victory that "He who draws out" has "brought Israel from the Red Sea."

Many scholars believe that this location is known even today as Ayun Musa, or the "Springs of Moses." Apparently, there are a number of wells and a considerable amount of vegetation there. It is about seven miles south of Suez. If this is that location, it is where the Song of Moses was written and sung.

From there, their steps were directed into the Wilderness of Shur. This name, Shur, is actually shrouded in mystery because of the various possible root words that lead to it, and also that it isn't agreed which root is correct.

But, there is a reason for selecting the name Shur because later in Numbers 33:8, the same area and journey is said to be in the Wilderness of Etham, a completely different name. The three roots from which the name is derived all have the common element of a sudden appearance, and thus the thought "Behold" seems to apply.

And in the context of the passage, that idea fits beautifully. In these verses, both the people of Israel as well as us will *behold* the healing of the bitter waters.

Shur is the same name of the place where Hagar, the concubine of Abraham and the mother of Ishmael, was fleeing to in Genesis 16. There, the Lord appeared to her at a well which was named Beer-lahai-roi, or the "Well of the One who Lives and Sees Me." At that time, the Lord announced that she would have her son and that he was to be named Ishmael.

That well was not to be found by the Israelites though as they continued their trek after three long days...

²² (con't) And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.

Regardless of whether the well which Hagar came to was near to them or still a long distance off, unlike her, they found no water. In the desert, water is life. The people

would have carried some, but there would not be a great supply. And considering the countless animals that went with them, this could easily become a great tragedy.

The animals would suffer the most and the most quickly. But we have to keep remembering that they are being *led*. There is nothing to suggest that the pillar of cloud and fire did not remain with them the entire time, guiding them. This then is a trial which has purpose and whether they could see it or not, was intended to instruct them.

²³ Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter.

If Ayun Musa is the true spot which they departed from, the next logical spot which corresponds to this description would be a place known now as Huwara. It is approximately 35 miles from Ayun Musa and the entire distance between the two is sand and rough gravel. It would have been a hard, hot walk, even if in springtime.

Regardless as to whether this is the true place they came to, at the time, they called it Marah. The word *marah* simply means “bitter.” It is named because of the waters which were bitter and undrinkable. But there is a small note or germ of grace here.

The name Marah is spelled with a *hey* or “h” at the end of it. This is the fifth letter of the Hebrew aleph-bet; five being the number of grace. It is the same letter that was *added* to Abraham and Sarah’s name as a sign of covenant grace.

However in the book of Ruth, when Naomi asked to be called Mara, it is spelled without this “h.” In calling herself Mara, she was proclaiming her bitterness and it was as if she felt she was outside of the Lord’s covenant provision, wallowing alone in her bitterness.

This letter, hey or “h,” has the meaning of “look,” “reveal,” or “breath.” And thus, understanding this, the story takes on a greater meaning, a gift of grace will be revealed which will take the people’s breath away.

²³ (con’t) Therefore the name of it was called Marah.

As I said, the place is named because of the waters. This is probably the case with almost every location which the people will travel to during the next 40 years. Unless they were already named places when they arrived, the places where they stop will be named based on what occurs at the place they stop.

This will be quite common as we travel with them through the wilderness. God will reveal something, or the people will act in a certain way, or some other thing will occur which will bring forth a name for the location.

²⁴ And the people complained against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?”

The Pulpit commentary notes, “The men who serve a nation best are during their lifetime least appreciated.” After three days of walking and coming to a well with bitter waters, the people did what the bitterness seemed to cry out for... they complained against Moses. Interestingly, the word for “complain” here is *luwn*. It literally means to lodge, as in lodging for the night.

And so it seems a strange word to be translated as “complain” or “grumble” and yet it is translated this way dozens and dozens of times during the wilderness wanderings. It appears that as lodging is a temporary thing, the grumbling is as well. Even though there is hardship in the night, with the Lord there is joy in the morning. The HAW describes this word, *luwn*, in this way –

“The theological usage emphasizes the brevity of God’s anger as opposed to the life-giving power of his abundant favor.”

That description actually fits quite perfectly with what happens next. Though the people complained against Moses, he knows where to go for relief...

²⁵ So he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree.

Moses, or “He who draws out,” cries to the Lord. In so doing, he draws out from the Lord an answer to their dilemma – the Lord shows him a tree. The word translated as tree, is exactly that, *ets* or a tree. The word simply means “wood.” However, there is a picture being given to us which is more than a piece of wood.

Instead, we are seeing the work of Christ revealed once again, as He has been so many thousands of times already since “Holy Bible, page 1.”

²⁵ (con’t) When he cast *it* into the waters, the waters were made sweet.

This is in essence correcting a contrary with a contrary. There is something bad which needs to be fixed and so something else which is bad will fix it. People can’t eat a tree, though they may eat what comes from the tree. But it is contrary to think that a tree

would heal water in this way, especially on the scale which could satisfy two million people.

Therefore, the tree is actually a sign to the people and not the cure itself. And because it is a sign, it then must also be a pictorial lesson for us.

Having been shown the tree and without any further note of what transpired between the Lord and Moses, we next read that he simply threw it into the waters and with that, they were made sweet. The verb for “made sweet” is *mathoq*.

This is a word used for the first of just five times in the Bible. Each time it appears it is used to contrast something else. Here, the bitter waters are contrasted with them becoming sweet. In Job 20, the sweetness of evil is contrasted with sourness in the stomach, and even venom –

“Though evil is sweet in his mouth,
And he hides it under his tongue,
¹³ *Though* he spares it and does not forsake it,
But still keeps it in his mouth,
¹⁴ *Yet* his food in his stomach turns sour;
It becomes cobra venom within him.” Job 20:12

Again in Job 21, the bitterness of life is contrasted with the sweetness of the grave. In the 55th Psalm, the sweet counsel of a friend is contrasted with his later betrayal of him. And in the proverbs, the temporary sweetness of stolen water, is contrasted with the consequences of the action –

“‘Stolen water is sweet,
And bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant.’
¹⁸ But he does not know that the dead *are* there,
That her guests *are* in the depths of hell.” Proverbs 9:17, 18

This is the idea that we are given here. A contrast is made between two things, bitter and sweet. But what is to be remembered is that the original change actually came about *because* of a tree. It is the lesson of the Garden of Eden.

Where there was ease, comfort, and fellowship, they were lost by a tree, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. In their interaction with this tree, came trial, difficulty, and

a broken relationship. If it was a tree which caused the rift, then we are being given a picture of a tree which will also heal the rift.

In this story, water is emblematic of life, because without fresh water the people will die. Therefore, the tree is also emblematic of the granting of that life; its restoration. This then is a picture of the cross of Christ – that tree which made our waters sweet once again. As Christ Himself proclaimed –

“Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again,¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

-John 4:13-14

However, before the well could bring forth the fresh water, there was bitterness. There was bitterness in man who lacked everlasting life, and there was bitterness in Jesus' cross which could only bring us everlasting life through His death. The waters were bitter, but the waters were healed.

Now, through Christ, a fountain of life has bubbled forth, just as happened at Marah when the waters were sweetened.

*The bitter waters of life have stolen all joy
There is no soundness in my bones, I am weak and drained
What can heal the waters, what can I employ?
That will bring life to this body so that health is attained*

*Is there a way to purify this fount?
What can heal these waters, what can I employ?
And because they flow, it would take an ever-lasting amount
What kind of thing could bring this eternal joy?*

*I behold there a tree, and on it a bitter-filled sight
A Man whose life is ebbing away
But I perceive that He will heal the waters of my plight
Through His death the waters are sweetened in a marvelous way*

II. I Am the Lord Who Heals You (verses 25^{1/2}-27)

²⁵ (con't) **There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them,**

It seems that these words should be their own verse, separated from the previous words of verse 25. So much so is this, that I have started an entirely new thought in today's sermon. And yet, it is right that the words are contained in one verse.

God has shown the people grace in the wilderness. He gave them sweet water in repayment for their complaints. He healed them despite their lack of faith. And now, a threat is implied. In the same verse where grace is bestowed, a statute and an ordinance are given.

The giving of this statute and ordinance would make no sense if He had not healed the waters. But because He had, it became an object lesson for them. He was able to heal the water, and now He was asking for implicit trust in the mandates that He would proceed to give them.

The word "statute" is *khoq*. It implies something prescribed or owed. The word "ordinance" or *mishpat*, implies a judgment based on justice. Grace is not based on these things. A law doesn't confer grace: it confers a requirement which is to be obeyed. When it is isn't, then one may receive punishment, or they may receive mercy. But either way, grace is excluded.

They received grace in the healing of the waters; they now receive a law to guide them after their healing. In the giving of that law, it then says that "He tested them." It is the word *nasah*. It was first used in Genesis 22:1 when the Lord *tested* Abraham by asking him to sacrifice Isaac. Now it is used for the second time in the Bible to *test* the descendants of Abraham.

In their testing comes a promise, but also a veiled threat...

²⁶ and said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians.

The word *im*, or "if," is a conditional word. It implies that if something is in compliance, then there will be one result. If it is not, then there will be another. The Lord promises them now, after this first testing which ended in grace, that further testings' will carry rewards or losses.

This is sounding like our own walk in Christ, isn't it! We are saved by grace, with no works on our part. We have walked in a wilderness, we have complained of our situation, and by His unmerited favor, He has given us the life-giving waters.

But after our salvation, and after our being granted eternal life, we are given commandments and statutes. If we comply, things will normally go well for us. If we don't, we only have ourselves to blame. The commands and exhortations from the hand of Paul are many. But they are given for our wellbeing.

The Lord is showing us from this ancient story that His ways are always the better option. And so He first tells Israel, that they should diligently heed His voice with the words *shamoa tishma* – “listening you shall listen.” Pay heed! Take note! Hear the word! And what is it that they should be so attentive to?

1) *v'hayashar b'enav taaseh* – They should do what is right in His sight. The word is *yashar* and means “upright.” It is the first time it is used in the Bible and it is the Lord imploring them to do what is morally honorable and proper in His eyes, not theirs. He sets the standard; they are to accept it.

Unfortunately, the people failed often, generation after generation found it more suitable to follow their own desires than the will of the Lord. It is the theme of the book of Judges. The very last words of the book repeat the sentiment found throughout the book –

“In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.” Judges 21:25

2) *v'haazanta l'mitsvotav* – and give ear to His commandments. The *mitsvot* are the comprehensive list of laws which form the Law of Moses. They are told to listen to these, not just to hear. We hear things all the time, but we often don't listen. Every week, you come and hear a sermon from Charlie, but you don't always listen...sometimes you drowse and sometimes you nod off.

The Lord will give commandments and they are to be listened to, unlike Charlie's sermons. Many generations later, the Lord spoke to Ezekiel and said that the people had failed to do exactly this –

“So they come to you as people do, they sit before you *as* My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much

love, *but* their hearts pursue their *own* gain. ³² Indeed you *are* to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them.” Ezekiel 33:31, 32

The Lord is warning the people of what lies ahead. A law will be given and there will be consequences for failing to heed that law.

3) *v'shamarta kal huqav* – “and keep all His statutes.” A commandment is something one is to do in obedience to the one in authority. A statute is similar. It is something owed to the one in authority. It is something apportioned to someone to guide them in their societal conduct.

The rest of the Old Testament is replete with examples of the people, both the leaders and the common people, failing to adhere to this admonition. During the giving of the law, the Lord will be very specific concerning the blessings and the curses which will come upon the people for either adhering to these things or for straying from them.

These are recorded in the first person from the Lord in Leviticus 26 – “I will do this and I will do that.” They are recorded in the third person by Moses in Deuteronomy 28 – “The Lord will do this and the Lord will do that.” It is the Lord who gives the laws, it is the Lord who executes the judgments upon violators, and it is the Lord who heals the people who adhere or who repent. The psalmist understood this –

“I will extol You, O Lord, for You have lifted me up,
And have not let my foes rejoice over me.

² O Lord my God, I cried out to You,
And You healed me.

³ O Lord, You brought my soul up from the grave;
You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.” Psalm 30:1-3

It is the Lord who judges and the Lord heals. He is the Lord...

²⁶ (con't) **For I *am* the Lord who heals you.”**

ani Yehovah rophékha – It is a title as much as a proclamation. “I am Yehovah who heals you.” The healing of the waters was for their physical healing. The Lord promises now that in adherence to His word, there is such healing to be found.

This word, heal or *rapha*, is used 67 times in the Old Testament and it is often used in exactly the manner that He proclaims here. After much disobedience and a second exile which lasted for 2000 years, the Lord promised that He would a second time heal His wayward people. This is recorded in Hosea 6 –

“Come, and let us return to the Lord;
For He has torn, but He will **heal** us;
He has stricken, but He will bind us up.
²After two days He will revive us;
On the third day He will raise us up,
That we may live in His sight.” Hosea 6:1, 2

It is also the same word which is used to describe the work of the Lord as He went to the cross for our healing –

“But He *was* wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him,
And by His stripes we are **healed**.” Isaiah 53:5

The Lord is telling this group of people, in advance, that what He has done for them at Marah is a part of His nature – He is gracious. But He is also telling them that there are other aspects of who He is – He is just; He is righteous; He is holy. And in His proclamations, they are to see that there are consequences for violating these awesome attributes that He is revealing to them.

He is their Healer if they will but allow themselves to be healed. For us, the healing of the waters isn't for our physical healing. Rather, it is for our spiritual healing. The fount was poisoned by the devil, but Christ purifies it once again, if we will but trust. It is, in fact, by grace we are saved – through faith.

²⁷ Then they came to Elim, where there *were* twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters.

The chapter ends with this most unusual verse. It gives us enough to know that things went well after the next trek, but only enough to tantalize the thoughts, wondering why more isn't given.

This place, here called Elim, is believed to be identified today as the Wadi-Ghurandel. It is an oasis with many types of trees, including palms and which has a stream flowing through it. Barnes notes that it is about a mile in breadth, but in length it stretches out a long way to the northeast.

The name Elim, comes from a root which indicates to protrude or stick out, such as a porch on a house, a ram in a flock, or a large tree. There at Elim the Bible records 12 wells. However, the word in Hebrew it says *enot mayim*, “eyes of water.” And so these are springs, not really wells.

There are also seventy palm trees. The word is *temarim*, which is the plural of Tamar, the same name as the daughter of Judah who bore his child. The name pictures an upright or righteous person. At this location, it is said that the people camped there by the wells.

I dread leaving verses like this unattended concerning a picture that they are making and there is every reason to believe that the Lord is telling us something with the specificity – 12 springs and 70 palms. What is this referring to?

If Christ is the Water of Life and there are twelve springs, these then picture those who send out the word of the water of life to the people. In Matthew 10, the apostles are given the power to heal, just as the Lord said that He would be Yehovah Rophekha in the previous verse –

“And when He had called His twelve disciples to *Him*, He gave them power *over* unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.” Matthew 10:1

And the seventy palms then would represent the 70 disciples, or righteous ones, chosen by Christ in Luke 10, to follow suit –

“After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. ... ⁹ And heal the sick there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’” Luke 10:1 & 9

Again, like the apostles, they were given the power to heal by Yehovah Rophekha, the Lord Jesus. The name Elim is given to show that the work of Christ protrudes out for all to see as the apostles and disciples spread its message to Israel.

Chapter 15 closes with a picture of the Lord and His ministry to the people of Israel. A ministry which was intended for the healing of the people if they would but pay heed to Him and to His words.

*I am the Lord who heals you
I am the One who can take away your pains
In following Me, you are following the Path which is true
And in doing so, are to be found eternal gains*

*I am the Lord who heals you
In Me there is a well bubbling up to everlasting life
I will fulfill every promise as I said I would do
I will end the enmity between us, I will end the strife*

*There is healing in My wings
For I am the Lord who heals you
And I will do marvelous things
For I am ever faithful and true*

III. Bonus Insert (2 Kings 6:1-7)

In the book of 2 Kings, the prophet Elisha performs two miracles, both of which parallel the account which we have just seen. The first is found in 2 Kings 2:19-22 where Elisha throws salt into water to heal it. The second is found in 2 Kings 6:1-7 and deals with him throwing wood into water to raise an axe head.

Although space won't allow us to cover both, or even one in detail, I decided to add in a quick look at the second to round out our time in God's precious word today and to satisfy Jim and Linda's well-directed curiosity. Here are those verses –

And the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, "See now, the place where we dwell with you is too small for us. ² Please, let us go to the Jordan, and let every man take a beam from there, and let us make there a place where we may dwell." So he answered, "Go."

³ Then one said, "Please consent to go with your servants."

And he answered, "I will go." ⁴ So he went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. ⁵ But as one was cutting down a tree, the iron *ax head* fell into the water; and he cried out and said, "Alas, master! For it was

borrowed.”

⁶ So the man of God said, “Where did it fall?” And he showed him the place. So he cut off a stick, and threw *it* in there; and he made the iron float. ⁷ Therefore he said, “Pick *it* up for yourself.” So he reached out his hand and took it.

¹And the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, “See now, the place where we dwell with you is too small for us. 2 Kings 6:1

The term “sons of the prophets” means those who are of the prophets as disciples. They are a collective group of people who study under the hand of Elisha. Collectively, they come to Elisha and say that the place where they are dwelling can no longer sustain them. Instead, they wish to go to the Jordan to build a larger place to study.

The name Elisha comes from two words – *el*, meaning God and *yasha* meaning to be saved. So his name means God is Salvation or God the Savior. To him, they ask *nelekha na ad ha’yarden* – “Let us go, we pray you, to Jordan.”

**² Please, let us go to the Jordan, and let every man take a beam from there, and let us make there a place where we may dwell.”
So he answered, “Go.”**

The name Jordan is given and therefore it is relevant to the story. It means “the Descender” because it descends from the high mountains of Lebanon all the way to the Dead Sea, the lowest spot on earth. The word for “beam” is used just five times in the Old Testament.

It comes from a word which means to occur or happen, especially that which happens beyond one’s control. The idea in a beam is probably that by putting beams together it causes a building to occur. In response to their request, Elisha simply says *leku* – “go.”

**³ Then one said, “Please consent to go with your servants.”
And he answered, “I will go.”**

Where it says “one said” the term *ha’echad* is used. It means “the one.” One is singled out as making the request. He asks Elisha to come along and calls himself and the others *abadekha* – “your servants.” The request was probably so that the project would be blessed by his presence and for him to oversee the project.

Elisha, seems impressed enough by the man's faith in his ability to be of assistance, and so in response he in says *ani elek*. "I will go." There is an immense sparseness of verbiage being employed by Elisha in this account. He is direct, his words are simple, and unlike me in my sermons, he doesn't waste any words.

⁴So he went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees.

Together they all went and came to the Jordan where they cut down *ha'etsim* or "the trees." The word for "cut" here is *gazar*. It means to completely divide or separate. It is used when speaking of Christ's death in Isaiah 53 –

"He was taken from prison and from judgment,
And who will declare His generation?
For **He was cut off** from the land of the living;
For the transgressions of My people He was stricken." Isaiah 53:8

⁵But as one was cutting down a tree, the iron *ax head* fell into the water; and he cried out and said, "Alas, master! For it was borrowed."

The person cutting down the tree seems to be the same person who asked Elisha to come in the first place. The term *ha'echad*, or "the one" is again used, possibly to imply the same person. The term for "cutting down" in this verse is not the same as the previous verse. This word is *naphal*, not *gazar*. It means to fall, as if a tree falls.

While in the process of felling a tree, *ha'barzel* or "the iron" comes off of the axe handle and falls into the water. Charles Ellicott notes that the wording here is unusual. He says–

"The subject of the verb is made prominent by being put first in the accusative. It is thus implied that something happened to the iron." Ellicott

His response to this contains pitiful words, *ahah adoni v'hu shaul* – "Alas my lord, and it (was) begged." He couldn't afford his own and so he *begged* to use one belonging to another. He was morally responsible to pay for it, but he could not.

⁶So the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And he showed him the place.

Here Elisha is called *ish ha'elohim* – Rather than “the man of God” it should say “man of ‘the’ God,” thus signifying the One true God. He asks where the iron fell in the water and the man showed him.

⁶ (con't) **So he cut off a stick, and threw *it* in there; and he made the iron float.**

To rectify the situation, Elisha takes the action. He doesn't ask the person to get him a stick, instead he gets one himself. The word for “cut” is another word entirely from the two previously translated as cut. This word is *qatsav* – to cut. The only other time it is used is in the Song of Solomon when referring to shearing sheep.

Once he had the wood, he threw it in the water. It is the same word, *shalak*, that was used to describe what Moses did at the waters of Marah. In both accounts, they *cast* the stick into the water. For Moses, the waters were made sweet. For Elisha, the axe head was made to float.

The word for float is *tsuph*. It's used only two other times in the Bible. Once when the waters flowed over the Egyptians in the Red Sea, and once in Lamentations 3 when Jeremiah says –

“The waters **flowed** over my head;
I said; I am cut off!” Lamentations 3:54

Interestingly, Jeremiah uses the same word in Lamentations, *gazar*, about himself as was used in verse 3 concerning cutting down the trees.

²Therefore he said, “Pick *it* up for yourself.” So he reached out his hand and took it.

In his normal verbose way, Elisha simply says, *ha'rem lakh* – “take up to.” The word *rum* that he uses carries the idea of exalting something. By lifting, something is raised up, or exalted. The once-lost axe head has been restored.

So what is this story telling us? To understand, we need to first go back to Deuteronomy 19 and read a something similar about an axe head –

“And this *is* the case of the manslayer who flees there, that he may live: Whoever kills his neighbor unintentionally, not having hated him in time past— ⁵ as when a

man goes to the woods with his neighbor to cut timber, and his hand swings a stroke with the ax to cut down the tree, and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies—he shall flee to one of these cities and live ⁶ lest the avenger of blood, while his anger is hot, pursue the manslayer and overtake him, because the way is long, and kill him, though he *was* not deserving of death, since he had not hated the victim in time past.” Deuteronomy 19:4-6

In this account, the person is legally and morally culpable of an offense even though it was unintentional. The same is true with the man at the Jordan. He is morally and legally responsible to restore what was lost, even if he didn't intentionally lose it.

The axe head is a picture then of fallen man. He has inherited sin through Adam. Even if he didn't do anything intentionally wrong, he still bears the guilt because of *simply existing*. He is submerged in sin and there is seemingly no hope for him. He is covered by the waters and cut off. This is explained by Paul in Romans 5 –

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—” Romans 5:12

Being morally culpable, whether one knows they have done wrong or not, is a tenet found both in civil life and in the Bible as well. In civil life we use the term, “Ignorance of the law is no excuse.” If we break a law, even if we didn't know it existed, we are still guilty. The same is true with spiritual matters. Jesus said –

“And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare *himself* or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*.⁴⁸ But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few.”

-Luke 12:47, 48

The waters cover fallen man because man is fallen. However, the very waters that cover him are also the medium through which his moral and legal responsibility is reversed. Jordan, or the Descender, pictures the time of Christ's advent, just as it did at the burial of Jacob and at other times when it is mentioned. Christ became a Man. The same medium through which sin came will be used to deal with sin.

Jesus *descended* from the high mountain, picturing heaven, even to the Dead Sea itself. Elisha, or God of Salvation, is a picture of the work of Christ. Christ bore Calvary's cross Himself, pictured by Elisha cutting the wood Himself.

The wood was cast into the waters, just as Christ was cast into the pit of death. But through that act, the axe head was restored. The legal and moral responsibility was paid by another and it was removed from the offender.

In our baptism is a picture of what we see here. We are immersed in the waters of death with our legal and moral bonds weighing us down, but we are raised to newness of life, free from those bonds.

As in the account with Moses, the tree cast into the waters symbolizes the cross of Calvary and the expiation of our sins. The waters are the Source of life for the believer, Christ. They are the law, which overwhelms us and by which we are cut off, and yet Christ is the embodiment of that Law and so it is through Him and His fulfillment of that law that our sin is removed and eternal life is granted to us.

However, there is the final verse with those instructive words, *ha'rem lakh*, "**Pick it up for yourself.**" We have to do something, we have to reach out, by faith, and receive back the restored rights. Each of us should do just as the man there with Elisha – "So he reached out his hand and took it."

If you have never reached out your hand to receive God's pardon which is found in Christ Jesus the Lord, do it today! The entire Bible, even these obscure little passages that seem almost quaint, is there to show us of the love of God in Christ our Lord.

The axe head was still in the water, still in Christ, until it was received from Him. The hole in Jesus' side was there for all to see, but Thomas doubted and so Jesus told him to "reach your hand *here*, and put *it* into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing" (John 20:27).

This is what Jesus asks each of us to do, reach out for the axe head, reach out our hand and take what has been offered, reach out for restoration through Christ. I pray that you will do so today...

Closing Verse: *"And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17*

Next Week: Exodus 16:1-8 (Bread from Heaven) (45th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Precious Water of Life

So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea
Then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur
And into the wilderness they went days three
And found no water; nothing to drink, nothing tasty and pure

Now when they to Marah came
They could not drink the waters of Marah for they were bitter
Therefore Marah was called its name

And the people complained against Moses, saying
“What shall we drink?” Tell us, we are praying

So he cried out to the Lord
And the Lord showed him a tree
When he cast it into the waters
The waters were made sweet, sweet as can be

There He made a statute and an ordinance for them
And there He tested them, and said
“If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God
And do what is right in His sight and not wrong instead

And give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes
I will put none of the diseases on you
Which I have brought on the Egyptians
For I am the Lord who heals you; this I will do

Then they came to Elim
Where there were of water twelve wells
And seventy palm trees, beautiful it would seem
So they camped there by the waters, as the account tells

Such a beautiful story of God's tender care for us!
He took what was bitter and healed it
And if we will just receive His Son, the Lord Jesus
And to Him our souls entrust and commit

We will be saved unto the ages of ages, for all eternity
It is a gift and an offer from our glorious God
How can such love be found! How can it be?
That He would heal us from the sins of our earthly trod

We hail You, O our majestic King!
We praise You glorious Lord Jesus!
Hear our voices as to You we sing!
You who have done such marvelous things for us!

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 16:1-8 (BREAD FROM HEAVEN)

In the Bible, the word *lechem* or bread is often used synonymously with that which sustains us. That has carried over into English as well. We speak of “breaking bread” together as having a meal. We think of “our daily bread” as a term which encompasses everything we need to sustain us. And when we make money, we often call it “bread” because money is what we deal with in order to buy those things which sustain us. As bread comes from the earth, we tie our existence to this earthly thing which keeps us going from day to day. Jesus spoke of another type of bread, a heavenly Bread. As this comes from heaven, then it must sustain us in a completely different way – a way that we’ll look at more closely in the sermon today.

Bread is one of my favorite parts of any meal, and I love the many varieties of bread that are out there. If my lovely wife serves bread first, I’ll often fill myself up on just that and nothing else, leaving her to wonder why she prepared 8 or 10 other dishes for me to look at and ignore.

When I was young and we went out for dinner, my grandfather didn’t want us to eat any bread before we had our meal for exactly that reason. He didn’t want us to stuffing ourselves on it and then missing out on whatever we ordered. I remember him filling up his coat pockets with all the rolls that had been served but which were ignored during the meal. He was famous for this.

In today’s passage, the Lord promises to give the Israelites “bread from heaven.” Psalm 78’s description of that bread is our text verse for the day –

Text Verse: *Yet He had commanded the clouds above,
And opened the doors of heaven,
²⁴ Had rained down manna on them to eat,
And given them of the bread of heaven.
²⁵ Men ate angels’ food;
He sent them food to the full. Psalm 78:23-25*

Not every stop between Egypt and Sinai is recorded in the book of Exodus, but each stop that is shows us something important that occurred and it is given as a picture of something later in redemptive history. This has been the case up until now and so it is logical to assume that today’s verses are no different.

And so let's find out if that is correct by looking a bit deeper into the passage we just read. Isn't it great? I mean, isn't it stupendous that God has given us such marvelous stories that are so filled with wonder! Week by week it's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Whining in the Wilderness (verses 1-3)

¹And they journeyed from Elim,

Chapter 15 ended with the account of the waters of Marah having been made sweet. This was immediately followed by the last verse of the chapter which said –

“Then they came to Elim, where there *were* twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters.” Exodus 15:27

The name Elim comes from a root which indicates to protrude or stick out, such as a porch on a house, a ram in a flock, or a large tree. There at Elim there were 70 palm trees which protruded out of the oasis, and there were 12 springs which provided water for the people. That was a picture of the work of the Lord in and through His 12 apostles and the 70 appointed disciples.

^{1 (con't)} and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai,

It is rather peculiar to have the words “all the congregation came” unless it means that they didn't all travel together at all times. But this is logical. The main stops where all the people gathered would be big enough to fit two million people.

However, while traveling, they would go through areas that could in no way accommodate such large numbers. And so the congregation would divide at times in order to have sufficient room to lodge along the journey. Also, those who had flocks would want to break off from the others in order to find something for them to snack on.

Occasionally though, there would be a place big enough to accommodate everyone and this is where they would meet up as a whole group. Here in our first verse, it says that they journeyed from Elim and came to the Wilderness of Sin. However, the actual travel

log that was filled out by Moses in Numbers 33 includes another stop not mentioned here –

“They moved from Elim and camped by the Red Sea. ¹¹ They moved from the Red Sea and camped in the Wilderness of Sin.” Numbers 33:10, 11

Scholars pretty much unanimously say that the stop by the Red Sea is left off here in Exodus because “nothing remarkable happened in it” (Benson, et al). But that is no reason to leave off recording a stop. Rather, each stop in the abbreviated account is given to show us a picture of something. Names always have importance when they are given, even if it isn’t plainly evident to us why.

The name Sin means “thorn,” as in a thorn bush, and is a shortened form of Sinai. This wilderness of Sin is said to be between Elim and Sinai, which means “Bush of the Lord.” This is the first mention of Sinai in the Bible.

In all, it will be named 35 times and all of them except four will be in the books of Moses. It is the same place known by its other name, Horeb. The stop now at the Wilderness of Sin is the eighth stop on their journey.

^{1 (con’t)} **on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt.**

As the Passover was held on the fourteenth day of the first month, and Israel departed Egypt on the fifteenth day, we know that this is the 31st day of travel. Israel has now been free from their bondage for one month, just one month...

² **Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.**

Before the Exodus, the people complained against Moses and Aaron because the workload upon them had increased. However, the Lord brought on Egypt all of His wonders while keeping Israel safe from them. Finally, the final plague on the firstborn came about and Israel was released from its 215-year captivity.

But no sooner had they been freed, than they complained against Moses as Pharaoh’s army approached by the shore of the Red Sea. Then, after they had been miraculously delivered through its waters, they again complained against Moses at Marah because the waters weren’t fit to drink.

Now, for the first time it says that they have complained against both Moses and Aaron. After thirty days, they are no longer content to trust that the Lord who delivered them was capable of continuing to deliver them. He had identified Himself as Yehovah Rapha, the Lord who heals, but instead they complain that His healing is less wonderful than the satisfaction of the stomach...

³And the children of Israel said to them, “Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat *and* when we ate bread to the full!

In this verse, the King James Version reads’ “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.” In the Hebrew, there is no mention of God. They followed the translation of the Geneva Bible that inserted this without any support from the text.

However, the expression was probably included to give weight to the complaining of the people. Instead of being grateful for their freedom, the intent of their words is that it would have been better to die by the plagues of Egypt than to die by starvation in the wilderness. Jeremiah gives the same thought as he watched the people dying of starvation during the siege of Jerusalem –

*“Those slain by the sword are better off
Than those who die of hunger;
For these pine away,
Stricken for lack of the fruits of the field.”* Lamentations 4:9

It should be noted though that the people still had flocks in abundance as will be seen throughout their time in the wilderness. But not everyone would have flocks and they would be hungry as well. When people started to eat their animals, the others with none would join in and rapidly deplete the entire stock.

After thirty days, anything carried out of Egypt would be consumed and so this would be their only option left. It is probably not an exaggeration that they had plenty to eat in Egypt. Charles Ellicott, noting the ancient historian Herodotus says that –

“It was the habit of the Egyptians to feed well those whom they employed in forced labours (Herod. ii. 125), just as slave-owners commonly do their slaves.” (Ellicott)

The question for us, knowing what the Israelites have pictured so far is, “Would we rather be in bondage to sin and yet filled with the things of the world, or would we rather be free from our bondage and suffer physical lack in the process.”

There can be no doubt that we are tied to our stomachs. They are a part of us and without filling them, we will eventually waste away. But what price is our freedom from sin by the work of Christ? In the end, even if our bodies die, our soul will live because of Him.

Time and again we are seeing the contrast between the carnal and the spiritual and we are being asked to evaluate ourselves. For every meal we eat, there is actually no guarantee that we will have another. If our last meal will be our last meal, will we still be able to say, “The way of the Lord is worth the suffering?”

As a bonus thought for you, and as a new squiggle for your brain, this is the first time that the word *siyr* or “pot” is used in the Bible. It also means “thorn.” The idea is that a pot is used to boil up something, and a thorn is something that rapidly springs up. So you can see the connection between the two words.

It is of interest to me that the word *siyr* means “thorn” as does the name of this place, Sin. There is a connection seemingly being made between the full pots of meat for the people, which are now empty, and the location where they now are. The cooking pots of Egypt have become *painful thorns* in the memory of the people as they impatiently turn their hearts back to the land of their bondage.

If the Wilderness of Sin is picturing the work of Christ, including His crown of thorns, then the picture seems to say, “Do you believe what He did for you is sufficient, or do you want to go back to your old life of sin and bondage, pictured by the pots full of meat in Egypt.”

And so I have a question for each of you today – What sin is tempting you from your own past? Don’t let what once seemed to be so delightful, but which was so destructive, turn your heart away from the Lord who brought you out from that past life.

^{3 (con’t)} **For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”**

The “you” of these words is speaking of Moses and Aaron. And yet, they are the Lord’s representatives and so He must be included in the words. They have just said that it

would have been better if the Lord had taken their lives in Egypt, but that didn't happen. They cannot disassociate Moses and Aaron from the Lord.

Further, there is the background truth that the pillar of cloud and fire is still with them. Moses and Aaron are merely going wherever they are led. If they supposedly brought the assembly out to be killed, then the implication is that the Lord is even more to blame.

*I didn't get what I wanted for dinner... O! woe is me!
I had to suffer through meatloaf instead of a steak
Why is my life so difficult? How can it be?
Won't life ever give me a break?*

*I had to walk to work because my car broke down
My job is more than half a mile down the road!
Ten minutes of anguish, and you wonder about my frown
Now leave me alone before I explode*

*Who cares that the Lord saved me through the Red Sea
Who cares that the bitter waters were made sweet
That was yesterday, it's all about me!
And I am not a happy camper; my misery is complete*

II. Bread from Heaven (verses 4 & 5)

⁴Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you.

The story of Manna from heaven is one that is forever remembered by God's people. Hearing it just once is enough to solidify it in the memory of the mind for a lifetime. One reason is certainly that food comes from the earth, not from heaven. Just as man was taken from the earth, so our sustenance comes from there as well.

To think that food would come from heaven then means something beyond the ordinary and even heavenly. To be the recipient of such a shower of heavenly blessing would then indicate divine favor. As the people of Israel picture the church of the firstborn of all of God's people, then the bread from heaven is a picture of the divine favor of God upon them.

And as bread is what sustains us in our physical bodies, this is picturing that which sustains us in our spiritual lives. It is exactly why Jesus spoke as He did in John 6. When He was asked what works a person must do in order to do the works of God, we read –

“Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”

³⁰ Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? ³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

³² Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

³⁴ Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.”

³⁵ And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.” John 6:29-35

Secondly, we are so dependent on food that to think of it coming from heaven gives us the impression of an infinite supply. There is only so much ground and when it has been picked clean, there is nothing left. Where else can one go for food when the ground has yielded its last morsel?

But if something comes from heaven, there is always the possibility that more can come. Just as the bread from heaven was divine favor upon the people of Israel to sustain their *physical lives*, Jesus is God’s divine favor upon His people to sustain our *spiritual lives*. It is a favor which never perishes and the supply of which will never run out.

However, in the case of this account, the miracle of the bread from heaven doesn’t begin with the bread coming from heaven. It begins with the promise of it coming, which is when the promise enters the ear of the hearer. If the words are true, then there will be an anticipation of their fulfillment. When they are realized, the miracle of the promise will also be realized.

That is no different that our own grant of eternal life. The miracle of eternal life doesn’t begin with our resurrection unto eternal life. Instead, it begins with the promise of its coming, which is when the promise enters our ears. As the Bible says, “...faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:17)

If the words of the Bible are true, then we will longingly wait in anticipation of their fulfillment. When they are realized, so will the miracle of the promise be realized. What Israel will wait a few hours for, some faithful Christians have waited 2000 years for, but the promise is not less true and its sure fulfillment will come in due time.

⁴ (con't) **And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day,**

The Hebrew word translated here as “a certain quota” is *devar* – literally “word.” The idea of a word is a thing, or a matter and the people are told to gather this thing *yom b’yommow*, or “daily in its day.” It is to be an act of faith that each day they would gather what was needed for the day.

If they gathered and there was none the next day, then what they gathered would be their last meal. But by faith, they are being instructed to gather *the word*, as it is, daily in its day; trusting that there would be another day to gather in its day.

And this is exactly what Paul tells us concerning our spiritual walk. In 2 Corinthians 5, he says –

“So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. ⁷ For we walk by faith, not by sight.” 2 Corinthians 5:6, 7

Each day is to be a day of trust. Just as Israel didn’t gather up an infinite supply of Manna to ensure they would never face deprivation again, we don’t simply expend all of our faith on any given day, expecting it to last us forever. Instead, we continue to exercise faith *yom b’yommow* or daily in its day.

And these two principles, the physical and the spiritual are tied up in the one unified thought of the Lord’s Prayer where Jesus said, “Give us this day our daily bread.” To be properly functioning believers, we need daily bread for both our physical and our spiritual lives.

⁴ (con't) **that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.**

These words follow the last words which were spoken to Israel just a few short verses ago. At the end of the last chapter by the bitter waters made sweet, we read this –

“There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them, ²⁶ and said, ‘If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do

what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I *am* the Lord who heals you.” Exodus 15:25-26

With the promise of the bread from heaven, the Lord also gave the people a law – to gather a certain quota each day. And He gives them the reason for the law which is to test them. In the Garden of Eden, abundance was promised with the words, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat” (Genesis 2:16).

And yet, a law was given as well. It was a law that bore its consequences if disobeyed –

“...but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17).

In Genesis 17, Abraham was given a promise of abundance, but along with that promise came a law – circumcision for him and his descendants and all those in his household. Along with that law came a consequence for disobedience – being cut off from the people of God.

Here in Exodus, a promise of abundance, even bread from heaven, is given. But with it is the law that they are to gather a portion *yom b’yommow*, or daily in its day. And there is also an implied consequence for disobedience – that the plagues of Egypt would come upon them.

The same is true with the covenant at Sinai, there are great promises made to the people in Leviticus 26, but there are also great consequences for disobedience. Time and again, this pattern is seen in Scripture. So why should we think the Lord works any differently towards us now?

He has given us a promise of abundance and He has given us laws which accompany this. But there are also consequences for not adhering to His laws. There are consequences for our earthly bodies when we depart from His precepts, and there is the promise of the loss of eternal rewards in our life to come as well.

It is a pitiful thing to think that every negative thing which we receive from the hand of the Lord is actually a self-inflicted wound. But this is how it is. What is more pitiful is that this is so rarely taught among Christians.

People are told about the showers of Manna that the Lord provides His people, but the law which accompanies the blessing, and the consequences for not adhering to the law,

are quickly passed over or completely ignored. Don't waste heaven's eternal rewards for sin's momentary pleasures! This is what I would first and foremost convey to you today.

⁵ And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily."

There are two major differences of opinion on what this verse means. Some scholars take this as a command that the people *are to collect* enough for two days. Others take it that what is collected on the sixth day will turn out to be *enough* for both days. The Hebrew seems to more naturally prefer the latter option.

Actually, it could be a combination of the two. Verses 17-21 show that there is a miraculous element tied up in the collecting of the Manna and yet there is also a natural element as well. The people gathered until the Manna melted away. At the end of the gathering, there was the right amount for everyone, even if some collected too much and some collected too little.

Therefore, there is no reason to assume that the amount provided by the Lord was twice as much, or that the time that the Manna melted away was later, allowing more time to gather it. Whatever was the case, twice what was normally gathered would be gathered on the sixth day. And so, each day was to be a day of faith that the next day would be taken care of by the hand of the Lord.

*I will test My people, but with an easy command
In conjunction with My grace, sending them heavenly bread
Surely they will be grateful and not whine or demand
Surely they will give Me praise and thanks instead*

*I will ask of them to collect it day by day
And to trust that it will come each day and on the next as well
Who could complain about that? Who could anything negative say?
I am sure they will be tickled pink and think the deal is quite swell*

*And when I give them the true Bread
When I give My own dear Son
Surely everyone will call on Him instead
The whole world will acknowledge He is the One*

*Actually, I know the wickedness of the human heart
But some will call out to Him, and to them righteousness I will impart*

III. Pots full of Meat and Bread to the Full (verses 6-8)

⁶Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, “At evening you shall know that the Lord has brought you out of the land of Egypt.

Moses and Aaron now contradict the words of the people which we saw in verse 2. There they inferred that it was Moses and Aaron who brought them into the wilderness by complaining against them. They now correct them by saying that it will become evident at evening that it was not them, but the Lord who has led them.

Based on what is said in verse 8, this verse seems out of place. The Lord has been speaking of bread from heaven which will come in the morning and yet now Moses and Aaron tell them that that “at evening” they would know the Lord’s hand was in it. This is based on the Lord giving them meat to eat; something which hasn’t even been mentioned yet.

But the structure of the passage is one based on parallels. It is a common form of Hebrew writing. The quail parallel the evening, and the Manna parallels the morning. The bread is a miracle on a different order than that of the quail.

A flock of quail coming into a camp not far from the ocean could be perceived as a chance occurrence but for the fact that it is announced in advance. And so in order to stave off the killing of any flocks that night, and in anticipation of the truly miraculous event which lie ahead, Moses and Aaron first mention that in the evening something great would take place.

⁷And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord;

Not only will the evening confirm to the congregation that it is the Lord who brought them out of the land of Egypt, but the morning will demonstrate the glory of the Lord in a unique way. The Hebrew word for “glory” here is *kavod*.

This is the first time that this word is used in connection with the Lord. Based on the parallelism used in these verses, the glory of the Lord spoken about here is *not* what happens in verse 10 as many scholars state. That manifestation of the Lord’s glory is given to confirm the coming manifestation of the giving of the bread.

It is through the bread from heaven that the glory of the Lord will be seen in a special way for the congregation. This then follows on with a chain of thought that will run throughout all of Scripture. There is a glorious aspect of the Lord which is unlike any other. In Isaiah, He claims His glory for Himself alone –

*“I am the Lord, that is My name;
And My glory I will not give to another,
Nor My praise to carved images.”* Isaiah 42:8

And yet, in John 1:14, we read these marvelous words which speak of Jesus –

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

And to ensure that we know that this isn't speaking of another glory than that of the Father, we read this in John 17 –

“And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” John 17:5

Throughout the epistles and into the book of Revelation, the glory of Jesus Christ is highlighted time and again, often in connection with the glory of God. Thus, from this starting point in Exodus 16, we have another sure example, of the countless others found in Scripture, which testify to the deity of Jesus Christ.

Without either abusing what is written or simply denying the truth of what lies before his eyes, one can come to no other conclusion than that He is the Lord Yehovah of the Old Testament. The glory of the Lord, revealed in the giving of the bread from heaven simply pictures the very glory of God in the giving of the true Bread from heaven, our Lord Jesus.

^{7 (con't)} **for He hears your complaints against the Lord.**

This is explicit. Verse 2 said that the people complained against Moses and Aaron. Now, it is openly stated that by complaining against them, they have complained against the Lord. A challenge against one's ambassadors is a challenge against the one who made the ambassadorial appointment.

In these words is the first use of the word *tluwnah* or “murmuring” found in the Bible. It will be used only 9 times in only three chapters of Exodus and Numbers and six of them are in this chapter. Harris, Archer, and Waltke explain this word for us to consider –

“The true nature of this murmuring is seen in the fact that it is an open act of rebellion against the Lord and a stubborn refusal to believe God’s word and God’s miraculous work. Thus the right attitude in real difficulty is unconditional acceptance and obedience. God’s own must never stand in judgment upon him.” HAW

^{7 (con’t)} **But what *are* we, that you complain against us?”**

Their words to the people show that the complaints have been wholly unwarranted. It has been and it will be evident again that the Lord has led them out and tended to them all along. It is also evident that the Lord is using Moses and Aaron as His chosen instruments for the leadership of the people.

Therefore, complaining against them is a complaint against the Lord. And a complaint against the Lord is certainly known to them to be a futile effort. He destroyed an entire nation’s economy, He killed the firstborn of the nation, He parted the waters of the Red Sea, and He made the bitter waters sweet.

What had possessed the congregation to complain against Moses and Aaron when they have simply been fulfilling the Lord’s word on their behalf? And the parallel in today’s world is therefore all the more astounding.

The Lord has given His word to direct and guide us – His superior word. As it is from Him, it is His *representative* to each of us. And yet, His people complain against it, either implicitly or explicitly, all the time.

We reject the things we don’t like in it, we dismiss the parts which don’t fit our warped theology, and we twist it to say whatever we want so that we can feel good about ourselves in congregations which bear little or no resemblance to what the Lord has directed for us. God help us!

If the Lord destroyed the Israelites along their journey to Canaan, can we expect any less as we treat His glory with utter contempt by diminishing this precious treasure we call the Holy Bible?

And so to understand that the severity of these Old Testament passages, even from this one we're looking at today, are given to direct us to a right attitude towards God via His word, let's take a moment and read a few verses from 1 Corinthians 10 –

“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ² all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. ⁵ But with most of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness.

⁶ Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. ⁷ And do not become idolaters as *were* some of them. As it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.’ ⁸ Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; ⁹ nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰ nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹ Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” 1 Corinthians 10:1-11

When the people complained against Moses and Aaron, they complained against the Lord. Likewise, when we complain against what is written in the word, we follow that same unholy path.

⁸ Also Moses said, “*This shall be seen when the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to the full;*

It should be noted now that this verse contains the first use in the Bible of the word *saba*, which means to be “sated” or “satisfied.” I only bring this up so that when we get to verse 12, we will better understand the timeline of what is going on. We'll get to that verse next week and I'll explain things then.

This verse confirms that the “glory of the Lord” spoken of in the previous verse is talking about the giving of the bread and not that which is seen in verse 10. Verse 6 said “At evening you shall know that the Lord has brought you out of the land of Egypt.” And verse 7 said, “And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord.”

Now the parallel of those two thoughts is given in one verse, meat in the evening and in the morning “bread to the full.” In paying attention to the structure of these Hebrew parallelisms, you can more easily identify what’s going on in what are somewhat difficult passages. Even some of the greatest scholars have misread what is being relayed here.

^{8 (con’t)} **for the Lord hears your complaints which you make against Him.**

A third parallel line is introduced. In the middle of verse 7, Moses and Aaron said, “for He hears your complaints against the Lord.”

^{8 (con’t)} **And what *are* we?**

Now a fourth parallel is stated using the same words from verse 7, *v’nakhnu mah* – “And we, what?”

^{8 (fin)} **Your complaints *are* not against us but against the Lord.”**

And the fifth parallel is seen here. At the end of verse 7 it said, “...that you complain against us?” This is now modified to correct the congregation. Instead of “But who are we that you complain against us?” they are corrected with the words “Your complaints *are* not against us but against the Lord.”

1)

6 At evening you shall know that the Lord has brought you out of the land of Egypt.
“*This shall be seen* when the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening,

2)

7a And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord;
8a and in the morning bread to the full;

3)

7b for He hears your complaints against the Lord.

8b for the Lord hears your complaints which you make against Him.

4)

7c But what *are* we,

8c And what *are* we?

5)

7d that you complain against us?”

8d Your complaints *are* not against us but against the Lord.”

These concluding words of verse 8 have a beautiful New Testament parallel. Just as a complaint against Moses and Aaron was a complaint against the Lord, so a complaint against the Lord is a complaint against God. Jesus said this in Luke 10 –

“He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me.” Luke 10:16

At that time, He was speaking of the word of His representatives, those seventy He had commissioned to speak His word. If nothing else confirms that the picture of Elim from the previous chapter that I gave you was speaking of the apostles and these seventy disciples, this should.

That seemingly obscure verse, right at the end of Chapter 15 was given to show us that the Lord tests us through His representatives. As the word of the apostles has been recorded and is now our New Testament, the word of those men is our point of contact with God.

This account follows directly after that stop in Elim and before they come to Sinai. It therefore follows that the Lord brought them this way in order to show us a picture of this. At Sinai, the Bush of the Lord, the law will be received. That law was received on the same day as Pentecost, 1500 years later.

If the stop at Elim pictured the words of the apostles and disciples, and Sinai is for the giving of the law, picturing the giving of the Holy Spirit to us, then this time in the Wilderness of Sin is given as a precursor to that. The statute and the ordinances of the Lord are given to us to sustain us. They are our daily bread and our meat by which we are fed.

So let's follow the logic – we cannot know God without knowing Jesus Christ. The Bible was given to us by the representatives of Jesus Christ who tell about Him. Therefore, we cannot know Jesus Christ without knowing the Bible. And therefore, we cannot know God without knowing our Bible. It is incumbent on each one of us to study to show ourselves approved, being obedient to this cherished word which has lovingly been passed down to us by our merciful and glorious God.

And above all, we cannot have fellowship with this God unless we fellowship with His Son. As unappealing as this message is to the world we live in, it is a truth which we cannot deny if we accept that this is God's word, and it is.

If you have never received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, calling on Him as Lord, you stand condemned before God. Let us get that fixed today. Let me tell you how...

Closing Verse: *“Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.” Philippians 2:14-16*

Next Week: Exodus 16:11-21 (Quail and Manna) (46th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Bread from Heaven

And they journeyed from Elim
And all the congregation of the children of Israel
Came to the Wilderness of Sin
Which is between Elim and Sinai, as the account does tell

On the fifteenth day of the second month, we understand
After they departed from Egypt the land

Then the whole congregation...
Oh! What a mess
Of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron
In the wilderness

And the children of Israel said to them, in a way not so sweet
“Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord
In the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat
And when we ate bread to the full; rather, we die by the sword

For you have brought us out into this wilderness
To kill this whole assembly with hunger, or so we guess

Then the Lord said to Moses, the thing that He would do
“Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you

And the people shall go out
And gather a certain quota every day around their dwelling spot
That I may test them without a doubt
As to whether they will walk in My law or not

And it shall be on the sixth day
That they shall prepare what they bring in
And it shall be twice as much as they gather daily, I say
Sure enough on the morrow, the process will begin

Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel
“At evening you shall know
That the Lord has brought you out of the land of Egypt
And has led us everywhere we did go

And in the morning you shall see
The glory of the Lord
For He hears your complaints against the Lord quite plainly
He hears your every uttered word

Also Moses said, “This shall be seen
When the Lord gives you in the evening meat to eat
And in the morning bread to the full
For the Lord hears your complaints, words not so sweet

Which you make against Him
Your grumblings are filled to the brim

And what are we? Tell us your word!
Your complaints are not against us but against the Lord.”

Lord, help each of us to be content with the life you have given
Help us to not complain, but to be grateful instead
Because of Jesus we have a promise of eternal livin’
Because of our Lord, our true and heavenly Bread

May we rest in Him, content and at peace
May we give you the glory and the praise that You are due
May this offering from us never, never cease
But throughout the ages, may we ever be praising You

Thank You, O God, for Jesus our precious Lord
Who You have revealed to us in Your superior word

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 16:9-21

(QUAIL AND MANNA)

When we decided to move off the beach a few years ago, we started looking for a building. When I saw the sign on this place, I called the number and asked about it. The owner told me the price and then asked if I was opening a bar. I told him, “No, a church.”

He was so delighted that he immediately started talking himself down on the price! He said that bars had offered much more than the asking price, but being a Christian he refused to sell. But when a church wanted it, he went in the opposite direction to the point where I was worried he would lose on the deal.

As we were getting the place ready, we needed some nice cabinets for the bathrooms. Within just a couple days two, beautiful ones were sitting out by the road waiting for someone to take for free. I could go on and on with such stories, but you get the picture.

The Lord sent us Manna in order to sustain us as a church. He was saying, “Trust me, it will work out as it should.” Today, we will see how He did the same for Israel as they wandered in the wilderness.

Text Verse: *You also gave Your good Spirit to instruct them,
And did not withhold Your manna from their mouth. Nehemiah 9:20*

My friend Tom often says, “The Lord may not give you everything you want, but He will always give you everything you need.” He is great in that way! He never fails to meet our needs. And quite often, He sends us the things we want as well. He is the Giver of the extravagant, and He is the Provider of all we need. It is a truth that permeates His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Glory of the Lord (verses 9-11)

**⁹ Then Moses spoke to Aaron, “Say to all the congregation of the children of Israel,
‘Come near before the Lord,**

The word for “before” in this verse is *liphne* which literally means “face” or “faces” and hence we get the idea of “before.” But what is implied is that the people are called together for a special meeting; a face to face meeting.

And not only is it the “people” in general, as if it could imply only the designated leaders of the tribes, but rather Moses has called “all the congregation.” Every person is to present their face to the Lord. And there is a reason for this, as the rest of the verse explains...

^{9 (con't)} **for He has heard your complaints.”**

The word for “complaints” here is *tluwnah*. It’s a word that was introduced to the Bible in the last sermon and as was explained then, it is only used nine times in the Bible, six times in this chapter and three more in Numbers.

This is the fifth of those six times. It indicates a murmuring or a grumbling, as if the people have a resentment welling up inside of them which they have been sitting around moaning about. It wasn’t just a few people but the entire congregation has been whining. It started somewhere and the infection grew throughout the people of the camp. This was seen explicitly in verse 2, which said –

“Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.” Exodus 16:6

At that time, their reason for complaining was also given –

“Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat *and* when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” Exodus 16:3

But their whining was surely unjustified. Matthew Henry gives his thoughts on the words they spoke –

“We cannot suppose they had plenty in Egypt, nor could they fear dying for want in the wilderness, while they had flocks and herds: none talk more absurdly than murmurers. When we begin to fret, we ought to consider, that God hears all our murmurings.”
Matthew Henry

The Lord did hear their murmurings and promised to provide for them, again withholding His wrath at their lack of faith. His promise included two things – meat in the evening and in the morning bread to the full. When we looked at the verses from last week, in verse 7 it said this –

“And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord; for He hears your complaints against the Lord. But what *are* we, that you complain against us?”

-Exodus 16:7

Now, as the congregation is summoned, the glory of the Lord will appear in the cloud before all the people, but as was seen from a breakdown of the structure of the verses, this is not the “glory of the Lord” which verse 7 was speaking of.

Scholars whose commentaries tie the glory of the Lord in verse 7 with that which will now be seen have missed the significance of how the passage is structured and what it is trying to show us.

The pillar of cloud and fire has been with the people since Etham and they were expected to have faith that if the Lord was leading them in this way, that He would tend to their needs in the process. But instead of turning their eyes to the Lord in faith, they turned them inward in complaint.

He is now going to illuminate the cloud with His splendor in an attempt to wake them up and show that that if His glory is there *ahead* of them, then His glory will also be displayed *among* them.

¹⁰ Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel,

As was the case with Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh, we see here as well. Aaron was given the instructions to speak by Moses and then he repeated the words to the whole congregation. However, this is probably more for the benefit of Aaron than it is for the sake of Moses’ speech impediment.

By having Aaron speak for Moses, it will show that he is, like Moses, a qualified representative of the Lord. The congregation was said to have complained against both of them in verse 2 and so having Aaron speak for Moses will show that their complaints against both of them were unjustified.

¹⁰ (con't) **that they looked toward the wilderness,**

It is significant that these words are included. The Lord could have appeared directly above them as if He were an authoritarian Ruler lording Himself over the people. He could have radiated to them from the top of a nearby mountain as if He were a King on his throne ready to make a judgment or hand down an edict.

He could have appeared from the direction they had come, as if to say, "I will take you back to your pots full of meat in Egypt, just as you wished." But none of these things occurred. Instead, He will manifest Himself in the direction of the wilderness.

In one sense, He had separated Himself from the people as if to say, "Your grumbling has caused a rift between you and Me. I am separated from you in order to keep from destroying you." Additionally though, it was also a sign that the Lord determined to continue leading them into the wilderness when they broke camp.

That vast and inhospitable area which lay before them would consume them all if they were to simply venture into it without suitable provision. By manifesting Himself there, it was to be a sign to them that He *was* their provision and that what He would do would be sufficient for them.

The promise had already been made – "meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to the full." Now they would have a visible manifestation of where that promise would come from. By seeing the Lord in this way, in the future they would be reminded of His glory every time they went out to reap what He sowed for them, and to gather what He had graciously left for them.

In this gathering, they were expected to behold the glory of the Lord each day. This then is what it meant in verse 7 with the words, "And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord." What they picked up would be from the same Source as what their eyes beheld. The Lord in the cloud was to be the Giver of the bread – a marvelous picture of Christ in both instances.

¹⁰ (con't) **and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.**

As the cloud was with them throughout the journey, this then must indicate a particular change in the cloud itself. Just as Christ was with the apostles throughout His ministry, there was a time when He more fully manifested His glory to them. That is recorded in all three synoptic gospels. Matthew records it this way –

“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; ² and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. ³ And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. ⁴ Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’” Matthew 17:1-4

The cloud which had led Israel suddenly burst forth with a glory hitherto unseen. There are certainly a few reasons for this. The first was already alluded to – the Lord was with the people and He would be both their guide and their sustenance in the wilderness.

Further, because he appeared to the people as Aaron spoke, it would revalidate his authority to be a spokesman on behalf of the Lord. In turn, because he spoke according to the instruction of Moses, Moses was likewise distinguished and therefore recognized as the Lord’s spokesman.

And finally, it was a visible demonstration of the majesty of the Lord. He wasn’t just an invisible entity which was surrounded by a pillar of cloud and fire. Instead, He is a visible entity which was merely concealed by that pillar. It is a picture of Christ.

Hebrews chapter 1 says that Christ is the brightness of God’s glory and the express image of His person.” It is this brightness which burst forth from the cloud to show that there is more than just a hidden force, but a glorious Being; the God of Israel.

¹¹ And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

At least twelve times in this chapter, a verse begins with someone speaking to someone else and it continues on with what that person says. However, in this one instance, the words, “And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,” are set off as a separate verse. In this, the chapter has 36 verses instead of just 35. In turn, the book of Exodus is a verse longer, and in turn the Bible is a verse longer.

Each seemingly random addition like this one leads to a more perfect pattern which is found in the structure of the Bible. And so each time we come to a sentence which is divided like this, I try to highlight it to you in order to remind you that there is true wisdom behind each word and verse found in Scripture.

In addition to that, there is something for us to pay attention to here. Moses is mentioned seventeen times in this chapter, Aaron six times. And all six times that Aaron is mentioned, it is either in connection to Moses or speaking as directed by him.

The Lord has chosen Moses as His representative, and in turn he at times designates Aaron as his spokesman. What we are seeing in words, Israel was to see in person. The obvious nature of the established hierarchy makes the rebellions which are recorded all the more poignant.

Like the fifth commandment which asks us to honor our father and our mother, the Lord establishes hierarchies for a reason. When we complain against them, or refuse to be obedient to them, the result is that we end up harming ourselves and our relationships with them and with the Lord.

And one final point about these words. They should probably read, “And the Lord **had** spoke to Moses, saying...” rather than, “And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying...”

In time, this verse certainly precedes verse 7. But in order to ensure the proper structure was maintained to show that “the glory of the Lord mentioned in that verse was speaking of the bread from heaven rather than the appearance of the Lord in the wilderness, it is stated to us now.

Hebrew is deficient in tenses and so we have to infer whether something is present tense or past tense. In the case of these words, they are past. They preceded Moses’ words to the people and therefore Moses was not being presumptuous in what He said to the people. Instead, he was relaying what was already said to him, even though it is only now recorded.

¹² “I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel.

This is the last use of the word *tluwnah*, or “complaints” in the book of Exodus. Chapter 16 is at least partly given to show us that the Lord is not unaware of our complaining and that He is not unsympathetic to it.

When we are in need, our needs will be met according to His purposes. However, the next time that this word, *tluwnah*, is used there will be a different result than what is experienced in this chapter. In Numbers 14, the same congregation will receive very bad news because of their complaints –

“Say to them, ‘As I live,’ says the Lord, ‘just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: ²⁹The carcasses of you who have **complained** against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above. ³⁰ Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in.’” Numbers 14:28-30

The very wilderness where the Lord has now manifested Himself in splendid glory will become the burial place for all of the people who refused to acknowledge Him as their faithful sovereign leader who would certainly provide for them if they would just humble their hearts before Him.

12 (con’t) Speak to them, saying, ‘At twilight

The term for “twilight” here is *ha’arbayim*. It literally means, “between the evenings” and it was first used in Exodus 12:6 at the time of the Passover. This is now the second time it is used. I won’t re-explain all the details, but it is used 11 times in the Bible and each time it details the work of Christ; the time of day when He died on the cross. What we are seeing here in the giving of the quail “between the evenings,” and the glory of the Lord being seen in the Manna in the morning, is exactly seen first in the cross of Christ, Him giving His flesh for the sins of the world, and then in His resurrection where the bread of life, the resurrected Christ, comes forth from the grave in the morning. This is the very reason for the Lord’s Supper where weekly we say these words—

barukh atah Yehovah elohaynu, melech ha’olam, ha’motzi lekhem min ha’aretz –
Blessed are Thou O Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth Bread from the earth.

It was “between the evenings” that Jesus Christ died on the cross, just as these quail will die for the people’s meal. And, it was in the morning that the Bread of Life, our Lord Jesus Christ came forth from the grave, just as the Manna miraculously appeared each morning.

12 (con’t) you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread.

Remembering that these words have already been spoken to Moses and we are only now seeing them, we can see why there is the change from verse 4 which only spoke of

the “bread from heaven.” It is not an arbitrary insert by a fumbling scribe, but a logical progression of thought in combination with a marvelous series of parallelisms which have helped us to determine what is going on.

This is certain because we come to the second use in the Bible of the word *saba*, which means to be “sated” or “satisfied.” The first was in verse 8. Its use shows us that this verse certainly precedes verse 8 and Moses is repeating what he was told.

If the details seem overwhelming, imagine my Monday, 17 August as I went back and forth between verses trying to put together a timeline that would help you grasp what is going on. In the end, Bible study is hard, but the rewards are heavenly.

We are getting a look into the mind of God as He slowly and methodically reveals His word to us. Each verse is selected to show us what happened and how it has a greater fulfillment in Christ the Lord.

Why is it that the Lord chose this chapter of the Bible to introduce the word *saba*, or satisfied? It is because this chapter pictures the only thing that can truly satisfy – the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is exactly what Jesus said concerning these things in John 6:35 –

“I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.” John 6:35

¹² (con’t) **And you shall know that I *am* the Lord your God.”**

The term “Lord” or “Yehovah” is mentioned 22 times in this chapter. The word God or *elohim* is mentioned only once and it is only mentioned in relation to the Lord – *ani Yehovah elohekem*, “I *am* the Lord your God.”

Notice though that the proclamation is made in connection with the giving of the meat and the bread. Out of all of the 22 uses of “Lord” in the chapter, He chooses this verse with this precept to explicitly remind them and us of who He is. Why would this be?

The answer is Jesus. The word “meat” here is *basar*. It literally means “flesh.” It is the body of a being which is “seen in contrast to the spirit (*ruah*)” (HAW). The Lord is giving Israel flesh and bread to sustain them. This is exactly what Jesus claimed He was giving to His people.

In John 6, Jesus speaks extensively about the bread from heaven which is detailed in this passage of Exodus. To sum up his words to the people, He says this –

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁵⁵ For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. ⁵⁶ He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. ⁵⁷ As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.” John 6:53-58

In that passage, He uses both the Greek word for “*flesh*” which is *sarx* and the Greek word for “*bread*” which is *artos*. This is why this 12th verse of the chapter says, “And you shall know that I *am* the Lord your God.” In the end, it is all about Jesus. Christ gave His flesh and He is the true Bread of heaven. By these, we know that He is the Lord our God.

Take time today to read John chapter 6 from the 22nd verse on and you will better understand the relationship between these two wonderful stories.

*You shall know that I am the Lord your God
I will make it evident in the works I do
Be confident that as in this earth you trod
That I have given sufficient evidence to you*

*I prevailed over the law, which no one else could do
I showed that I am the Holy One of Israel
And then I went to Calvary’s cross for you
And so of My works, you are to tell*

*I proved My sinless life when I broke death’s chains
In the resurrection, I proved that I have set you free
Now the only thing which remains
Is that You reach out your heart and receive Me*

II. Bread from the Lord (verses 13-16)

¹³ So it was that quails came up at evening and covered the camp,

This is the first of four times that quails will be mentioned in the Bible. The word is actually in the singular, *ha'selav*, or "the quail." It is as if they came up as one and alighted everywhere at the same time, covering the camp.

I will explain the word *selav* for a new brain squiggle for each of you. *Selav* is an orthographical variation on the word *shalah* which means "prosper." That idea comes from "to be quiet" or "to be at ease." The connection between the words is that quails are fat and slow in flight because of their weight, and so they are given this name.

The other account of quails being given to the people in this manner is in Numbers 11. However, when the people eat of those quails, many will die. From a New Testament perspective of why, we can go to Paul's admonition concerning the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians chapter 11.

There in verse 30, Paul told them that because of not discerning the Lord's body, many were weak and sick and many had died. We are to come to the Lord's Table recognizing our state before Him, not arrogantly, but in humility. Israel will fail to do this in the book of Numbers and they will suffer because of it.

Albert Barnes notes this about migrating quail which can be observed even in our modern times –

"This bird migrates in immense numbers in spring from the south: it is nowhere more common than in the neighborhood of the Red Sea. In this passage we read of a single flight so dense that it covered the encampment. The miracle consisted in the precise time of the arrival and its coincidence with the announcement." Albert Barnes

After spending the winter in Africa, they fly north again. Once they cross the Red Sea, they are utterly exhausted and can be gathered up in enormous numbers with no difficulty at all. As Barnes noted though, the miracle is that they arrived exactly at the time the Lord said they would.

Flesh would be given at the same time that Christ died on the cross – between the evenings. The giving of the quails pictures the giving of the Son of God for the nourishment of our life.

¹³ (con't) and in the morning the dew lay all around the camp.

The bread from heaven, of which a name has not yet been given, came in the morning with a layer of dew. The word translated here as “lay” is *shekavah*, which means “an emission.” It’s a surprising word to show up here, but nothing sexual should be inferred. The word is used for the first time here and a total of just 9 times in the Bible, all in Exodus through Leviticus. This word *shekavah* is defined as the “(seed of) copulation” (HAW). This would then imply “that which gives life.” If that doesn’t perfectly fit with Jesus’ words of John 6, I’m not sure what does –

“Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” John 6:32, 33

Again, like the giving of the quail, and even the timing of their arrival, the appearance of the dew around the camp is a perfect picture of the Lord Jesus and His work for us. The true Bread of God is what gives life to the world, pictured by the bread in the wilderness that was provided to give life to Israel.

Interestingly, the term “dew” here has only been used in one account prior to this. That was in Genesis 27, during the blessing by Isaac on his two sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob was blessed with the dew of heaven and Esau’s blessing was being away from the dew of heaven (NIV). This picture of the “dew of heaven” is beginning to be realized here in Exodus 16.

¹⁴ And when the layer of dew lifted, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a small round substance, as fine as frost on the ground.

There is a lot of interesting information in this verse. We have the “dew” mentioned again which was just explained in the previous verse. Once that was gone up from the ground, something wonderful is left behind for the people.

It is a small round substance. The word for “small” is *daq*. It literally means “thin.” The word for “round” here is *khaspas*, which is used only this once in the entire Bible. It means round, but not round like a ball. Rather it is round like a scale. Its root means to peel like a scale and so we get the idea of a round thing which is very thin.

And the word for “frost” here is *kphowr* which indicates “to cover” as in the frost covering the ground. This word comes from *kaphar*, which means to appease, atone, forgive, be merciful, etc. It is again a picture of Christ who covers our sins in His mercy.

Israel's receiving of this bread from heaven is merely looking forward to our atonement and the sustaining of our salvation as we walk in this fallen world. As long as we are here, we continue to rely on the true Bread from heaven to sustain us until we enter the Land of Promise, which is also exactly when Israel's Manna ended.

When they crossed over the Jordan and into Canaan, we read this from the book of Joshua –

“Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho. ¹¹ And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day. ¹² Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year.” Joshua 5:10-12

As the Manna only became visible when the dew had lifted, it is probably an explanation for the enigmatic expression used by Jesus in Revelation 2:17 where He promises those who overcome “some of the hidden Manna to eat.” Until the dew lifts, it remains hidden.

¹⁵ So when the children of Israel saw *it*, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it *was*.

The Hebrew words translated here as “What is it?” read, *man hu*. Though it would seemingly be easy to translate this, it isn't. The word “what” is not *man*, but *mah*. And so some scholars say that it doesn't mean “What is it?” but rather “It is a gift.” The Hebrew word *manan* means “gift” and so they believe that it is a shortened exclamation for that.

Other scholars disagree and say that *man* obviously means “what” because that is what it means in the Aramaic language. But why would one word from Aramaic be translated this one time in the Bible as “what?”

The KJV avoids the conflict by saying, “It *is* manna.” This doesn't explain anything. Instead, it simply translates what the Hebrew says. But then it causes it to contradict itself because it next says that they named it Manna because they didn't know what it was. That makes as much sense as a football-bat.

I'm sure that the meaning of the word Manna is as clear as mud to you now. And just so you know when you read the Bible, the word is *man*, whatever *man* means. I would prefer "gift" because this is exactly how Jesus and His work is described in the New Testament.

¹⁵ (con't) **And Moses said to them, "This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat.**

Whatever the actual meaning of *man* is, Moses explains that it is the bread which the Lord has provided for them. It is an exact picture of the words of Jesus in John 6. The Lord has given us the Bread of life to eat and to sustain us for all of the ages to come.

¹⁶ **This is the thing which the Lord has commanded: 'Let every man gather it according to each one's need,**

Moses' instructions are clear concerning what should be gathered – "according to each one's need." The Hebrew however is much more expressive. It says *ish le-pi akelow* – "man as his mouth to his eating."

¹⁶ (con't) **one omer for each person,**

An omer for each person. In Hebrew, *la'gulgoleth* – literally "for every head." *Gulgoleth* means head or skull and you can hear the similarity to the name of the hill where Jesus died, Golgotha – The Place of the Skull. This is the first of twelve times it will be used in the Bible. For each person reckoned, one omer is designated.

This is an average for what a man would normally eat in a day, an omer per person. It is the first time this measurement is given in the Bible and scholars vary in what they believe it is, from about three to six pints. If it is only three pints, and an average family had four people, then that would be six quarts collected daily.

It is assumed that there were about two million people in the congregation and so this would mean about 93,500 bushels of Manna were collected every single day. If you have ever watched one of the stupid programs on TV that show someone collecting some type of stuff in the desert and claiming it is Manna, now you can see how utterly ridiculous that is

This could be nothing other than a miraculously provided food source. Considering that this went on, day after day, for about 40 years, there is no possible way that what is

described on those stupid shows could ever come close to meeting what the account says for even one day, much less for 40 years.

¹⁶ (con't) **according to the number of persons;**

However many dwelt together in each residence, the amount was to be figured according to that.

¹⁶ (con't) **let every man take for those who are in his tent.”**

The directions given are very precise and follow a set pattern – “man as his mouth to his eating; one omer for every head; according to the number of souls.” It is this that each man was to take for his tent. And just so you know, the word “tent” in this verse is singular, not plural. The KJV gets a demerit on this verse for translating it as “his tents.”

There has been a lot of specificity in these verses, all of it pointing to God’s provision in Christ. The people would be tended to and they would even be given an abundance to meet their daily needs. As Matthew Henry sums up these words –

“God promises a speedy and constant supply. He tried whether they would trust him, and rest satisfied with the bread of the day in its day. Thus he tried if they would serve him, and it appeared how ungrateful they were. When God plagued the Egyptians, it was to make them know he was their Lord; when he provided for the Israelites, it was to make them know he was their God.” Matthew Henry

*The flesh which God has sent, it is food indeed
It is sufficient to fill us and give us life anew
And when we have partaken, we will then follow at the lead
Of our Lord, who has given Himself for me and you*

*The dew of heaven has left behind a gift for us
There is bread enough for all to eat
And this only pictures the coming Messiah, Jesus
Oh my! How delicious is this Bread... so very sweet*

*Thank You, O God, for filling our souls in such a way
You have granted us life through Your Son
And so we will exalt You through Him, each and every day
Until when at last this earthly life is done*

*Then we shall praise You forevermore O God
As in the heavenly Jerusalem we shall forever trod*

III. Our Daily Bread (verses 17-21)

¹⁷ Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less.

What seems to be implied here is not disobedience, but rather initiative. Some people were more inclined to gather, and some less. They gathered what came to their hand until they were done gathering. It follows through then that if the Manna pictures Christ, that we can apply the same to us.

Some of us here gather in a little bit of Christ, some gather in a lot. A preacher or a scholar may struggle over the Bible, searching out its mysteries in order to bring them home to his flock. But the blue-collar worker may read the word cursorily at best and not really intending to find anything other than the surface story which is before his eyes.

Likewise, the rich man in the church may gather in a great deal in order to meet the needs of its expenses while the poor widow may only give 2 small pennies to meet them. And yet, when the two are combined, something wonderful happens...

¹⁸ So when they measured *it* by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one's need.

The marvelous result of the gathering of the people resulted in having exactly what was needed according to each one's need. The word "left over" is *adaph*. This is its first use and it means "excess." It is only found nine times, and only in Moses' writings from Exodus through Numbers.

A couple things seem to be implied in this passage. One is that this was that the miraculous gathering occurred each day, not just on the first day. And the second thing is that it was all gathered into heaps and then portioned out. What was collected by all collectively met the needs of all individually.

This verse is used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 8 to show exactly this. In the end, every need is met according to the wisdom of God. He had asked the Corinthians to assist in giving

to the saints in Jerusalem who were in need. In order to inspire them on in their giving, he wrote these words –

“For *I do* not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; ¹⁴ but by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may supply* their lack, that their abundance also may *supply* your lack—that there may be equality. ¹⁵ As it is written, ‘He who *gathered* much had nothing left over, and he who *gathered* little had no lack.’” 2 Corinthians 8:13-15

If we learn nothing else from this verse, we should at least see that the Lord truly has it all under control. This isn’t a verse condoning communism. There is nothing here or anywhere in the Bible to suggest that everyone’s property belonged to the collective whole.

Rather this is a passage which asks us to realize that the Lord has handed out abilities and gifts to all and that each of these collectively works towards the fulfilling of every need. Some have greater needs, some have lesser, but in the end, every need is met.

¹⁹ And Moses said, “Let no one leave any of it till morning.”

This directive is given specifically as one requesting trust. In essence, “The Lord will provide and so you are to trust that He will, in fact, provide.” They were to recognize their complete dependence on God, and have sufficient faith that He would meet their needs according to His promises.

In the same chapter of Matthew which includes the words, “Give us this day our daily bread” Jesus seems to remind his audience of this very passage from Exodus –

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble.” Matthew 6:31-34

²⁰ Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses. But some of them left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them.

This is another miracle of the Manna. When we get to verse 24, we will see that when they gathered enough for two days with the approaching Sabbath, it will last both days without breeding worms or stinking.

Further, in verse 33, Moses and Aaron were instructed to “Take a pot and put an omer of manna in it, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations.” This Manna was intended to last forever. Thus, the manna was something incorruptible in and of itself, but which became corruptible through disobedience.

This then is an exacting picture of how Paul describes our life in Christ. One’s obedience to the Lord, or lack of it, pictured by how the Israelite’s treated the Manna, was either rewarded or frowned upon. And it was the light of the new day which showed the results of what occurred.

The manna itself had nothing wrong with it, but how it was treated brought the negative result. Paul says that our work for the Lord is the same. If we act in a positive manner, there will be a reward, if negatively, a loss. Here are his words from 1 Corinthians 3 –

“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone’s work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” 1 Corinthians 3:11-15

²¹ So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need. And when the sun became hot, it melted.

And now we see another miracle of the Manna. The Manna that wasn’t collected melted away under the sun. And yet, we will read in verse 23 that it could be baked or boiled, something much hotter than the sun shining on it, and yet it wouldn’t melt away.

The Lord ensured that the Manna wasn’t just left on the ground to be trampled underfoot, nor was it left out where people could gather it any time during the day, and nor could any from outside the covenant community come along and partake of it. Instead, they needed to be diligent in gathering it as early and as much as possible in order to be ready for the day ahead.

The Manna was to be a lesson to them that they were dependent on the Lord for their sustenance, and it was to be a way of instilling in them discipline and obedience while still lavishing them with abundant grace.

For us, it is no different. God has shown us that we are utterly dependent on Him for our salvation. We are also dependent on Him for the gifts we possess. We are to use those gifts through discipline and obedience to His glory. If we fail to do so, it is we who will go hungry.

Everything we need is found in Christ and we simply need to reach out, day by day, and receive it. If you have never made a first and heartfelt commitment to this wonderful Lord who is pictured in these verses, please let me introduce Him to you now so you can...

Closing Verse: *“And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” 2 Corinthians 9:8*

Next Week: Exodus 16:22-36 (Entering God’s Rest – The Hidden Omer) (47th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Quail and Manna

Then Moses spoke to Aaron this word
“Say to all the congregation of the children of Israel
‘Come near before the Lord
For He has heard your complaints as well

Now it came to pass
As Aaron spoke to the whole congregation
Of the children of Israel
Yes the entire nation

That they looked toward the wilderness
And behold the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud
A sight which did impress

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
“I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel
Speak to them, as I am relaying
Saying, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat – get ready for a tasty smell

And in the morning you shall be filled with bread
And you shall know that I am the Lord your God
Just as I have said

So it was that quails came up at evening
And covered the camp of Israel
And in the morning
The dew lay all around the camp as well

And when the layer of dew lifted
There, on the surface of the wilderness all around
Was a small round substance which had been gifted
As fine as frost on the ground

So when the children of Israel saw it
They said to one another, “What is it?”
For they did not know what it was
They didn’t have clue, not even a bit

And Moses said to them concerning this tasty treat
“This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat

This is the thing which the Lord has commanded:
‘Let every man gather it according to each one’s need
One omer for each person, I am being candid
This is what I have decreed

According to the number of persons, to this extent
Let every man take for those who are in his tent

Then the children of Israel did so
And gathered, some more, some less even though

So when they measured it by omers after they brought it back
He who gathered much had nothing left over, indeed
And he who gathered little had no lack
Every man had gathered according to each one's need

And Moses said, "Let no one leave any of it till morning
Notwithstanding, Moses they did not heed
But some of them left part of it until morning ignoring the warning
And it bred worms and stank because of their misdeed

And Moses was angry with them in turn
Because they refused to pay attention and learn

So they gathered it every morning
Every man according to his need
And when the sun became hot, it melted
An impressive lesson for them indeed

Here we are, O God, just like Israel
We complain about every possible thing
Even when we know that surely all is well
Still we let our complaints openly ring

And we fail to heed to Your word
We find it easier to simply disobey
Even in the presence of our Lord
We get up and complain each and every day

Help us, O Lord, to simply trust and obey
Your word has told us that everything will be ok

Give us hearts that are geared toward glorifying you
And eyes that are fixed solely upon Jesus
This is surely the right thing to do
And so grant this kind favor to each one of us!

Thank You, O God, for our precious Lord Jesus
Thank You for leading us each step of the way
Be exalted on our lips; hear the praises from each of us
As we come before you day unto day

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 16:22-36 (ENTERING GOD'S REST - THE HIDDEN OMER)

Anybody want to come up and give evaluating this passage a shot before I do the sermon? All you have to do is think of Christ and it will fall into place. Come up... please!

As I first looked over the passage, a feeling that comes from time to time took hold of me. How am I going to make a sermon out of this? For whatever reason, I figured it would be difficult to find a lot of hidden treasure in it. But as so often happens, I was completely wrong.

Even the last verse, which seemed wholly disconnected to the rest of the account made perfect sense by the time I was done typing. Like the last few verses of the book of Ruth, this verse seemed to be added on for no particularly good reason.

But there is always a perfectly good one when the Lord has determined it to be there. And so, let's jump into the passage and see what wonderful things we can pull out of it.

Text Verse: *"I rejoice at Your word
As one who finds great treasure." Psalm 119:162*

As happens so often, with each new insight into Christ that showed up in these verses, I literally rejoiced as if having found great treasure. I hope you'll rejoice over each nugget which is found here as well. What a wondrous and superior word! And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Holy Sabbath to the Lord (verses 22-26)

²² And so it was, on the sixth day, *that* they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one.

The sixth day of the week is Friday. On this day, one of the miracles of the Manna is evidenced because twice as much Manna was available for gathering than on the other five days. Instead of one omer per person, there was *mishneh shnei ha'omer* or "double two, the omer." This is what the Lord promised in verse 5 and this is what happened. It would be unreasonable to assume that this is anything less than a double miracle. The Manna itself was neither natural, in either content or amount. The fact that it came to be twice as much on Friday only added to the miraculous nature of the event.

It should be noted that the Manna is called “bread” here and elsewhere. It isn’t merely called “food,” nor is it always specifically called by the name that it is given, Manna. Instead, it is called bread. It is a picture and a foreshadowing of Christ, who is the Bread of life.

²² (con’t) **And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses.**

This is what is recorded in verse 5 –

“And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.” Exodus 16:5

There is one of two possibilities concerning the reaction of these elders. The first is that Moses relayed this information to them and they simply didn’t pay attention, or Moses didn’t tell them in order to see how they would respond to what happened.

Either way, it seems by their appearing before Moses to tell him about the great harvest that they weren’t sure what to do with the surplus. If they kept it, would it stink and be filled with worms in the morning? If they threw it out, would they be held accountable for wasting what the Lord had provided?

Either way, they seemed to be in a conundrum concerning what they should do with the double portion they had received. And so Moses explains, or re-explains, it to them.

²³ **Then he said to them, “This *is what* the Lord has said: ‘Tomorrow *is* a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord.**

This verse contains the first use of the word *shabbaton* or “rest” in the Bible. Literally, *shabbaton shabbat-qodesh Yehovah makhar* or “a rest – a holy Sabbath to Yehovah – (is) tomorrow.” Scholars are divided on how to present the Sabbath day here. Some argue that the Sabbath is to be considered an eternal institution based on Genesis 2:3 –

“Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.” Genesis 2:3

Some go so far as to say that there was confusion in the elders about what to do on the Sabbath because they had this double portion on Friday and they were confused about what to do with the second omer on Saturday. Would they be allowed to violate the Sabbath to prepare it?

This is nonsense. Nothing in Scripture shows that the Sabbath existed at all until this point in history. Not a single verse outside of Genesis 2:3 hints at this. And the text itself will disprove this.

Secondly, Genesis 2:3 only became a written fact at the giving of the law through Moses, and it will be written after this account in Exodus. Genesis 2:3 simply describes the fact that God sanctified the seventh day, but it goes no further than that.

There is nothing prescriptive added to the general statement which was made in Genesis. Thirdly, the reason is given for the Sabbath in the presentation of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and in Deuteronomy 5, but the reason for it is different in both. First it is based on Creation, and then it is based on Redemption.

Therefore, the Sabbath was uniquely revealed to Israel at the time of their organization as a nation to show that the Lord is Creator and Redeemer. Until this point, there was no need to mandate the Sabbath to the world. And to demonstrate that this is certain, the Lord told Israel that the Sabbath would be a sign between Him and them, a sign of sanctification. That is found in Exodus 31 –

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ¹³ “Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it *is* a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that *you* may know that I *am* the Lord who sanctifies you. Exodus 31:12, 13

Also, these words directly clue us into this because it says, “Tomorrow *is* a Sabbath rest.” It does not say *ha’shabbat*, or “**the** Sabbath.” Instead, it leaves off a definite article. If the people were aware of the Sabbath as an institution, it would have said *ha’shabbat*, “**the**” Sabbath. It does not. Instead, Moses was made aware of it in connection to the giving of the Manna.

Unfortunately, the KJV utterly mistranslated this verse and added in two definite articles which don’t exist in the Hebrew. They say, “To morrow is **the** rest of **the** holy sabbath unto the LORD.” By adding these in, they have inserted inappropriate theology to the text which I believe has actually been harmful to the church.

And finally, in the same line of thought, Moses gives additional specificity by repeating the words and adding in the word “holy.” He says, “Tomorrow *is* a Sabbath rest, a **holy** Sabbath to the Lord.” The entire phrase smacks of, and implies, uniqueness and thus first-time instruction concerning Sabbath requirements.

The reason why it's important to know this is because of the highly divergent teachings on the Sabbath within Christianity. Those who teach that a Saturday Sabbath is required for Christians will make the claim that it is an eternal standard of God that always existed for humanity. This verse shows that this is not true.

Much of this aberrant doctrine surely arose from the mis-translation of the KJV. Rather, only now is the Sabbath introduced into God's redemptive plans for man. In the giving of the Manna is a picture of Christ. And, in the giving of the Sabbath in connection with the Manna is another picture of Christ. As He is our Bread, He is also our Rest. This is seen explicitly in Hebrews 4:3 –

“For we who have believed do enter that rest. Hebrews 4:3

By faith in Christ, our heavenly Bread, we enter into God's eternal rest, pictured by the giving of the Sabbath. It is only a picture.

²³ (con't) **Bake what you will bake *today*, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.”**

The Hebrew here is more expressive than our words. It reads “baking you shall bake and boiling you shall boil.” In this thought is more than just instruction for the Manna though. There is also a hint as to the unique nature of the substance. It wasn't just something that one would eat uncooked.

It was also something that could be cooked in several ways. It could be baked or boiled. This means that it could be used as a base for other things like the addition of spices or sauces. One can bake bread, but boiling bread isn't something we think of doing.

The nature of the Manna then shows that it could meet many different culinary needs and desires for the people to keep them from getting tired of the same thing. And yet, that is something they will actually complain about in the time ahead.

Moses' instructions here are given for them to do all of the work for Saturday on Friday. In doing so, they would be able to keep the Sabbath holy to the Lord. Everything that “remains” would be kept for the following day. The Hebrew word for “remains” is *adaph*. It is the second use of it now in the Bible.

The first was in verse 18 and showed that there was no excess after the people gathered the Manna. Now it is used to show that there was not only excess, but an entire day's

worth of excess. It is a specific, miraculous exemption to the standard expected for the other five days.

²⁴ So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it.

Again we see the miracle of the Manna. It was either a miracle that caused the leftovers *to stink* through disobediently keeping them when they shouldn't, or it was a miracle to keep the leftovers *from stinking* when they were obedient.

I showed in the previous sermon that it was a miracle that the Manna was caused *to stink* through disobedience. Thus it would picture our walk with Christ being corrupted through disobedience.

Christ is pure and undefiled. It is we who cause defilement through our sinful actions. Either way, a miracle occurred each week in the cycle of the lives of Israel during the time they received God's bread from heaven. As Matthew Poole comments on this verse –

“So great a difference there is between the doing of a thing upon God's command, and with his blessing, and the doing of the same thing against his will, and with his curse.”
Matthew Poole

²⁵ Then Moses said, “Eat that today, for today is a Sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field.

Again, there is no article in front of Sabbath. It simply says, “a Sabbath.” However, this is the formal institution of the Sabbath for Israel as will be seen in the next verse, and so it actually precedes the giving of the law. It is implicitly so in several ways. First, through the giving of the name “Sabbath” to designate the day.

Second, because God provided in advance *of* the Sabbath *for* the Sabbath. And third, He directed that what was provided on Friday was to be prepared on Friday, in advance of the Sabbath. It is a picture of Christ coming after the giving of the law.

When He came, the law was annulled, and with it, the Sabbath day requirement was annulled. For now, the Lord expected rest when rest was given. The Geneva Bible states it this way –

“God took away the opportunity for their labour, to signify how holy he would have the Sabbath kept.” Geneva

It should be noted here that eating is not considered work. That may sound obvious, but fasting which is mandated elsewhere in the Bible has a specific meaning and intent behind it. Israel was not expected to fast each Sabbath, but when they were told to fast, it became an additional precept, wholly unrelated to the Sabbath.

²⁶ Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none.”

This verse confirms the thought that the first Sabbath wasn't a one-time occurrence. Rather it was to become the standard at all times and as long as the Manna was provided. However, it could be inferred at this point that the Sabbath was then only to be observed during that period when the Manna was given.

It would be an incorrect conclusion, as we know. But at the time, they wouldn't have known this. Hence, at the giving of the law, the Sabbath will be fully incorporated into what was expected of Israel, even apart from the times when Manna was given. Again, we might say now, “Who cares about that?”

But for Israel, all they have is an incremental giving of instructions as the Lord progressively reveals His intentions to the people. If the Manna ceased and no further definition of the Sabbath had been given, then there might be confusion as to whether they still needed the Sabbath or not.

Step by step, the Lord is methodically shaping Israel to become His obedient people. By giving them the Sabbath in connection to the giving of the Manna, He was preparing them for a time when the Sabbath would be required apart from the Manna.

Think about it! Which would have been easier for people to adjust to? Being given Manna and being told to prepare on Friday and then not work on Saturday, or simply being told to prepare food on Friday and not do anything on Saturday when houses were full of things they had stored up for through normal life?

The giving of the Manna for six days and withholding it on the seventh before entering a normal agricultural setting was a valuable preparation for the time when the Manna would no longer be provided. The wisdom of God is written all over this story.

*Manna in the morning, what a wondrous sight
Day by day we get up and go into the field
And as occurs again, night after night
More is provided; a heavenly crop, a bountiful yield*

*And on the sixth day there is something even more
There is double the amount waiting for us to collect
It is a wondrous sight each Friday as we head out the door
Our Sabbath needs the Lord does never neglect*

*What a great God, one who provides a daily miracle
Our eyes behold what would otherwise not be believed!
But through the gathering of the Manna, the data is empirical
Any worries about what to eat on the morrow are always relieved*

II. Israel called its name Manna (verses 27-31)

²⁷ Now it happened *that some* of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none.

This verse implies one of two things. Either one or more of the elders was negligent in giving the instructions to those below him, or the people didn't listen to the elders when they were instructed concerning what to do. One way or the other, there is either negligence or disobedience involved.

And either way, it is a reflection of the offenders' attitude towards the Lord. We can very easily make this account into a useful example for us. There are churches all over the world whose preachers and teachers fail to convey the proper counsel of the Lord from His word.

That reflects an uncaring attitude by the one who is responsible for the people below him. It also shows disrespect for the sanctity of the word of the Lord. This in turn shows an uncaring attitude about his relationship with the Lord.

Or, it could be that the preacher or teacher is both capable and faithful and he diligently puts forth sound doctrine for those under his care. And yet, there may be some in his flock who simply disregard what they have heard. This shows an uncaring attitude towards the elder and the same towards the Lord and His word.

There are obvious variations on both scenarios, but we should honestly evaluate ourselves in relation to *the word of the Lord* from time to time. The care we show for His word is reflective of our ultimate concern about our relationship with Him. What a terrible thing to face up to on that great Day when we stand before Him and give an account of how we mistreated His superior word!

Concerning this act of disobedience on this first Sabbath, what is most surprising, and which is the exception rather than the rule, is that with the disobedience against a new commandment, there is no display of wrath upon the offenders. The Lord shows restraint towards these disobedient people. But, the next verse shows us that He, in fact, does care...

²⁸ And the Lord said to Moses, “How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?”

This is a stinging rebuke framed in the form of a question. The first time the Lord asked such a question was through Moses to the defiant Pharaoh –

“Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews: ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me.’” Exodus 10:3

It is as if the spirit of Pharaoh is dwelling in the people whom He delivered *from* Pharaoh. And it will continue to be seen in them almost constantly in the pages of the Bible. The next time this form of question is given will be in Numbers, after the giving of the law and as the people are being readied for entry into Canaan –

“Then the Lord said to Moses: ‘How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them?’” Numbers 14:11

Because of the rebellion, the Lord sentences the congregation to wander aimlessly in the wilderness until their bodies fall dead. Only two of them over the age of 20 will be spared because they defended the honor of the Lord. All the others perished without ever reaching the Land of Promise.

²⁹ See! For the Lord has given you the Sabbath;

The translation here follows the Hebrew properly. *Reu* or “see” is exactly what is being relayed. He is telling them that they are to perceive that the Sabbath has been given for

a reason. It is for the people because they are His people. As I noted from Exodus 31 earlier, it was to be a sign that they were the people of the Lord.

Even though that hasn't been stated to them yet, it is implicit in the fact that they are there *with* Him and He has given it *to* them. The Egyptians aren't there, the Chinese aren't there, and the people of Zimbabwe aren't there. He is with Israel and He has given them *ha'shabbat*, or "the Sabbath," for a reason.

It is now the first time in the Bible that the Sabbath has been used with a definite article, once again confirming that this is a *new thing* which has been introduced and which is now specifically defined by the Lord for the people. It has gone from the general to the specific. A new ordinance has been instituted for them.

^{29 (con't)} **therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days.**

What was implicit is now explicit. It is as if he is knocking on their *gulgoleth* (their skulls) and saying, "Hellooo, anyone home. I have given you bread for two days for a reason. I even told you the reason and what to do about it. Let's go through this step by step..." "Did I give you bread for two days any other day? No? Oh. Ok. And did I give you two days of bread on the sixth day? Yes? Good! And did I tell you that I *wouldn't* give you any bread on the seventh day? Yes. So *why* would you go out looking for bread on the seventh day? Your new name is Filbert, because you're a nut. Now listen closely Fil, because I have some instructions for you..."

^{29 (con't)} **Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day."**

Very few translations of these words convey the idea they relay properly. Two different words are translated as "place." The ISV and a few others show the distinction. It says, "Let each person stay **where he is**; let no one leave his **place** on the seventh day." The first word is *tahtaw* which means "under." The phrase says *shebu ish tahtaw* – "sitting man under himself." It gives the idea of staying put. The second word is *maqom* which means "place." It says *al yetse ish mimmeqomow* – "not let man go out of his place."

There is a spirit and an intent that the people were to rest. However, there is a point to which these words were taken to absurdity. There are accounts of people having fallen

down on the Sabbath and refused to get back up, lest they defile it. But in order to fall, they had to be up in the first place!

The Sabbath will be addressed and readdressed in the Old Testament, but it will be Jesus who truly defines what the giving of the Sabbath meant. In Mark 2, He says this –

“The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸ Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.” Mark 2:27

In the completion of His work, fulfilling the law, He is now *our rest*. The Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath and we are in Him when we receive Him as Lord. Therefore, in Him, we enter our rest – a rest which truly was made for man.

This might be a bit complicated, but a picture is being made here that we shouldn't miss. The Lord created Adam on the sixth day and it says in Genesis 2:8 that He *then* placed him in the Garden of Eden. It implies that he was made outside the garden and then placed in it.

The word used to describe placing him in the garden is *yanakh*. It carries the idea of “being set” and means the same as the word *nuakh* which means “rest.” It is then the same word used in verses 23 and 24 here for laying up the bread for the Sabbath. Here we are being given a picture. God “rested” the man in the garden and this bread is being “rested” for the Sabbath, the day of rest. What we lost in the Garden of Eden, God's rest, is being *pictured here* in the weekly Sabbath observance for Israel and which finds its fulfillment in Christ.

Again, Hebrews 4:3 is the key to this lovely picture – “For we who have believed do enter that rest.” It is a verse we should memorize and never forget. The picture was given for us to see and grasp today, while the instruction was finally obeyed by the people...

³⁰ So the people rested on the seventh day.

This verse uses the verb form of the word *shabath* which conveys the idea of ceasing or desisting. The people ceased from looking for Manna on the seventh day. Again, it is a prophetic picture of redemptive history. Man had searched for heaven's bread but it was out of our reach.

However, the Bread was provided in Christ. For those who have believed, we have received heaven's Bread and have ceased from looking any further for it. For those who haven't, they are still searching. But, in the millennium He will sit on His throne and the nations will stream to Him.

The six days of the week look forward to the seventh day of rest, just as the six thousand years of man under labor look forward to the last thousand years of rest under Christ. Verse 30 is given to show us Christ. It is offset to show us the marvelous picture of what He has done for us and what He will do for the world at large. Simply amazing!

Although they made no connection at all to Christ, Keil and Delitzsch say this about the gathering of the Manna –

“Through the commandments which the Israelites were to keep in relation to the manna, this gift assumed the character of a temptation, or test of their obedience and faith.” Keil and Delitzsch

They are exactly right and it is just what we are expected to accept in relation to our spiritual lives as humans. We cannot seize heaven, nor can we work for it. We must be obedient to the word of God and demonstrate faith in Christ.

The bread and the rest are completely tied together in this account because they both picture Christ and His work. If we have the Bread, we also have the Rest. If we lack one, we lack both. It breaks my heart that Seventh Day Adventists like Ben Carson have missed this. They have missed Christ.

³¹ And the house of Israel called its name Manna.

I explained this in last week's sermon. The name is actually *Man*, not Manna. The name Manna comes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament. In Hebrew, *man* does not mean “what.” The meaning of the name is not agreed upon, but the name is *Man*.

^{31 (con't)} And it *was* like white coriander seed, and the taste of it *was* like wafers *made* with honey.

The word for coriander seed is only used twice in the Bible and both times it is used to describe Manna. All translations agree that it is coriander, but some scholars don't. However, it still is sufficient to describe the size of it, which is small and round.

Later in Numbers it will also describe it as resembling bdellium, a whitish transparent wax-like resin. Along with the other images given, we can have a pretty good idea of what it looked like.

As coriander seed is small and unnoticeable, it forms a picture of Christ – small in the eyes of the world and yet the only Source of true nourishment for the world. The color white may be used to describe Him as well. In the Song of Solomon, a poem about Solomon and his bride, picturing Christ and the church, we read –

“My beloved *is* white and ruddy,
Chief among ten thousand.” Song of Solomon 5:10

And interestingly, we’ve gone through over 2500 hundred years of human history so far, but the sense of *taste* in the verb form has never been mentioned until now. Meals have been cooked and consumed and fruits and grains have been eaten in the Bible’s pages, but until now, the mentioning of the ability to taste has been left off.

Manna is described as having the *taam*, or taste, of wafers with honey. But if you think of it, if you didn’t know what wafers and honey tasted like, you’d be kind of in the dark about the taste of Manna. However, honey is one of those foods that is found pretty much everywhere and throughout the entire world.

This is because honey bees have been domesticated in all places. Further, honey doesn’t spoil and so it can be transported anywhere. This probably isn’t coincidence. The taste of the very substance which is described as “bread from heaven,” and which pictures Jesus Christ, is pretty much universally known.

And therefore, we have another revelation from God’s word. The word is used to describe Jesus and it is said to be “sweeter than honey” to the mouth. Jesus is the subject of the word and is described in picture through the Manna as having the taste of honey. It is like a package which has been wrapped for the people of the world, even with a beautiful bow on top of it.

*I will rest on the seventh day, in the presence of my love
Trusting in Him I will obey, I – His precious turtledove
He has given me bread to sustain me in His rest
I am filled with His goodness and have not a care*

*My tormented soul He has caressed
No more worries shall be found in there*

*I will eat of the Manna, heaven's tasty bread
And sing praises in my rest to the Lord
I have not a trouble or a care, but instead
I am comforted as I sit and read His word*

*I have entered His rest; my soul has found a home
There at my Savior's breast; never again shall I roam*

III. An Omer for Your Generations (verses 32-35)

³² Then Moses said, “This is the thing which the Lord has commanded: ‘Fill an omer with it, to be kept for your generations, that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.’”

The last five verses of this chapter were actually written by Moses, prior to his death and before the Israelites entered the Land of Promise. The Lord told him that they were to fill “**the** omer” with Manna. There is a definite article in front of the word “omer.” Although no commentary I read noted this, because of the article, and because of the words of verse 36 to come, I would suggest that “the omer” is referring to the exact measuring device that was used to establish what an omer is.

In other words, specific measuring devices for these amounts were maintained so that any deviations or cheaters could be challenged by comparing against the known standard maintained by the priests. “The omer” then is the standard by which all other omers were to be compared.

It was this particular omer which was used for measuring the Manna, and thus it is the perfect picture of Christ as the full and perfect measure of what sustains us from day to day. The omer for perfectly filling the hungry man equates to Christ for perfectly filling the hungry soul.

³³ And Moses said to Aaron, “Take a pot and put an omer of manna in it, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations.”

From this verse, we also know that this omer of Manna was collected prior to Numbers 33:38 which is where Aaron's death and burial is recorded. That was in the 40th year after leaving Egypt and just before the recording of the book of Deuteronomy.

After his instruction from the Lord for the Manna to be collected, Moses in turn instructed Aaron to take the omer and put it in a pot. The reason for this might not seem evident, but it is explicitly stated in the verse – it was to be laid up before the Lord.

Only Aaron was allowed to enter the holy of holies in the tabernacle. It was a right that even Moses was not ordained for. Therefore, and for this reason, we are given the minute details of what has transpired. The Lord spoke to Moses and Moses instructed that the Manna be collected for this special purpose.

And then he instructed Aaron to take what was collected and place it in a pot because he was the one authorized to comply with the directive. This pot in which the omer was placed was made of pure gold, as we learn from Hebrews 9:4. The pot used by Aaron is called a *tsintseneth*, a word used only here in the whole Bible.

It comes from, *tsen*, which means "thorn." Thus the Manna was to be adorned in a pure gold pot resembling a thorn. This then is a picture of Christ, the Bread of life, adorned in a crown of thorns.

According to Hebrews 9, this special jar was placed inside of the Ark of the Covenant. It is implied here that the bread in this golden pot would never corrupt throughout all generations. Thus it is a picture of the incorruptible Bread of life, Christ Jesus.

And this is confirmed by Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 10:3 concerning what is called "the spiritual food" that the Israelites fed on which, like the spiritual drink they drank, was Christ.

³⁴ As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept.

Again, specificity is given here. The Lord commanded Moses, and Aaron completed the task. As the high priest, he is the human mediator for the people and the one to minister in the Holy of holies. And here it says he laid it up before the Testimony.

The wording is precise and it pictures Christ perfectly. The word for “laid it up” is the same word used in verses 23 & 24, *yanakh*, “to rest.” The Manna is “rested” before, or literally, in the face of the Testimony, meaning the Ten Commandments.

This is the first reference to them in the Bible. In Hebrew, they are called *eduth*. Thus the Ark is called *arown ha’eduth*, or the Ark of the Testimony. In other words, the Ark contains the Testimony. We’re still some chapters away from this, but the Ark in every detail pictures the Person and work of Christ – His life; His death.

As the Testimony is inside the Ark, it is a picture of Christ embodying the law. Therefore, the Manna being “rested” in the Ark next to the Testimony is again a picture of our “resting” in Him and what He has done. When we eat of the Manna, the Bread of Life then, as Colossians 3 says, our status before God changes –

“For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” Colossians 3:3

We are literally, in the face of Christ, beholding Him through the gospel. This is stated by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4 –

“For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” 2 Corinthians 4:6

Again, everything we have seen in today’s verses keeps bringing us back to the fact that in Christ we have our rest because of His work. His body, His crown of thorns, and His fulfilling the law. Memorize Hebrews 4:3, think on it, ponder it, revel in it, and be confident in it. We are in Christ and we have received our rest – a rest promised from the very foundation of the world itself.

³⁵ And the children of Israel ate manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

This would probably have been one of the last things ever written by Moses. The words of Deuteronomy were spoken to the people in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month. Sometime after that, as the forty-year period of wilderness time was ending, Moses then wrote these verses about the Manna.

There is no need to assume that someone else penned this after his death. Instead, he simply acknowledges that for the entire forty years when Israel was without a home,

they were tended to by the Lord who brought them out of Egypt. In Joshua 5, the details of the ending of the miracle of the Manna are recorded –

“Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho. ¹¹ And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day. ¹² Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year.” Joshua 5:10-12

Any later writer would have included that the Manna ceased, but this verse simply says that the Manna continued until they came to an inhabited land and to the border of Canaan, meaning the last spot where Moses stayed with Israel before his death.

He faithfully recorded the account and placed it here in Exodus 16 where it most perfectly fits with the pictures of Christ it is intended to make. Christ sustained their living bodies every step of the way.

And if this isn't a perfect picture of us, receiving our spiritual nourishment until we pass over Jordan and into the true Land of Promise, I can't think of anything else that would suffice. Every spiritual need we have is provided for in the Bread of life, Jesus our Lord, who is sufficient to nourish us until He delivers us unto our heavenly home.

³⁶ **Now an omer is one-tenth of an ephah.**

This seems like an unusual way to end a chapter which is so wonderfully used to picture Christ. Why on earth would the Lord simply add on a verse which seems so unnecessary? There are at least two reasons for this that I can think of.

The first is that Moses is explaining the word now, and yet retroactively from the *end* of the wilderness journeys so that when it is never used again, the people would know what an omer is by volume. The second is dependent on the first reason. It is that the word omer, **as a measurement**, is used only six times in the Bible and all six times are *in this chapter*.

After this chapter, the term “one-tenth of an ephah” will be used to describe this measurement. Why would the Lord do this instead of simply carrying on with the set measurement known as an omer? The answer is, of course, Christ. The number six in the Bible is the number of man. EW Bullinger describes the number –

“Six is either 4 *plus* 2, i.e., man’s world (4) with man’s enmity to God (2) brought in: or it is 5 *plus* 1, the grace of God made of none effect by man’s addition to it, or perversion, or corruption of it: or it is 7 *minus* 1, i.e., man’s coming short of spiritual perfection. In any case, therefore, it has to do with *man*; it is the number of imperfection; the human number; the number of MAN as destitute of God, without God, without Christ.” E W Bullinger

An omer is what sustains a man for a day. Hence there are six mentions of the omer in the passage. But that is insufficient to sustain a man, isn’t it. There are actually seven days in a week. What about the seventh day?

It is there, tucked away for us. When the omer is mentioned in verse 22 it says “two omers.” Thus there is a hidden omer in the text. The miracle of the Manna is that because of the Man, Christ Jesus, there is always a sufficient amount of Bread to sustain us.

And because of the Man, Christ Jesus, we have now entered into God’s rest. The hidden omer is always enough to sustain the people of God, because the hidden omer is.our.rest.in.Christ the Lord – having entered into His rest as have we, entering into it through faith in Him.

Never underestimate the marvel of what God has concealed in His word. It is beyond imagination. I am sure for every picture and detail that the Lord has revealed for this sermon, I’ve missed 20 more. This wondrous treasure we call the Holy Bible is truly God’s majestic and superior word.

Now think of it... if God has put such tender and minute care into His word for us to see His Son, and people keep missing such details, even thousands of years after they were penned, then how much more do you think that He wants You to see the open and revealed message about His Son. It is a message of love and reconciliation. It is a message of hope for the weary human soul.

If you have never simply reached out and grasped this hope and made it a reality, let me tell you how you can – even today! Let me tell you about Jesus Christ the Lord...

Closing Verse: *“There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. ¹⁰ For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.”*

-Hebrews 4:9

Next Week: Exodus 17:1-7 (Water from the Rock) (48th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Entering God's Rest

And so it was, on the sixth day
That they gathered twice as much bread
Two omers for each one, by the way
And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses instead

Then he said to them, at his behest
"This is what the Lord has said, His spoken word:
'Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest
A holy Sabbath to the Lord

Bake what you will bake today
And boil what you will boil
And lay up for yourselves all that remains, I say
To be kept until morning, and it won't spoil

So they laid it up till morning
As Moses commanded; as he did submit
And it did not stink
Nor were there any worms in it

Then Moses said, "Eat that today
For today is a Sabbath to the Lord
Today you will not find it in the field, I say
So do according to my word

Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day
The Sabbath, there will be none, so to you I say

Now it happened
That some of the people, out they went
On the seventh day to gather
But they found none, no Manna had been sent

And the Lord said to Moses, with no hems or haws
“How long do you refuse
To keep My commandments and My laws?
What is this disobedient path you choose?

See! For the Lord has given you the Sabbath
Therefore He gives you for two days on the sixth day bread
Let every man remain in his place
Let no man go out of his place on the seventh day instead

So the people rested on the seventh day
Because the Lord wanted it this way

And the house of Israel called its name Manna
And it was like white coriander seed
And the taste of it was like wafers made with honey
Sweet and tasty it was indeed

Then Moses said, “This is the thing
Which the Lord has commanded to do
‘Fill an omer with it, to be kept for your generations
That they may see the bread with which I fed you

It was there in the wilderness, from my open hand
When I brought you out of Egypt the land

And Moses said to Aaron
“Take a pot and put an omer of Manna in it
And lay it up before the Lord
To be kept for your generations, not just a minute

As the Lord commanded Moses, he did relay
So Aaron laid it up before the Testimony
To be kept just as the Lord did say

And the children of Israel ate Manna forty years
Until they came to an inhabited land
They ate Manna until they came, surely with cheers
To the border of the land of Canaan, a sight so grand

Now an omer is one-tenth of an ephah, we are told
And that omer of Manna was kept in a pot of gold

What a marvelous passage of the Lord's tender care
Of the people He redeemed, Israel
Out in the wilderness is the place where
These marvelous events occurred as the story does tell

The Manna fed them throughout those years
And the true Bread of life feeds us as well
So let us have no frets, worries, or fears
As we walk in this fallen world for a spell

Christ will surely bring us to the Promised Land
And when He does, it will be marvelously grand

Until that glorious, marvelous day
We will praise our God through Jesus the Lord
And we daily look to see what it does say
In His wondrous, superior word

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 17:1-7

(WATER FROM THE ROCK)

These seven short verses actually tie together with hundreds and hundreds of verses in the Bible. They are intricately woven together to show us marvelous things which the Lord did for His people, is doing for His people, and will do for His people.

We can only get an overall picture of this marvelous tapestry in a single sermon, but I hope you will appreciate that overall picture enough so that when you read the Bible on your own, and you come to a verse which ties together with this account, you can better understand the connection.

That is, of course, if you are taking the time to read your Bible. Read your Bible!

Text Verse: *“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.” Revelation 22:1*

We can't live long without water, this is certain. And yet, water for our physical bodies often only pictures water for our spiritual lives. What makes us think that we need the less important, physical water, but that we can go without the more important of the two – the spiritual water?

Are we that dull to the things of God that we could ever assume this is the case? The Bible shows us of our great need for the true, living water. And it does so often. Let us think on this as we read accounts such as the one we are looking at today.

It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Why do You Tempt the Lord (verses 1-3)

¹Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin,

The previous verses brought us the manna to sustain the lives of the people – their bread from heaven. This passage will now enter into a similar situation concerning

water. As always, the names of the places are important to consider and certainly each was given based on what happened.

In other words, the names of the places are not necessarily names that existed already, but which are given based on circumstances that arose after their arrival. The Wilderness of Sin is mentioned here again. The name Sin means “thorn,” as in a thorn bush, and is a shortened form of Sinai.

The name “Wilderness of Sin” hasn’t been used since Exodus 16:1, where it was said to be between Elim and Sinai. From this point, it says that they set out on their journey. The word for “journey” here is different than the more common word.

It is *massa*. This is the second of twelve times it will be used; all of them are in the books of Moses – the first being in Genesis 13:3 and the last in Deuteronomy 10:1. It means “pulling up, breaking (camp), setting out, a journey.” Instead of it indicating just going somewhere, it indicates a station to station move.

There is a difference between going on a journey from your house to North Carolina and then back to your house, than packing up your belongings, selling your house, and moving to North Carolina. The second is more of the idea of this word *massa*. The camp is being broken down and the people are moving on. They are as pilgrims awaiting their arrival in the Land of Promise.

^{1 (con’t)} **according to the commandment of the Lord,**

The Hebrew literally says, “according to the mouth of Yehovah.” He opened His mouth in instruction and the people moved according to that. This doesn’t mean that the pillar isn’t with them, but that the directions to follow the pillar are according to His spoken word. We can reasonably assume the pillar is with them.

It needs to be considered that everything which will take place then is according to His intentions. He has instructed the people, He has led them, and He will take them, intentionally, to a place where there is no water. We can never derive from the account the notion that any of what happens does so apart from His specific intent.

And so everything that does happen is given to show us a picture of something else. There is no reason to think otherwise, and there is only the complete assurance that this is the case. This will be seen more exactly in the next words...

¹ (con't) **and camped in Rephidim;**

It is accepted that Rephidim is today known as a place called Wady Feiran. The detailed record of the wilderness wanderings in Numbers 33 says this about the travels of the Israelites –

“They moved from the Red Sea and camped in the Wilderness of Sin. ¹² They journeyed from the Wilderness of Sin and camped at Dophkah. ¹³ They departed from Dophkah and camped at Alush. ¹⁴ They moved from Alush and camped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink.” Numbers 33:11-13

Every scholar that I read who commented on why this record in Exodus leaves off Dophkah and Alush said basically the same thing. Their answer is that “probably because nothing of moment took place at either.” Adam Clarke et al

That seems like a copout. Rather than taking a negative view, I would choose to take a positive one and say that each place where something *is* recorded is because the Lord selected it to show us the work of Christ.

This is the first of five times that Rephidim will be mentioned in the Bible, and all of them will be in Exodus and Numbers. Rephidim is a plural noun which comes from the verb *raphad* which means “to spread (a bed).” And so by implication it means “to refresh” or “comfort.” The word is used in the Song of Solomon in just this way –

“Sustain me with cakes of raisins,
Refresh me with apples,
For I *am* lovesick.” SS 2:5

Raphad's sole derivative is a feminine noun, *rephida*, which indicates a rest or support structure. That is used only once in the Bible, in the Song of Solomon as well –

He made its pillars *of* silver,
Its **support** *of* gold,
Its seat *of* purple,
Its interior paved *with* love
By the daughters of Jerusalem. SS 3:10

Chapter 16 began in Elim which pictured the message of Christ which went out by the mouth of the 12 apostles and the 70 disciples. From there, it went to the Wilderness of Sin, the Wilderness of the Thorn, where the quail and the manna were received.

That pictured Christ's body being given as flesh to eat and bread to sustain. Now they leave that area and arrive in Rephidim. What picture is then being made? A clue is found in the finishing words of verse 1...

¹ (con't) **but *there was no water for the people to drink.***

Again, water is the issue, just as it was at Marah where the bitter waters were made sweet. However, the problem isn't that there is bitter water; it is that there is *no* water. One thing is for sure; in the dry wilderness life cannot endure long without water. But let us not forget that it is the Lord who directed them here and He has done it for a reason.

² **Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, "Give us water, that we may drink."**

Charles Ellicott notes –

"...we cannot be surprised at their "chiding." Nothing but a very lively faith, or an utter resignation to the will of God, could have made a people patient and submissive in such an extremity." Ellicott

It is hard to disagree with this. We are creatures which are tied to bodies which easily tire, quickly run dry, and are constantly in need of food. If we don't get sleep, water, or food, we can quickly change into a being that doesn't resemble our normal selves at all. Just ask my wife. The Israelites were no different.

Add into this a large multitude that tire at differing rates and you can see how some would wear out and start grumbling more quickly. Once a grumble starts, it rapidly spreads from one to all. In the case of walking among wadis, or dry river beds, there would be an even more pronounced feeling of misery.

Wadis imply that there was once water in abundance flowing right at their feet. Along the sides of the wadis, there would be plants which had gathered up the remaining waters after the torrents had subsided. In essence, there would be – "signs of water, water everywhere, yet not a drop to drink." (Pulpit)

However, there is also the truth that the Lord had already showed them amazing acts of His power and gracious kindness. Would the people remember these lessons longer than the strain of lacking basic needs? Unfortunately, “No.” As Albert Barnes notes –

“It is a general characteristic of the Israelites that the miracles, which met each need as it arose, failed to produce a habit of faith.” Albert Barnes

And this is exactly what the Lord had purposed for them. He was leading them to the extreme points of their physical existence in order to produce a habit of faith and complete reliance on Him. And time and time again, they failed to realize this.

As these physical examples are intended to reveal spiritual pictures of Christ, then we should obviously look at the practice of our faith and see if it is, in fact, sound. Do we trust the Lord with each step of our walk?

I’ve noticed several types of people who post their lives openly on Facebook for the whole world to see. There are those who post how excited they are about going to church on Sunday morning. They then come home and post about the great “portion” of the Holy Spirit they got and how super life is.

On Monday, they are posting photos of piles of money that say, “If you like this photo, comment ‘Amen,’ and share it in the next ten minutes. You will receive a large sum in your bank account.” The expectation of the god Fortune has replaced reliance on the Lord.

By Tuesday morning, they are complaining about the ills of life, the things they lack, and the general drag that they feel as they trudge through the week. On Wednesday, they’re angry because they didn’t win the lottery. The pastor had told them that they would be blessed and they would reap a thousand-fold if they gave, and they were sure that it meant right now and in a big way.

They even bought the tube of miracle anointing oil at the church lobby for \$25.00 and anointed the door posts of their house and their checkbook with oil. Why was the Lord neglecting them? The next Sunday, they start the cycle again.

And then, there are those who post about being excited that they are leaving for church. They come home and post about the great lessons from Scripture that they assimilated into who they are. They post on Monday about the excellent devotional they read.

They post on Tuesday about their brother who was just diagnosed with terminal cancer, but how thankful they are for having him in their life and about the honor of being there for him during the ordeal. On Wednesday, they post about the fantastic Bible study they went to and how relevant God's word is to their own situation.

On Friday, they post that their house burned down and the bank lost all their money, but how grateful they are that the Lord is with them through it all. They're thankful for their church and the people they attend with and in the outpouring of support and prayers they have received.

It is all a matter of perspective and the Lord is trying to get Israel to take the *right* perspective. And in His lessons to them, He is asking us to do the same. He has given us examples of what pleases Him and what angers Him.

² (con't) **So Moses said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the Lord?"**

Moses responds that the people are acting inappropriately in two different ways. First he asks them "Why do you contend with me?" Here he uses the same word which was used at the beginning of verse 2 – *riv*. It means "to contend or quarrel." It is what the story says they did and this is what Moses confirms they are doing.

However, instead of stopping there, he elevates the severity of their complaints to the appropriate level of the offense. They may be quarreling with him, but they are "tempting" the Lord. Here he uses the word *nasah*. It means "to put to the test, prove, etc."

It is the same word that the Lord has used twice so far concerning His attempt to mold and shape the people into an obedient group who would be willing to simply trust Him –

"There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He **tested** them, ²⁶ and said, 'If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I *am* the Lord who heals you.'" Exodus 15:25-26

“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may **test** them, whether they will walk in My law or not.’” Exodus 16:4

They had been explicitly told that He was *testing them* for obedience and trust, and yet Moses now shows them that they have instead put the Lord to the test. The words are valuable to evaluate because it shows us more clearly the situation at hand. John Gill rightly explains their situation –

“...they tried his power, whether he could give them water in a dry and desert land; and they tried his patience by chiding with his servants, and showing so much distrust of his power and providence, of his goodness and faithfulness; and by their wretched ingratitude and rebellion they tempted him to work a miracle for them.” John Gill

Let us ask ourselves, “Are we receiving the tests of the Lord and using them to mold our faith, or are we testing the Lord by failing to see His hand of grace upon us, even in times of extreme trial?”

³ And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, “Why *is* it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”

The truth of the record of the Exodus can be implied from verses like this. Israel was in bondage in Egypt and eventually ended up in the Land of Canaan. This we know. Had they left Egypt, the natural thing to do would be to head straight for Canaan, they didn’t. Instead, they went the opposite way.

When they left, it was apparently without enough water and food for even a few days, much less a long trek. Only a fool would do something like that. How much more foolish would be an entire congregation of people to do it. One may find something to sustain life, but two million could never.

And to exacerbate the situation, children and livestock came along too. The only reasonable explanation for the entire scenario is that the Lord led them, they followed, and they were completely dependent upon Him from the very start. If this isn’t what happened, then the story is simply a fabrication about a most foolish group with an even more foolish leader.

But it is not. And yet, despite this, it is the exact kind of accusation that they now make. They had left Egypt unprepared as if the intent was to kill them. If it were only Moses there, the allegation would seem reasonable.

But Moses is not alone. If they would simply evaluate the situation, they would be willing to pray in faith instead of argue in the flesh. However, the lack of water which was not only destroying them, but also their children and the livestock, was too great an affliction for them to see beyond.

Surely, of all of the afflictions we can face, thirst is one of the worst. The Lord was beaten, ripped, and nailed to a tree, but the only agony that He called out as He hung there dying was, "I thirst." And like Him, the people are so suffering.

Were they justified in their anger? In the body, yes; in the spirit, no. They still lacked the faith needed as a group of people to understand that the Lord alone directs each moment's existence for each and every soul. It appears that as a group of people, they never really acquired this faith. The 78th Psalm speaks of their situation –

"He split the rocks in the wilderness,
And gave *them* drink in abundance like the depths.
¹⁶ He also brought streams out of the rock,
And caused waters to run down like rivers.
¹⁷ But they sinned even more against Him
By rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness.
¹⁸ And they tested God in their heart
By asking for the food of their fancy.
¹⁹ Yes, they spoke against God:
They said, 'Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?
²⁰ Behold, He struck the rock,
So that the waters gushed out,
And the streams overflowed.
Can He give bread also?
Can He provide meat for His people?'
²¹ Therefore the Lord heard *this* and was furious;
So a fire was kindled against Jacob,
And anger also came up against Israel,
²² Because they did not believe in God,
And did not trust in His salvation.
²³ Yet He had commanded the clouds above,

And opened the doors of heaven,
²⁴ Had rained down manna on them to eat,
And given them of the bread of heaven.
²⁵ Men ate angels' food;
He sent them food to the full." Psalm 78:15-25

*If we just had water, we could go on
But instead we are out here dying of thirst
Our lives are ebbing away and our strength is almost gone
Things are much worse now than when at first*

*When we were in Egypt we at least had life
Now only death seems to await us in this dry land
With Moses we have quarreled, between us is strife
But he says we are only tempting the Lord's gracious hand*

*Where are the Lord's grace and His gracious hand?
We see the pillar but our souls are dry and parched
Yes the pillar is there, but we cannot understand
Why to this barren place, He has led as we have marched*

II. You Shall Strike the Rock (verses 4-7)

⁴ So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying,

The notable thing about Moses is that he first defended the Lord in the eyes of the people and he then immediately elevated the people's request to the Lord. There is no hint of him either speaking highly of himself, such as "You dare to resist me, the Lord's representative!" Nor does he have Aaron come to his rescue either, "You dare to resist Moses, the Lord's representative."

Instead, he defended the Lord's integrity and then went straight to the Lord in petition. And his petition refrains from any accusation against the Lord...

⁴ (con't) "What shall I do with this people?"

Moses doesn't ask, "What have You done to this people?" He doesn't ask, "What are You going to do for this people?" And, he doesn't say, "You have left this people in a bad

situation.” Instead, he says, “What shall I do with this people?” He never finds fault in the Lord. He instead asks for directions which he can carry out.

It is for such reasons as this that Numbers 12:3 will say, “Now the man Moses *was* very humble, more than all men who *were* on the face of the earth.” His humility is beautifully evident whether he is addressing the people below him or the God who is above him.

⁴ (con’t) **They are almost ready to stone me!”**

This is the first time in recorded history that stoning is mentioned as an individual punishment. The stoning of all of the people of Israel was mentioned in 8:26, but this verse shows that it was not just a way of harassing others. Instead, it is implied that it was a known form of execution.

His words to the Lord more accurately say, “Yet a little and they will stone me.” He was on the verge of being stoned and even the slightest amount of time or a single misstep in his interactions with them would result in his death.

But even in these few words we can get a look into the human condition. How often we are aggressive at attacking others over wrongs, but slow in thanking them for their good deeds! How slowly will we respond positively to kindness, and how quickly we will respond negatively to adversity!

So far since the night of the Passover and the departure from Rameses, the only note of thanks or praise from the people is found in the Song of Moses in Exodus 15. It was a song penned by Moses and which the people then joined in.

But apart from that, there is no note of either thanks or praise for the many miracles thus far evinced by the Lord for the people. As the Geneva Bible comments on this verse—

“How ready the people are to slay the true prophets for their own purposes and how slow they are to take up God’s cause against his enemies and false prophets.” Geneva

⁵ **And the Lord said to Moses, “Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel.**

In Numbers 20, Moses will again bring water from a rock for the people. However, at that time, he is told to gather the congregation together to see the miracle. Here, Moses is only told to take of the elders of Israel. There are various opinions on why only they were chosen.

One is that the congregation was ready to stone him and so he left only with the elders. That makes no sense at all. If he told them what he was going to do, they would have waited to see if he could do it. Another view is that the distance was too far for the weary people to travel and so they left them there to accomplish the feat.

But that doesn't fit either, because the same weary people would still have to travel to where the water came from. That is unless the water flowed all the way to where they are. But it says nothing of that. The elders are being singled out *from* the congregation for a reason. Only they are to witness the miracle.

⁵ (con't) **Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go.**

Again, as has been seen in the past, Moses is specifically instructed about the rod, or *matteh*, which he is to take with him. It is the rod of God which he had with him at the burning bush. This time, however, it specifically identifies it as the "rod with which you struck the river."

One scholar says that this could mean either the Nile or the Red Sea, because the finger of the Red Sea could be called in Hebrew *ha'yor*, or "the river." But this is incorrect. Moses did not strike the waters of the Red Sea; he stretched the rod out over them. However, when in Egypt at the first plague of blood, we read this in chapter 7 –

"So he lifted up the rod and struck the waters that *were* in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants. And all the waters that *were* in the river were turned to blood." Exodus 7:20

The same rod which brought death to the river when striking the waters will be used to bring forth a river of the water of life for the people when he strikes the rock.

⁶ **Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb;**

The Lord has already selected the place and the miracle. The reason for the route, the reason for leaving out the interim stops from the narrative, and the reason for waiting

until the people were almost completely parched – the reason for all of it belongs to the Lord. He has organized every detail to reveal Jesus.

He has promised now to “stand before” Moses. The pillar, which is the Lord, will stop and stand on the very rock chosen for the miracle. And it is a specific rock. In the Hebrew it says *ha'tsur*, “the rock” not “a rock.”

This is the first of 77 times that this word *tsur*, or rock, will be used in the Old Testament. Numerous times, it is used to speak specifically of the Lord as the Rock. The last time it is used in the OT is in Habakkuk where it is used in just that manner –

“Are You not from everlasting,
O Lord my God, my Holy One?
We shall not die.
O Lord, You have appointed them for judgment;
O **Rock**, You have marked them for correction.” Habakkuk 1:12

Even the coming Messiah is called by this term in Isaiah 8:14. That verse is then used to speak of Jesus in the New Testament in both Romans 9 and in 1 Peter 2:8. Thus the Rock is Christ. This rock is said by the Lord to be in Horeb. This is now the second time Horeb is mentioned in the Bible.

The first was when Moses came to Horeb, the mountain of “the” God in Exodus 3:1. Horeb means “Arid” or “Desert” and thus what we have is a marvelous miracle coming. The words are precise and they have been selected carefully to reveal the Lord’s greatness.

^{6 (con’t)} **and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.”**

Like the waters of the Nile, Moses is told to strike the rock. Instead of blood, water will come from “the rock” in the Arid place. And it won’t just be a small amount, but enough so “that the people may drink.” Two million people, plus innumerable animals are waiting anxiously for relief. There will be enough to satisfy all.

The Lord is the God of miracles, not just enough to tease, but to fully satisfy. If He can bring such volumes of water from a solid rock, imagine what He can do for you!

^{6 (con’t)} **And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.**

The word for “sight” is *ayin*, literally “eyes.” With their own eyes they beheld the marvelous sight of water gushing from solid rock. There was nothing hidden, there was no sleight of hand, and there was no magician’s trick.

The hand of Moses is used as the principle cause of the action, the rod of God is used as the instrumental cause which brought it about, and the glory of God is the final cause – the end purpose of what has transpired.

Moses is thus again shown to be the Lord’s representative, the rod is shown again to possess the ability to accomplish the Lord’s miracles, and God is both pleased to care for His people and to receive their praise through His mighty act of power.

⁷ So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah,

It is rare for a place to be given two distinct names in the Bible based on one occurrence. But the Lord determined that it would be so in this case. The name Massah means “testing” and it comes from the verb *nasah* which was used in verse 2 to describe the tempting or testing of the Lord by the people.

The name Meribah means “quarreling” and it comes from the verb *riv* which was also used in verse 2 to describe the quarreling of the people against Moses. The fact that two names are given for the one location is then intended to further elevate Moses’ standing among the people.

Massah is named first as it was tempting against the Lord. Meribah is named second because it was in contention against Moses. Later, in Deuteronomy 6:16, this place will only be called Massah because it only refers to the people’s tempting of the Lord –

“You shall not tempt the Lord your God as you tempted *Him* in Massah.”

-Deuteronomy 6:16

Both names are exactly explained in the final portion of verse 7 and the final words of the account –

^{7 (fin)} because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

The passage seems to end on a sad note, but it doesn't really. It instead is looking back on the greatness of what God did despite the complaints of the people. They had questioned if the Lord was among them or not, and He confirmed that He was.

But only the elders saw it directly. The others didn't. Why was this the case? What is the Lord trying to tell us through this? Stay tuned for an explanation of the passage after a short poetic break...

*Take in your hand the rod and go
To a place I have chosen in a dry and barren land
I will show you the spot from where the water will flow
And from this marvel, future generations will understand*

*I will stand upon the Rock for you to see
A Rock hard and dry will come to life
You shall come to the place, even unto Me
And with the rod, you shall end this people's strife*

*They will drink of the water, to re-nourish their soul
All will be satisfied, to them life I will give
I will prove to them I have it all under control
By water from the Rock, their souls shall live*

III. A Wonderful Picture

The account of the water from the rock is memorable on its surface. If you tell it to a child, they will listen with wide-eyed wonder that such a thing could ever happen! But it is also an account which is intended to show us more than just the surface.

It is meant to show us the problem with man and how God fixed it. It follows naturally after the story of the quail and the Manna. Christ had to go to the cross in order for us to dine on His body – His flesh, the quail; His body, the bread which is the Manna.

The account is said to have happened at Rephidim. It seems the name was changed after the account to Massah and Meribah, but it was in fact named because of the account. They are different areas. The name Rephidim gives the idea of Rest and also Support.

The people received their rest and their support from the waters, even if it was contention and testing which occurred before the waters came. As the previous story pictured the death of the Lord in the giving of the Manna, this picture follows naturally from that same act.

The people thirsted in the wilderness for water, just as David thirsted for the truth of God in his own dry and thirsty land –

“O God, You *are* my God;

Early will I seek You;

My soul thirsts for You;

My flesh longs for You

In a dry and thirsty land

Where there is no water.

² So I have looked for You in the sanctuary,

To see Your power and Your glory.” Psalm 63:1, 2

David lived in a fallen world and longed for the time when he would see the power and the glory of the Lord in His sanctuary. The people of Israel then picture us – the people of God – complaining of thirst in the same dry and parched existence.

But the Lord is always ready to provide for His people. And so He directs Moses and the elders to go to a particular rock where He will, in fact, provide for the people. There He says that He will stand before him on “the” rock. Paul explains what that Rock is in the New Testament –

“For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.” 1 Corinthians 10:4

The Bible scholars Keil and Delitzsch note that the Lord, standing before Moses upon the rock “signified the assistance of God.” They then say this about the words *l’phani* and *amad* which are used to describe the Lord standing before Moses.

These words –

“...frequently denote the attitude of a servant when standing before his master, to receive and execute his commands. Thus Jehovah condescended to come to the help of Moses, and assist His people with His almighty power.”

In this then we see an act of God, where he condescends in a way which will be for the benefit of His people. It is a picture of the incarnation, when Christ condescended to become a Man and live as one of us in order to restore us to spiritual life.

Knowing that the Rock is Christ, one must ask, “Why were only the elders taken to witness this?” The answer is in who they must then picture. As the Rock is Christ, then these elders are those who saw Christ’s work and can witness to what they saw. They are our elders in the faith, the apostles.

When the people are told about the water and where it came from, it will be an act of faith, not sight, to believe what they have been told. This then corresponds with what the New Testament says –

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.” 2 Corinthians 5:7

We are to trust the words of the Bible for what they are. They are an eyewitness account of what Jesus Christ did. The apostles saw, they testified, and now we must accept their words as they have been given.

And so Moses goes off with the elders and is told to strike the Rock with the rod of God. Moses, whose name means “He who draws out,” is the principle cause of what will occur. He pictures *Christ* drawing out salvation for His people.

The rod is Christ, the power of God. It is the *instrumental* cause by which the water will come from the Rock. As Romans says –

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”

-Romans 1:16

The Rock is Christ, the *material* cause, by which salvation comes forth. The action of striking the Rock is the *work of Christ*, the *efficient* cause, by which the process is carried out. And *the water is Christ*, the *final cause*, by which salvation is accomplished and by which God is glorified. Every detail pictures Christ!

God sent his Son, the spiritual Rock to live among us. He was born without sin, and thus he was capable of drawing out salvation for His people, pictured by Moses – He who draws out. He lived under the law and died under the law – pictured by the Rod. His work in this is the process by which salvation was carried out.

He was smitten with the curse of the law, pictured by the striking of the rock with the rod by Moses. Not only was this pictured here, but it was later prophesied by Isaiah 700 years before Christ came. Using the same word, *nakah*, as when Moses struck the rock at Horeb, there in Isaiah 53 we read this –

“Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.” Isaiah 53:4

And from Him came the water by which we receive eternal life. As Jesus said to the people in John 7 –

“‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ ³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” John 7:37-39

This was the final cause. The water from the rock *is* the giving of the Spirit. It *is* the granting of eternal life, and it *is* the glory of God revealed in each of us. This is according to the words He spoke to the woman at the well in John 4:13, 14 –

Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Out of the dry place, Horeb, came the living waters. Likewise, out of the Heavenly Mt. Zion, which also means “Dry Place” has come the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. It is the Bible which testifies to the work of the Godhead – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -in the great plan of redemption of fallen man.

It should be remembered though, that the Lord was very specific about calling the rod in Moses’ hand, the “rod with which you struck the river.” The same rod which brings forth life from the Rock can also bring forth death for those who reject the Rock. The law is either fulfilled in Christ or it goes unfilled in one without Christ. It is a lesson and a warning that we are to choose wisely.

In Isaiah 11:4, the same word, *nakah*, is used to describe what the Lord will do to those who reject Him –

“His delight *is* in the fear of the Lord,
And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes,
Nor decide by the hearing of His ears;
⁴ But with righteousness He shall judge the poor,
And decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
He shall **strike** the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.
⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins,
And faithfulness the belt of His waist.” Isaiah 11:3-5

In this passage we have a few simple verses about something that happened 3500 years ago, but which is actually an in-depth look into the very heart of God for those He loves. He sent His Son to be stricken so that we may live. Truly, what manner of love is this!

Let us never downplay the majesty of what He has done for us, and let us never cease to tell of His marvelous work to those still lost and thirsty in a dry and barren land. And maybe this is you. Maybe you have a thirst which just cannot be quenched. Let me then tell you about the water of life and how you too can drink of it freely.

Closing Verse: *“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.” Revelation 1:16*

Next Week: Exodus 17:8-16 (Yehovah Nissi – The Lord is My Banner) (49th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Water from the Rock

Then all the congregation
Of the children of Israel

Set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin
As the record of the story does tell

According to the commandment of the Lord
Yes, according to His spoken word

And camped in Rephidim where there would be rest, you'd think
But *there was* no water for the people to drink
Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said
"Give us water that we may drink or soon we will be dead

So Moses said to them this word
"Why do you contend with me?
Why do you tempt the Lord?"
This is utterly futile you see

And the people thirsted there for water
And the people complained against Moses, and said
"Why *is* it you have brought us up out of Egypt?
To kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst instead
So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying
"What with this people shall I do?
They are almost ready to stone me, I am relaying
And so for directions about this I am asking You

And the Lord said to Moses, so He did tell
"Go on before the people, and take
With you some of the elders of Israel
A scene quite wonderful for them I will make

Also take in your hand your rod as I am telling you so
With which you struck the river, and go

Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb
And you shall strike the rock, as I say
And water will come out of it
That the people may drink this very day

And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel
The water is Christ, as the Bible does tell

So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah
Because of the contention of the children of Israel
And because they tempted the Lord
Saying, "Is the Lord among us or not, this to us please tell

How faithless we are, giving in to our weakness
And complaining against You Lord
Help us in our times of distress
To remember the promises found in Your word

Help us to praise You through every trial
And to give you the glory You are justly due
Give us hearts though the trials to smile
And to continue always to sing praises to You

Yes Lord! Thank You for our sure hope because of Jesus
Thank You for the marvelous things that You have done for us

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 17:8-16

(YEHOVAH NISSI – THE LORD IS MY BANNER)

The 7th of September was a tough day for me. It was the day I spent typing this sermon. There are a lot of names and places in these few verses and none of them are without significance. What the account pictures was eluding me and I was more caught up in the mechanical aspects of the passage and less in what it pictured.

But, God is good and He is good all the time. I went to one commentary on the passage outside of my regular sources of study and the line of reasoning that they gave was sufficient to direct me to an overall picture of what was being presented. From there, the mechanical details fell into beautiful pictures of Christ.

How the Lord can pack so much into just 9 verses is beyond me. And I fear that I've just touched on the magnificence of them. There are surely patterns in the letters – numerical and pictorial patterns. There are surely patterns in the structure of the verses as well. But those are left to be discovered by another. I am just pleased to have made it through the 7th of September without a broken brain vessel.

Text Verse: *Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another,
And the Lord listened and heard them;
So a book of remembrance was written before Him
For those who fear the Lord
And who meditate on His name.
¹⁷ "They shall be Mine," says the Lord of hosts,
"On the day that I make them My jewels.
And I will spare them
As a man spares his own son who serves him."
¹⁸ Then you shall again discern
Between the righteous and the wicked,
Between one who serves God
And one who does not serve Him. Malachi 3:16-18*

Malachi writes about a book of remembrance. The idea of writing something in a book is to accomplish exactly that – remembrance. God has given us a wondrous book of remembrance. We call it the Holy Bible. The very germ of that book is found in today's

passage. Since then, it has become a book of history, of love, of doctrine, and of looking into the very heart and mind of God.

Let us ever cherish this marvelous book which He has blessed us with. So much wonder and so much beauty is to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. War with Amalek (verses 8-13)

⁸ Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

During the last sermon which dealt with water from the Rock, the account began in Rephidim which was mentioned in verse 1. After that, it seemed that the name was changed by the end of the story to Massah and Meribah, but I noted that instead the name Rephidim was given because of the account, not changed during the account.

This first verse of this account confirms that. Massah and Meribah are where the water flowed from, not where Israel is encamped. The name Rephidim gives the idea of Rest and also Support. The people received their rest and their support from the waters, even if it was first contention and testing which occurred before they received the waters of Massah and Meribah.

Now, all of a sudden, another story is introduced in this same place, Rephidim. At Rephidim, their place of rest and support, Amalek has shown up and fought with Israel. This is actually explained later in Deuteronomy 25 –

“Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, ¹⁸ how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you *were* tired and weary; and he did not fear God. ¹⁹ Therefore it shall be, when the Lord your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess *as* an inheritance, *that* you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget.” Deuteronomy 25:17-19

This passage in Deuteronomy ties in “rest from your enemies” with the destruction of Amalek. In Exodus, the people were weary, implying they had no rest, and it is at this time that Amalek attacked the stragglers. And yet, this is in Rephidim, a name which is a

plural noun coming from the verb *raphad* which means “to spread (a bed).” And so by implication it means the place of “rests” or “comforts.”

We are being given marvelous hints of why the story is included and how to interpret what the word is showing us. Next, the name Amalek needs to be explained. Amalek’s birth is recorded in Genesis 36:12 –

“Now Timna was the concubine of Eliphaz, Esau’s son, and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These *were* the sons of Adah, Esau’s wife.”

Just a few verses later he is noted as one of the chiefs of the tribes of Esau. No mention of him has been made since then and now he is reintroduced into the story. The name Amalek is derived from the word *am*, or people, and from the word *malaq* which “means to nip or wring off the head of a bird with or without severing it from the body. It’s used only in Leviticus 1:15 and 5:8.” (Abarim)

Thus, they are the “The People Who Wring Off.” They are those who are disconnected from the body and strive to disconnect the body. The name is introduced here along with the account as a picture of something else.

These brutal people would have noticed the Israelites traveling through Sinai and would have been heated up over the idea that Israel’s flocks would eat up all the pasturage. In a cowardly way of handling the problem, they nipped away at the weakest of the people while not directly attacking the main body.

⁹ And Moses said to Joshua, “Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek.

Suddenly, and without any other explanation concerning who he is, Joshua is introduced into the Bible. His name is actually *Yehoshua* which comes from two separate words – the first is a shortened form of the Divine name Yehovah, and the second comes from the root-verb *yasha* which means “to save” or “to deliver.”

It is the same root-verb from which the name of Jesus, or Yeshua, is derived. Thus the name should alert us that he is a type of Christ, the incarnate word of God. His name means “Yah is Salvation.” Interestingly, in Hebrew his name is the precise reversal of the name of the prophet Isaiah – or Salvation of the Lord.

With no actual introduction other than the giving of his name, Joshua is instructed to choose men. Moses leaves it up to him to decide on who is best qualified to win the battle which is coming. It is up to him then who will defeat the foe Amalek.

Next Moses instructs him to “go out” to fight against Amalek. By instructing him to “go out” it implies that the battle will be conducted outside the camp of Israel. A picture is forming with the giving of four names in just two verses – Amalek, Rephidim, Moses, and Joshua.

It should be remembered from the passage of the parting of the Red Sea that Josephus says that the weapons of the Egyptians washed up on the shore for Israel to collect. Thus, they would have been prepared for the battle with the appropriate weapons of war.

Numbers 13:16 tells us that Joshua’s name at this time is actually Hoshea. In that verse, which is about a year later, it says that Moses changed his name from Hoshea to Joshua. But the name Joshua is used retroactively now because he is given in type to picture Christ Jesus. As Adam Clarke notes about him now –

“Both in the Septuagint and Greek Testament he is called Jesus: the name signifies Savior; and he is allowed to have been a very expressive type of our blessed Lord. He fought with and conquered the enemies of his people, brought them into the promised land, and divided it to them by lot. The parallel between him and the Savior of the world is too evident to require pointing out.” Adam Clarke

We also know that Joshua is about 39 years at this time old because of what he says to the people in Joshua 14 –

“I *was* forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back word to him as *it was* in my heart.”
-Joshua 14:10

That was about a year after this account in Exodus 17 and so he is about 39 or turning 40 at this time.

^{9 (con’t)} **Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.”**

It is an interesting set of words for us to contemplate. “Tomorrow” is certainly chosen for the people to be rested in preparation for battle. At the place of rests, Rephidim, the people will be rested. On the next day, Moses says that he will stand on the top of **the** hill with the rod in his hand.

There is a definite article in front of “hill” and so a particular hill is meant, though not named. There he will stand as if he is a banner for the people to see. And in his hand will be the rod. However, the Hebrew does not say “the rod of God.”

It is an unfortunate translation. It says *u’matteh ha’elohim b’yadi*, “and (with the) rod of **the** God in my hand.” There is an article in front of God. This is the first time it has been called “the rod of **the** God” since Exodus 4:20, thirty-eight sermons ago, when Moses set out towards Egypt after receiving his commission.

The article is given here to highlight the naming of the altar in verse 15. And so now we have five principles to consider – Amalek, Rephidim, Moses, Joshua, and the rod of **the** God.

¹⁰ So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek.

Without any note of timidity or reticence, the Bible records that Joshua faithfully executed his order from Moses and engaged Amalek in battle. It has to be remembered that just a short time earlier, he and the Israelites with him were slaves in Egypt.

The implication then is that they had never been in battle before and they had no time to train for battle. And yet, they went out in full confidence that they would be honorable representatives of Israel in fighting the Lord’s battle.

^{10 (con’t)} And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

Now *another* person is introduced, Hur. He has never been mentioned before, and yet he is named as if he was a well-known figure. According to 1 Chronicles 2, he is the great-great-grandson of Judah. At this time, we know that Moses is 80 and Aaron is 83. Hur is said to be the grandfather of Bezalel who will be the great artisan in the construction of the tabernacle. And so, it is certain that he is, like Moses and Aaron, an old man. Because they were not the right age to lead in battle, they instead will act as intercessors to the Lord while Joshua fights with the enemy.

Josephus says that Hur is the husband of Miriam and thus he would be the brother-in-law of Moses and Aaron. Later, in Exodus 24:14, Moses will leave him as the joint-ruler of the Israelites when he ascends Mt. Sinai to receive the law. His name comes from the word *khur*, which means “white.”

¹¹ And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

It is a curious verse to consider. Was it because there is a link between the failing strength of Moses and that of Israel? Was it because Israel gained confidence at the sight of the raised staff just as a soldier gains confidence at the raising of a flag? Or was it that the Lord stopped helping the people because Moses allowed the rod of the God, which represented His power, to falter

Each has to be considered because the verse is explicit about what has occurred. There is a direct link between Moses' body movements and the direction of the battle. Because there is, there must be a reason we are told this. The verb for "held up" is *rum*. It means to exalt, or to be high, or to lift up.

The verb for "let down" is *nuakh*. The word means simply "to rest." Matthew Poole seems to rightly evaluate what is happening here with these words –

"Amalek prevailed; God so dispensing his favour, that the honour of the day and victory might be wholly ascribed to the rod and power of God, not to Israel." Matthew Poole

¹² But Moses' hands *became* heavy; so they took a stone and put *it* under him, and he sat on it.

Moses' strength simply failed him. Anyone who has tried to hold up a two-pound weight for a few minutes will tell you that it starts to get very heavy, and very quickly. It is unnatural to hold one's hands up for a long time. It is even more so when raising them while holding something.

Compounding that, Moses was standing. In his own strength, he could not endure for very long under these conditions. And so Aaron and Hur placed a stone under him on which he could sit. They had seen the connection between the body movements of Moses and the direction of the battle and they knew they needed to do something.

With Moses now relying on the stone and not on his own strength to stand, he would have more energy than by standing. It should be noted that Aaron and Hur didn't trade off with Moses. If each of them had taken turns holding the rod, they could have continued on all day, but *only Moses* held the rod.

It is implicit then that only Moses *could* hold the rod and come out with the proper results. And so in order to ensure that those results would be favorable, they took a different course of action...

¹² (con't) **And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.**

The responsibility for holding the rod of God belonged to Moses alone, but this didn't preclude Aaron and Hur from supporting Moses' arms throughout the day. And so they did. With their assistance, it says that "his hands were steady until the going down of the sun."

The word for "steady" is *emunah*. It means "faithfulness." This is the first time it is used in the Bible. Outside of this time, it is always used in a moral sense. It is such an important word that I want to read you its entire description from the HAW –

"There are at least ten distinct categories in which this noun is used in Scripture. In its first occurrence in Scripture it expresses the sense of steady, firm hands, a very basic idea (Ex 17:12). From this mundane sense, Scripture moves almost entirely to a use of the word in connection with God or those related to God. Basically, the term applies to God Himself (Deut 32:4) to express his total dependability. It is frequently listed among the attributes of God. It describes his works and his words. *emuna* is also used to refer to those whose lives God establishes. He expects to see faithfulness in them. Indeed such faithfulness or a life of faith is characteristic of those justified in God's sight (Hab 2.4). God's word of truth establishes man's way of truth or faithfulness. From this we can also see the concept of a duty entrusted to a believer which becomes his trust or office." HAW

In the use of this special word, the holding of the rod by Moses and the supporting of Moses' hands by Aaron and Hur are being used to show us a moral lesson as much as anything else. To this, there can be no doubt.

All translations use the word "steady" here, but because of the use of *emunah*, we are certainly being told that his hand remained "faithfully steady" throughout the long day of battle. Thus the word here is being used in contrast to the previous word "heavy." Where his hands were at first weighted down and burdened, they now remain faithful.

¹³ **So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.**

Joshua was commissioned to lead the battle as the commander of the Lord's people. Because of this, the verse gives the credit to Joshua for defeating Amalek. However, from the previous verses, there can be no other conclusion than that the victory belongs to the Lord. When the rod was lifted, Joshua prevailed, when it was rested, Amalek prevailed.

Therefore, though the physical battle was won in a physical sense by Joshua, the physical is tied directly to the power of God. Without His hand upon them, there could be no victory. As it was though, Amalek and his people were defeated.

As a fun squiggle for your brain, it says that they were defeated with the "edge of the sword." In Hebrew, it says *l'pi kharev* – "with the mouth of the sword." The imagery is beautiful. The sword is considered a devouring instrument. Its edge is a mouth which consumes its enemy's souls.

*The enemies of the Lord's people come to harass and destroy
They come after the weak and the weary without a care
But the Lord will defend them, great weapons He will employ
Don't have fear, good Christians, for you the Lord is there*

*He is the Rod lifted high, the power of God
He is the Stone of support as a place of rest
His gospel of peace is nigh, so have your feet shod
The enemy is around, so in your armor be dressed*

*By His power you can word off all foes
In His strength the devil stands no chance
Though he comes at you with mighty blows
Fix your feet firmly in the battle, a warrior's stance*

II. The Lord is My Banner (verses 14-16)

¹⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book

It cannot go without note that this is the first time in Scripture that the Lord has directed anyone to write something down, and specifically in a book. This verse then is the true germ of what we now call "the Holy Bible."

It is not the first time that the word “book” has been used. That belongs to Genesis 5:1. But the concept of writing something at the direction of the Lord begins right here. Further, there is an article in front of the word “book.” It is not “a book” but “the book.” Thus versions, such as the King James, which say “a book” are in error.

Specificity is given in order to demonstrate that this book has a precise purpose. In this case it is as a memorial. The book itself is for the memorial. What seems like hair splitting is not. It is precise wording so that we can learn the intent of what is being said.

¹⁴ (cont) **and recount *it* in the hearing of Joshua,**

These words presuppose the line of succession in Israel. To recount the record in the hearing of Joshua implies that Joshua will someday be Moses’ successor. It would then be incumbent upon Joshua to continue to relay the account to his own successor. This tradition was carried on even as far as Samuel, the last Judge of Israel. In 1 Samuel 15, we read this –

“Samuel also said to Saul, ‘The Lord sent me to anoint you king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the Lord.’² Thus says the Lord of hosts: “I will punish Amalek *for* what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt.”³ Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.”” 1 Samuel 15:1-3

¹⁴ (cont) **that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.”**

The word here for “blot” is *makhah*. So far it has only been used in the account of Noah concerning the blotting out of all life during the flood. It means to abolish. The word for “remembrance” is *zeker*, which indicates memory. And so the basic intent is that the memory of Amalek would be completely erased.

However, because it is recorded in the Bible, the idea of the *mental* remembrance of who Amalek is and what he did still lives on. This isn’t the intent of what is being said. Rather, it is speaking of the *physical existence* of Amalek. By blotting out his existence, there would be no memory of him in the sense of an inheritance.

As a way of making this understandable, the word for “blot” here will next be used in Exodus 32 along with the word “book” again in regards to the blotting out of sinners from the Lord’s book. There will be no inheritance of the good things to come for those blotted out. Thus, blotting out the memory of Amalek is in essence to destroy any future of or for Amalek.

In looking back on why the Lord has determined this, a few reasons can be deduced. 1) They were the first to attack the redeemed of Lord after their deliverance from Egypt. 2) They attacked the Lord’s people without showing any regard or fear of the Lord. 3) They attacked those who were already tired and weary. 4) Being descendents of Jacob’s brother Esau, they are of the same general family and so they showed no fraternity to their own brothers.

However, the sternness of the words is showing us that there is a greater picture that we are to see. The blotting out of Amalek is intended to show us a greater cleansing in the spiritual world which surrounds us.

¹⁵ And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner;

In commemoration of the deliverance of Israel through the victory of the battle, Moses builds an altar. Although many scholars add in that Moses certainly sacrificed on the altar, there is no record of this. At other times, actions are taken in connection with the building of an altar, but in this account none is. And so there is no reason to add in that he made a sacrifice.

Instead, he merely names the altar, Yehovah-nissi. The name explains the passage. It means, “The Lord is My Banner.” The altar is being used as a metonym. Just as Washington stands for the US Government, and just as Hollywood stands for the movie industry, the name Yehovah-nissi is intended to stand for the rallying of the people to the Lord.

The word *nissi* means an ensign or a standard. It is something which is lifted up to which one’s attention is to be directed. Thus, the altar has been placed to commemorate the rod of **the** God which was elevated in the hands of Moses. This then explains why the definite article was used – *u’matteh ha’elohim b’yadi*, “and (with the) rod of **the** God in my hand.”

¹⁶ for he said, “Because the Lord has sworn: the Lord *will have* war with Amalek from generation to generation.”

ki yad al kes Yah milkhama Yehovah ba’amalek mid-dor dor

There are several possible translations for this verse. The word *kes* which is translated as “sworn” in the NKJV is only used this once in the Bible. Because of that, various ideas have been put forth. Rather than “sworn” it is probably better translated as “throne.” The reason why is that the word “throne” is *kisse*. In the Hebrew, the name Yehovah is shortened to Yah right after this word and so it is probably a poetic contraction of both words – throne and Yehovah. Therefore, this verse is also translated this way –

“‘Because,’ he said, ‘a fist has been raised in defiance against the throne of the LORD, the LORD will wage war against Amalek from generation to generation.’”
(ISV)

In other words, in attacking Israel, Amalek has attacked the throne of the Lord. In response, the Lord will be at war against Amalek from generation to generation. Based on the pictures this account is making, this makes much more sense.

And so, in evaluating these verses, we must consider what came before them. The first 7 verses of the chapter were about the water coming from the rock. At the end of that story, right in the sight of the elders, Moses brought water from the rock by striking it with the rod.

The last verse then said, “So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, ‘Is the Lord among us or not?’”

Immediately after that, came the connecting words *v’yabo amaleq*, or “and came Amalek.” The two stories are being tied together. And so that we know this is certain, the naming of the altar Yehovah-nissi is actually tied to the naming of the place Massah, and both occurred at Rephidim. The two stories are not separate; they are connected. Massah is derived from *nasah*, “to test.” The people tested the Lord, *nasah*, and asked whether He was among them or not. And the Lord was shown to be their Banner – *nissi*; that He was in fact among them. *nasah* and *nissi* are etymologically connected and they in turn connect the stories. So what are these verses telling us?

*The book is written and sealed with the final word, “Amen.”
God has a plan which will surely come about*

*Be sure to refer to it time and time again
And you will be strengthened for the battle no doubt*

*The Lord is my Banner, exalted is He!
He stands upon the high mountain watching over us
And He is the Victor over even the greatest enemy
He is the One who prevailed even over death; our Lord Jesus*

*Surely from generation to generation our foes are defeated
Because of the Lamb who to Calvary's tree was nailed
So marvelous is the story it needs to again be repeated
Until the end of time, our Lord, our Christ has prevailed!*

III. A Wonderful Picture

The picture that we are to see is, once again, that of Christ and His people. It is a war against the unregenerate, or “natural” man and those who are regenerated by Christ, or the “spiritual” man. The two are rivals and are at war with one another.

In the previous passage, the people questioned whether the Lord was among them or not. This passage is given to show them that He is. It is a sign then to the people – both the unbelievers to see and know, and to the believers for the strengthening of their faith.

Amalek, or the unregenerate man comes against Israel, but who do they attack? The weak and tired. As always, those who are not grounded in their faith are the easiest prey. They are confused about the nature of God, they are confused about proper doctrine, and they are confused even about their relationship with God.

Amalek comes to destroy them. His very name implies severing off the head from the body. They are those who are disconnected from the body and strive to disconnect others from it as well. There they are at Rephidim, or the place of rest and support, and yet they are trying to destroy the people of the Lord.

It is the constant battle which Paul writes about in his letters. There is Christ who has saved us and there is the enemy who wants to draw us away from Him. Think of the name Amalek – the people who sever the head from the body and listen to Paul's words –

“Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *false* humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is from God.*” Colossians 2:18, 19

Amalek represents false teachers, heretics, and other unregenerate people who are constantly attacking the weakest of the flock. He is the natural man that Paul writes about in 1 Corinthians 2 –

“These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴ But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.”

-1 Corinthians 2:13, 14

In order to counter this, Moses sends Joshua to engage Amalek in battle. Joshua is a type of Christ, the Captain of our Salvation and the Commander of the army. He is the one who leads His people into the spiritual battle in which we are engaged.

But the battle isn’t fought in the camp. Rather, Moses told Joshua to “go out” to fight against Amalek. We don’t get saved and then enclose ourselves behind walls with only believers. We are to GO OUT and engage the enemy where he is. We are to take the fight to the camp of the devil where, as Jesus says, “the gates of Hades shall not prevail.”

Gates are used for defense, not for offense. Joshua went out to engage in battle and to overcome the foe. We are those who fight under the Lord and we are to fight where the devil is. Paul writes to us concerning the spiritual battle in which we are engaged in –

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of

the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; ¹⁸ praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— ¹⁹ and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Ephesians 6:10-20

The battle we face is no less real than the one that Joshua faced. However, it is a spiritual battle against the wiles of the devil as he constantly attacks from the rear, harming the weakest and destroying their faith. In the battle, Moses stands on the top of the hill with the rod of God in his hand. It is a picture again of Christ, the power of God – on top of the hill with Moses and Aaron and Hur. All of these principles are here to picture the work of Christ.

Moses, which means “He who draws out,” pictures Christ the Prophet of God: Aaron, whose name means “Very high” pictures Christ our High Priest; and Hur, whose name is derived from “white,” and who descends from Judah pictures Christ the King.

The rod of God, like in the previous passage, is the *instrumental* cause by which the battle will be won. In Christian theology, the instrumental cause of salvation is “faith alone in order to be justified.” It is an entire dependence upon the work of Christ and nothing else.

Moses’ hand is the efficient cause. It is that which causes a motion to start or stop. Hence, only Moses could hold the rod, not Aaron or Hur. The symbolism is that the hand of Moses belongs to the prophet, the one who receives God’s word and relays it to His people. In other words, it is a picture of the recording of the Bible.

Christ’s power is revealed in His Bible which came through the hand of His prophets. However, Aaron and Hur are needed to strengthen Moses. A word without content is not a word. The word tells of not only the prophets, but also of the work of the Priest and King. Their ministries support and uphold the word of the Prophet.

It is to the Bible that we look to see Christ and which we rely on for understanding our spiritual battle. Without that, the enemy gets the upper hand, just as Amalek, or the natural man, got the upper hand on Israel when the rod was rested. In essence, it is a

picture which cries out, “DOCTRINE MATTERS!” We cannot engage in the battle without having proper doctrine.

And the stone placed under Moses, what does that represent? It is another confirmation of the importance of DOCTRINE in defeating the foes. Paul, citing Isaiah 28:16 says this in Romans 9 –

“What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; ³¹ but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because *they did* not *seek it* by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. ³³ As it is written:
‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense,
And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’” Romans 9:32, 33

The stone is the support to keep from being defeated. It is right doctrine which says that faith in Christ is our righteousness, it is that faith in Christ is our justification, and it is that faith in Christ will win the battle.

With the support in place, the words of the Bible which tell of the Prophet, Priest, and King and what He did are sufficient to win the battle. And according to the passage, Moses’ hands were *steady* until the going down of the sun. If you remember, there was that special word translated as “steady” – *emunah*.

His hands remained “faithfully steady” throughout the long day of the battle, even to the end of the day. It is a picture of moral endurance. God establishes our lives in Christ and with the Bible, His faithfully steady word, which tells us of Jesus, we have a duty entrusted to us, to live by faith in that word.

The very verse from the Old Testament which Paul cites concerning justification by faith is from Habakkuk 2 and it uses the same word *emunah* –

“Behold the proud,
His soul is not upright in him;
But the just shall live **by his faith.**” Habakkuk 2:4

Paul quotes it along with these words in Romans 1 –

“For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written,
‘The just shall live by faith.’” Romans 1:17

With the rod held high, with Moses’ hands in the air, and with Aaron and Hur supporting them, it then says, “So Joshua defeated Amalek with the edge of the sword.” Jesus defeats the enemies with the sword of His mouth, which is the word of God.

The picture is so absolutely marvelous that it’s actually hard to believe! Every word has been used to show little pieces of the work of Christ in defeating the enemy. And to show us that it is, in fact, the Bible that is being depicted here, we read the next words in the account – “Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write this *for* a memorial in the book.” All subsequent generations were to have this account, the very germ of the Bible itself, to understand how to defeat the foes of the people of the Lord, how to protect the weak, and how to rely on Yehovah-nissi, the Lord is my Banner.

The promise is made – the Lord will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek. Jesus will utterly blot out the memory of the wicked and those who harm His people. The question in the last passage asked, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

The answer in this passage is, “The-Lord-Is-My-Banner.” He is with me and He is the One to whom I will look. He is the Ensign on the hill. He is the Rod in the hand. He is the Captain of the army, and the Destroyer of our foes. He is the Stone of help and support, and the Foundation on which our hope is based. He is our Prophet, our Priest, and our King. He is Jesus!

And with Him as our Head, we await our final deliverance from this war with Amalek which still goes on today. Christ is still warring with those who would wring off the Head from the body until the day when all things are finished. Until then, if you have any fear at all, just listen again to this final verse of the chapter and your fears will melt away –

Because his hand is against the throne of Yah, Yehovah (will wage) war against Amalek from generation to generation. (Charlie’s rendering of this verse)

In essence, the Lord is fighting for us because the enemy has attacked us, His very throne. To Him, we are at His throne. And to make sure that we can make that claim, that we are in fact at the throne of the Lord, we can go to Revelation 3 as a confirmation–

“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” Revelation 3:21

When we call on Jesus, we overcome by His blood. And when that happens, we are granted the right to sit with Christ on His very throne. Paul tells this truth in Ephesians 2–

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

-Ephesians 2:4-7

Through the work of the Lord, we are already seated in the heavenly places in Christ. The deal is done and we have overcome! That is assuming, however, that you have actually called out to Christ. If you haven't, you are excluded from this promise. But by a simple act of faith, you too can be joined to Christ and seated at the very throne of God. Let me tell you how...

Closing Verse: *“And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse,
Who shall stand as a banner to the people;
For the Gentiles shall seek Him,
And His resting place shall be glorious.”* Isaiah 11:10

Next Week: Exodus 18:1-12 (Jethro, the Priest of Midian) (50th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Yehovah Nissi – The Lord is My Banner

Now Amalek came and fought in Rephidim with Israel
A war between good and evil as the Bible does tell

And Moses said to Joshua, as a sort of command
“Choose us some men and go out, with Amalek fight
Tomorrow on the top of the hill I will stand
With the rod of God in my hand in plain sight

So Joshua did as Moses said to him
And fought with Amalek, their enemy to kill
And Moses, Aaron, and Hur
Went up to the top of the hill

And so it was, when Moses held up his hand
That Israel prevailed
And when he let down his hand, we understand
Amalek prevailed, while Israel was assailed

But Moses' hands became heavy
So they took and put under him a stone
And he sat on it
But he was not there all alone

And Aaron and Hur supported his hands
One on one side, and the other on the other one
And his hands were steady
Until the going down of the sun

So Joshua defeated Amalek as we know
And his people with the edge of the sword
The battle was an impressive show
Won by Joshua for the people of the Lord

Then the Lord said to Moses
"Write this for a memorial in the book
And recount it in the hearing of Joshua
For all future generations when they take a look

That I will utterly blot out the remembrance
Of Amalek from under heaven, so shall it be
And Moses built an altar and called its name
The-Lord-Is-My-Banner; Yes Yehovah Nissi is He!

For he said, "Because the Lord has sworn
The Lord will have war with Amalek always
From generation to generation, each that is born
Will fight against Amalek until the end of days

Surely the Lord is our Banner, so to Him let us look
Let us keep our eyes steadily fixed on Jesus
And let us discern right doctrine by attending to His book
It is the place where today He communicates with us

Let us not trust in the cunning wiles of man
Nor let us trust in any false word
Instead let us do our utmost, the best that we can
To constantly trust Jesus alone, He our saving Lord

Thank You, O God, for Jesus, the Captain of our salvation
And thank You, O God, for Your superior word
From it we find in our souls a joyous elation
Because in it we find Jesus, our glorious Lord!

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 18:1-12

(JETHRO, THE PRIEST OF MIDIAN)

The timing of this account in the chronology of the Bible is exceedingly important to understand. Though it is recorded just after the war with Amalek and just before the giving of the law, it does not belong here chronologically. We will spend quite a bit of time detailing where it belongs.

You don't need to worry about the notes or getting overloaded with information though. As always, the sermons are uploaded on the internet and follow in written form exactly as they are in how I speak them, except without all of my slurs and st st stutters.

Jethro, the priest of Midian is the highlight of today's passage. He, a Gentile, came to know the true God simply by hearing about Him. A little faith goes a long way with God, so pay attention to His word and exercise faith in what it says to you.

Text Verse: *"Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people;
For He will avenge the blood of His servants,
And render vengeance to His adversaries;
He will provide atonement for His land and His people."* Deuteronomy 32:43

Moses wrote that the Gentiles are actually a part of the Lord's plan even though it was he who received the law for the people of Israel. He understood that they are included in the Lord's provision probably as much because of the account of Jethro today as for any other reason.

Paul picked up on Moses' words concerning the Gentiles and cited those words in the New Testament. It's a big book, it's filled with many details and some of them are hard to understand, but in the end the message is simple. God has a plan and it centers on the giving of His Son to redeem fallen man.

If we can just remember that, all of the more difficult concepts will fall into their proper place. Don't get overloaded by His superior word, instead rejoice in it. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Jethro, the Priest of Midian (verses 1-6)

The beginning of chapter 18 will immediately bring in a question of timing. When does this occur? In Chapter 17 we read this –

“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. ⁶Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.’”
Exodus 17:5, 6

However, Chapter 19 begins with this –

¹“In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came *to* the Wilderness of Sinai. ²For they had departed from Rephidim, had come *to* the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain.”

Mount Horeb of Chapter 17 and Mount Sinai of Chapter 19 are the same place. Therefore, as occurs from time to time, this account in Chapter 18 is an insert which is given to teach us a lesson, regardless of the timing of its actual occurrence. Right now, we just know it occurs after the arrival at the mountain of God.

A little later, I’ll show you that it is even after the giving of the law and the building of the tabernacle. Therefore, this account is given here even though it won’t occur for almost another year in Israel’s history. To ensure that we know this is correct before going on, all we need to do is look at the listing of recorded stops for the wilderness journeys which is found in Numbers 33 –

“They moved from Alush and camped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink.

¹⁵ They departed from Rephidim and camped in the Wilderness of Sinai. ¹⁶ They moved from the Wilderness of Sinai and camped at Kibroth Hattaavah.”

-Numbers 33:14-16

From Rephidim, they went to the Wilderness of Sinai. From that point, they will not move again for an extended period of time. The next move is to Kibroth Hattaavah in Numbers 11. But Rephidim is mentioned in both accounts in Chapter 17 – the water

from the rock and the war with Amalek. And yet it is a different place than where they are now.

If you remember, the elders alone first went to Horeb with Moses. Only later would the congregation have come there. Therefore, even the war with Amalek was not actually in chronological order. Understanding this, we can see that these accounts are being placed side by side for a reason.

The question then should be, “Why has it been placed here at this particular location in the Bible?” In order to understand, the bracketing accounts have to be identified. The preceding account was the war with Amalek. The one to follow is preparation for the giving of the Law.

Jethro is noted as “the priest of Midian.” Both Midian and Amalek descend from Abraham. However, though he is a priest of Midian, he is also called a descendant of the Kenites who are first recorded as living in Canaan in Genesis 15:19. These two accounts, being placed in this order then, must be at least in part concerning the different attitudes that are displayed towards Israel.

In picture, it would be the “two-fold attitude which the heathen world would assume towards the kingdom of God” (Keil) There are several analogous accounts to this in the Bible. There is the covenant between Abraham and Abimelech in Genesis. In the reigns of David and Solomon, there was a friendly partnership between them and Hiram, king of Tyre.

Solomon maintained a cordial relationship with the queen of Sheba as well. These records are given to show us that there is nothing wrong with associating with the world which is friendly towards God’s people, but that those who are belligerent against them are actually at war with them and are ultimately to be warred against until they are destroyed.

In today’s world, such foes are increasingly easy to identify. In the end, and particularly towards the nation of Israel in the end times, they will be known as the sheep and goat nations which Jesus speaks of in Matthew 25.

¹ And Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses’ father-in-law,

The name Jethro has to be explained. First, in Exodus 2, Moses was taken in by a man named Reuel. He was the father of Zipporah, who would become Moses’ wife. He was also the priest of Midian. This is all explained in Exodus 2 –

“Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. And they came and drew water, and they filled the troughs to water their father’s flock. ¹⁷ Then the shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

¹⁸ When they came to Reuel their father, he said, ‘How *is it that* you have come so soon today?’” Exodus 2:16-18

In Exodus 3, the name of the priest of Midian is changed to Jethro. Whether it was the same person or not is debatable because this was forty years later. Here is his introduction –

“Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian.” Exodus 3:1

Although he is described as Moses’ father-in-law in this translation, the word used is *khathan*. It is a word which has a wide signification. It implies “the giving away in marriage,” and so it can mean a father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, etc. And in the noun form, it is even used to describe a husband. It deals with contracting affinity by marriage.

If Jethro is different than Reuel, for example his son, then it means he would have replaced the position of his father as the sheikh of the tribe and therefore he would actually be Moses’ brother-in-law, but still the *khathan*.

He is the same person who Moses left in Exodus 3 to go attend to his people Israel. That was no more than a year or two earlier and now he is returning to the area he left. Having identified him, the meaning of his name is needed.

Jethro comes from the word *yatar* which means “to remain over,” or “to be at rest.” The HAW says, “It refers to one portion of a quantity which has been divided. Generally it is the smaller part and sometimes it is the part of least quality.”

Therefore, Abarim translates the name Jethro as “remnant.” During our early Exodus sermons, Reuel was there to picture the time of the church age. Jethro in Chapter 2 was introduced at the ending of the church age as God was ready to restore Israel to its inherited place in redemptive history. His name is tied to that.

The name Midian means “Place of Judgment.” Israel has been brought through the plagues on Egypt and has witnessed Pharaoh’s destruction. That pictured the tribulation

period, culminating in the destruction of the antichrist. After the tribulation, comes the millennial reign of Christ when He will rule among His people. In picture, this encounter with Jethro is given as a tie-in for that.

1 (con't) heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people—that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt.

I should note now that the term “God” will be used 5 times in the next 12 verses, “gods” will be used once, and the term “Lord,” meaning Yehovah will be used 6 times. However, twice there is an article before “God” which will be highlighted. Paying attention to such things will help us see more clearly what is going on.

At this time, He is merely called, *elohim*, or “God” in a general sense. Jethro has heard that *elohim* had done great things for Moses and for Israel. Then to show that Yehovah is *elohim*, it says that He had brought Israel out of Egypt.

Jethro had certainly heard of the miracles, the plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, and of the manna and quail. He may have been told of the pillar of cloud and fire and the water from the rock. He would have been told about the war with Amalek and the receiving of the law. Hearing these things was enough to excite him to action and to go out to see Moses.

2 Then Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses’ wife, after he had sent her back,

Moses’ having sent Zipporah back to Jethro was never recorded before. The account picks up here and it simply assumes that we will understand that she was, in fact, sent back at some point while Moses continued on to Egypt alone.

The word for “sent her back,” *shillukhim*, is a plural word and is used for the first time in Scripture. It will only be used three times in total. It implies a dismissal, or a sending away. This would have occurred sometime after the account in Exodus 4 where she circumcised her son on their journey towards Egypt.

In our earlier Exodus sermons, we saw that Zipporah pictures the church. She is reintroduced to show that in the millennium there will be Jews and Gentiles alike, exactly as the Bible will later confirm.

³ with her two sons, of whom the name of one was Gershom (for he said, “I have been a stranger in a foreign land”)

It may seem curious, but until this point, only one son has been named. The plural word “sons” is mentioned in Exodus 4, but only the name of Gershom was given. He is now reintroduced into the Bible. The explanation for his name here is given verbatim from that of Exodus 2:22 “I have been a stranger in a foreign land.”

The first half of his name, *ger*, means “stranger.” The second half *shom*, comes from either *sham*, “there,” or *shem*, “name.” And so his name means “Stranger There” or “Stranger is His Name.” However, Abrarim notes that the verse –

“... merely says that the boy was named such-and-such because his father was a so-and-so. There is no law that demands that the such-and-such should be etymologically akin the so-and-so. For all we know Moses might have been expressing his gladness for having finally settled, or grief for having been expelled from his familiar homeland. A verb that may have been on Moses’ mind is גרש (*garash*), meaning to drive or cast out.”

Thus his name may also mean “Exile.” He then pictures the church during the exile of Israel. He is the called-out Gentile church.

⁴ and the name of the other was Eliezer (for he said, “The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh”);

Eliezer is now introduced by name into the Bible. His name is explained by the words of Moses in this verse, “The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh.” His name means something like God of Help or My God is Help.

It is supposed that this is the son whom Zipporah circumcised in Exodus 4. It should be noted that the reason for the giving of his name is that he “delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh.” This is certainly referring to when Moses escaped from Pharaoh after he had killed the Egyptian in Exodus 2.

After that, Moses heard of the death of the Pharaoh who sought him. It was around this time that Eliezer was circumcised and he was probably named at that time because of it.

However, the giving of his name now for the first time in the Bible may be because Moses has actually twice been delivered from the sword of Pharaoh – once at the death

of the Pharaoh who first sought to kill him, and then again at the death of the second Pharaoh at the Red Sea. God had been Moses' help through both accounts.

This son, Eliezer, pictures those Gentiles who missed the rapture and endured through the tribulation period, calling on Christ. This was explained in the Exodus 4 sermon which detailed his circumcision by Zipporah. In 1 Chronicles 23:16, 17, this will be recorded about Eliezer –

“Of the sons of Gershon, Shebuel *was* the first. ¹⁷ Of the descendants of Eliezer, Rehabiah was the first. And Eliezer had no other sons, but the sons of Rehabiah were very many.” 1 Chronicles 23:16, 17

⁵ and Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness,

Again, I just want to note that this probably is Moses' brother-in-law, so please remember that as we go along. Also, the sons are now mentioned first in this verse and the wife second – exactly the opposite of verse 2.

Another point is that Jethro is called by name here. In all, he will be called by name 7 times in the first 12 verses of this chapter and in 5 of them he will be called Moses' *khatan*, or in-law in conjunction with the name. However, in the last 15 verses, he won't be mentioned by name even once and yet he will be called his *khatan* five times. In total, he will be called his *khatan* thirteen times. Why does this matter? Attention is being given to his *name* in the first half of the chapter, but attention to *his relationship to Moses* is given throughout the chapter. Thus, the chapter is logically divided based on the interaction *with him*. It is a most interesting thing to consider based on the details of the narrative between the two sections.

^{5 (con't)} where he was encamped at the mountain of God.

This section of verse 5 shows with all certainty that Moses and all of Israel is already at the base of Horeb, also known as Sinai, even though their recorded arrival there doesn't come until chapter 19. It shows that God has intentionally placed this chapter here, with its details, for the reasons previously explained.

Further, not only is it after their arrival at Sinai, but it is a year later, even after the erection of the tabernacle at the time of the sending of the spies into Canaan to scope out the territory. This can be determined from Deuteronomy 1 –

⁵ On this side of the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses began to explain this law, saying, ⁶“The Lord our God spoke to us in Horeb, saying: ‘You have dwelt long enough at this mountain. ⁷ Turn and take your journey, and go to the mountains of the Amorites, to all the neighboring *places* in the plain, in the mountains and in the lowland, in the South and on the seacoast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the River Euphrates. ⁸ See, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to give to them and their descendants after them.’ ⁹“And I spoke to you at that time, saying: ‘I alone am not able to bear you. ¹⁰ The Lord your God has multiplied you, and here you *are* today, as the stars of heaven in multitude. ¹¹ May the Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times more numerous than you are, and bless you as He has promised you! ¹² How can I alone bear your problems and your burdens and your complaints? ¹³ Choose wise, understanding, and knowledgeable men from among your tribes, and I will make them heads over you.’ ¹⁴ And you answered me and said, ‘The thing which you have told *us* to do *is* good.’ ¹⁵ So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and knowledgeable men, and made them heads over you, leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, leaders of tens, and officers for your tribes.

-Deuteronomy 1:5-15

That record in Deuteronomy encompasses the substance of what will be seen in verses 13-21 which is based on the advice of Jethro to Moses. Along with this, there are several other reasons to know that this occurs at the end of their time in Sinai:

- 1) Numbers 10 shows that the cloud was taken up in order for the Israelites to leave Sinai and head towards Canaan. At that time, Moses addressed Jethro, but his name is given as Hobab, and asked him to continue to travel with them as they journey, even to the land of promise itself.

As this is probable, the story we are looking at today actually belongs chronologically between Numbers 10:10 and 10:11.

- 2) Also, shortly after Israel departs from Sinai in Numbers 12, a dispute will take place between Miriam, Aaron, and Moses concerning Moses' wife. This would have probably occurred shortly after she came back to be with Moses, which is now.
- 3) Later in this chapter, in verse 16, it will say –

“When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws.” Exodus 18:16

How could he explain the statutes and laws until after they have been given? That won't occur until the law is received.

- 4) Finally, in verse 12, Jethro is said to offer burnt offerings and sacrifices which are in accord with those commanded in the law. Those details won't be realized completely until the book of Leviticus is complete.

Because of these things, and maybe others, we can be certain that this account comes not in a chronological fashion, but in order to show something else, and that a separation is being made between Amalek and the Kenite people of whom Jethro is a part. This distinction will be seen particularly in 1 Samuel 15. If you remember in Exodus 17 it said –

“Because the Lord has sworn: the Lord *will have* war with Amalek from generation to generation.” Exodus 17:16

However, in 1 Samuel 15, we read this –

“Then Saul said to the Kenites, ‘Go, depart, get down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them. For you showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt.’ So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. ⁷ And Saul attacked the Amalekites, from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is east of Egypt.” 1 Samuel 15:6, 7

And not only was this remembered by Israel at the time of Saul, but this same line was given an even greater promise directly from the Lord. To understand it, we have to see the genealogical record of 1 Chronicles 2. There it says –

“And the families of the scribes who dwelt at Jabez *were* the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, *and* the Suchathites. These *were* the Kenites who came from Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab.” 1 Chronicles 2:55

This same house of Rechab, the descendants of the Kenites, continued to live in tents hundreds of years later, at the time of Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 35, an amazing promise is made to this line of people who had always lived among Israel and in the favor of the Lord God of Israel –

“And Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts and done according to all that he commanded you,¹⁹ therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me forever.”’” Jeremiah 35:18, 19

These are just a couple of the amazing stories of the Kenites and the house of Rechab that are found in the Bible. Other important times they are mentioned are Judges 1:16; Judges 4 & 5; and 2 Kings 10:15. Their great history as a group tied to Israel really stems from this account of Jethro and his care for Moses and the Israelites in Exodus 18.

Though they started as a group of people set to be removed from the land when Israel was to move in, they instead became a permanent fixture there.

One more point about the verse we’re looking at is that there is an article in front of God. It is not the mountain of God, but “the mountain of ‘the’ God. Attention is again being drawn to this fact. It was first called this in Exodus 3:1. It was also called it in Exodus 4:27 when Aaron came to meet him there. Now it is again being called “the mountain of ‘the’ God.”

⁶ Now he had said to Moses, “I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her.”

It’s apparent from the next verse that Jethro sent word to Moses by a messenger that he was coming. Again, he identifies himself by name and this time the wife is placed first and then the sons are mentioned, reversing the order of the previous verse.

*A stranger in a foreign land I have been
But while there the Lord sustained me
And in that foreign land, a great thing was seen
A bush that burned but was not consumed, how could it be?*

*I realized that He was the God of Help to me
He had guided my life every step of the way
And marvelous things He intended for me to see
For me would dawn a marvelous new day*

*Now I have returned to that foreign land
And yet it seems more of a home to me*

*Egypt was never truly my home, something better was planned
Here at home with the Lord, such marvelous things I see*

II. The Rejoicing of Jethro (verse 7-9)

⁷ So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, bowed down, and kissed him.

Upon receiving word that Jethro was coming, Moses went out instead of waiting for his arrival. This shows a respect towards Jethro which would seem most uncommon. Moses is now the leader of several million people and yet he defers to Jethro by going out to meet him instead of summoning him to where he is.

In Genesis 18, Abraham saw the Lord coming with two others and ran out to meet them instead of waiting on them to arrive at his tent. And in the same fashion, Abraham bowed himself to the ground before the Lord just as Moses does now.

It shows a mark of true humility because Moses could have waited for Jethro to come bow before him. And then after the formalities came, the true meeting of the two occurred when Moses kissed Jethro. This is one of only two recorded kisses in the life of Moses.

Although he lived 120 years, Aaron is noted as having kissed him in Exodus 4:27. Now, he is recorded as kissing Jethro. One kiss is from a Hebrew, one is to a Gentile, and both are to priests – the High Priest of Israel and the Priest of Midian, the Place of Judgment.

^{7 (con^t)} And they asked each other about *their* well-being, and they went into the tent.

These last words of the verse leave a bit of a debate open. It specifically mentions that they went into “the tent.” As this is after the erection of the tabernacle, and because there is no obvious break in the conversation between this verse and verse 12, it implies that Moses took him into the tabernacle, not his own tent. As this is so, Moses is now showing him the very dwelling place of the Lord who is “the” God that he has been a priest to.

⁸ And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel’s sake, all the hardship that had come upon them on the way, and *how* the Lord had delivered them.

Here we see the concept of “recounting the works of the Lord.” It says that Moses “told” his father in law all that happened, but the word used is *saphar* which means to tell in the sense of recounting. He probably went through a long, methodical, and excited recounting of everything that happened from his first appearance before Pharaoh all the way up until he watched him sinking below the waters of the Red Sea. After that, there would have been the stories concerning the bitter waters made sweet, the lack of food and the giving of Manna and quail, the lack of water and the splitting of the rock, and then the war with Amalek.

Moses would have told him about the giving of the law and then the construction of the tabernacle and its dedication. Jethro would certainly have been amazed at all that happened and how the Lord continually delivered his people.

A rather uncommon word is used here which is translated as “sake” – “for Israel’s sake.” It is *odoth* which carries the idea of “because.” It is always used in a plural form and it is always preceded by the Hebrew word we translate as “for.”

It comes from the word *ud* which means a firebrand. The idea is that as a firebrand is turned in the coals in order to keep a fire burning, the Lord accomplished His *turnings* for Israel. It’s an interesting mental picture which is given as Moses speaks to Jethro.

And one more word is used here which is significant. It is *telaah*, translated as “hardship.” It’s the first of four times it will be seen in the Bible and it gives the sense of weariness and distress. The things that had happened on the way had literally wearied the people as the trials kept coming. What a picture of Israel throughout the ages!

⁹Then Jethro rejoiced for all the good which the Lord had done for Israel, whom He had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians.

In response to the deliverance of the people from their difficulties, Jethro is said to have rejoiced. It is the word *khadah* and this is its first of only three uses in the Bible. It is the type of rejoicing one would expect at the birth of a child. Psalm 21 gives a wonderful translation of the type of joy that Jethro experienced –

³“For You meet him with the blessings of goodness;
You set a crown of pure gold upon his head.

⁴He asked life from You, *and* You gave *it* to him—

Length of days forever and ever.

⁵ His glory *is* great in Your salvation;

Honor and majesty You have placed upon him.

⁶ For You have made him most blessed forever;

You have made him **exceedingly glad** with Your presence.

⁷ For the king trusts in the Lord,

And through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved.” Psalm 21:3-7

I will recount the works of the Lord

Of His great deeds I will continuously speak

Listen to me as I relay the word

He was my strength when I was weak

He rescued me from a horrible pit

And with kindness and love He delivered me

And even more, with Him on His throne I now sit

Forevermore His glorious face I shall see

I will recount the works of the Lord

Great is He and greatly to be praised

|Listen my children as I relay to you the word

And then to Him let our voices in joy be raised

III. Blessed be the Lord (verses 10-12)

¹⁰ **And Jethro said, “Blessed *be* the Lord, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh, *and* who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.**

This verse seems most perplexing. Jethro, speaking to Moses says “who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians.” “You” is plural, so he is either speaking *to* several people who aren’t yet mentioned, or he is speaking *of* the collective group of Israel. The KJV incorrectly translates this as singular instead of plural. The reason why it is perplexing is because he nearly repeats himself – “out of the hand of the Egyptians” and then “from under the hand of the Egyptians.” If he is speaking to a smaller group of elders about a larger group, this would make sense.

But it could be that through the use of “from out” and then “from under” he is referring to all Israel in both instances and showing the superlative nature of the deliverance. Not only were they separated from the hand of the Egyptians and Pharaoh, but they were also removed from the control of that hand. In what this pictures, this is certainly correct.

Because of the deliverance, Jethro blesses the Lord who could do such mighty things for these people. It is exactly what was promised to Moses by the Lord at the burning bush at this same mountain where they were now meeting –

“So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites.” Exodus 3:8

The Lord had made this promise and the first half of that promise was now complete.

¹¹ Now I know that the Lord *is* greater than all the gods;

Jethro, without having to see with His eyes, but only by hearing, has come to a right knowledge of the Lord. Romans 10:17 says –

“So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Moses recounted the works of the Lord and by faith alone Jethro has received his conversion of mind, knowing a truth that will be spoken again prior to the construction of the temple in Jerusalem when Solomon writes to Hiram, king of Tyre these words from 2 Chronicles –

“And the temple which I build *will be* great, for our God is greater than all gods.⁶ But who is able to build Him a temple, since heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him? Who *am* I then, that I should build Him a temple, except to burn sacrifice before Him?” 2 Chronicles 2:5

This same God came and revealed Himself to Israel 2000 years ago in human flesh. He entered the world as a helpless little baby. It is a seeming paradox that the greatest of all gods could so humble Himself, but such is the marvel of Jesus Christ.

And even more humbling than His birth was the death He endured for us. The author of Hebrews calls the cross a “shame” which Christ simply scorned. In His life, He not only showed Himself greater than all gods, but He proved Himself completely unique from all other gods.

11 (con’t) for in the very thing in which they behaved proudly, *He was above them.*”

The word for “proudly” here is *zud*. It’s used just 10 times and the last time it was used when speaking of the stew that Jacob cooked for Esau. The idea is that when one cooks stew, it will boil. The word comes from the sound – *zud* *zud* *zud*. From that comes the metaphor of acting proudly. Just as something boils, so does the pride of a man.

This whole phrase is shorter in the Hebrew and so in order for it to make sense, translators have to contemplate what it is actually trying to say. Newer translations make Israel the object of the false god’s arrogance and then translate the last word as “the people.” For example, the NIV says –

“Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods, because in this affair they dealt arrogantly with the people.” (NIV)

However, the older translations make their own pride the object and then translate the last word as “above” to indicate that the Lord is above what they prided in. This is probably the correct sense. Pharaoh and his magicians, relying on their false gods, thought they could outmatch Moses and they failed.

The gods which Pharaoh prided in were shown false one at a time. Pharaoh and his armies thought they would defeat Israel at the Red Sea, and instead they were defeated. And ultimately, each of these things simply looks forward to the larger works of the devil which have been defeated by Christ.

The devil behaved proudly in that he brought death to man, but through the death of a Man, death was defeated. It is certain that the words of Jethro are speaking of the greatness of the Lord over the false gods rather than the greatness of the Lord over the mere arrogance of the people.

12 Then Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, took a burnt offering and *other sacrifices to offer to God.*

The burnt offering is the first type of offering described in Leviticus. In fact, the book of Leviticus starts with the burnt offering and it encompasses the entire chapter. It is a good indication in itself that the visit of Jethro occurs, as I said earlier, a year after the arrival of Israel at Mount Sinai.

The law had been received, the altar for burnt offering had been constructed, and the rituals for the offerings had been detailed. Jethro, wanting to participate in offering to God followed the procedures outlined for him to do so.

Though not of Israel, his priesthood was acknowledged as legitimate, just as Melchizedek's priesthood was also considered. Though he was outside of the covenant people, he was accepted by them and by the Lord who sanctified them. And this is without a doubt because of the final words of the passage today...

^{12 (fin)} And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.

Aaron is mentioned for the first time in the passage today, but his being noted now is not without significance. Because of the true timing of this account, he was the *already* commissioned as high priest. As he is the high priest and in attendance at the sacrificial meal, no other conclusion can be made than that Jethro's sacrifice was acceptable and his performance of the sacrifice was also.

And as a mark of favor among all of Israel, their representatives, meaning "all the elders" were brought in to dine with him as well. The term "eat bread" doesn't mean to just eat bread. It is inclusive of the entire meal but it probably would have included bread too, thus Jethro would have been a participant in the eating of Manna – the bread from heaven.

The burnt offering would have been completely burnt up as the Lord's portion, but the other sacrifices would have been consumed according to the law which had been given.

To finish up with the final words of the verse, it says that this meal was before God. It doesn't say, "before the Lord" as one might expect, especially because in just the previous verse Jethro said, "Now I know that the Lord *is* greater than all the gods." Why would it only say "God" and not "the Lord?"

There is a reason which is revealed right in the verse, but which is left out of our translations. There is an article in front of God. Aaron and all the elders came to eat with

Jethro before “the” God, not “a” god. The entire purpose of this account is realized in this one definite article.

It is what defines the contrast between Amalek of the last passage and Jethro in this one. It is the difference between being at peace with God through faith and at enmity with God through pride – either in self, or in a false god, or in both. Amalek chose one path, Jethro chose another.

In picture, what has occurred here is showing us the calling of all people, Jew and Gentile. The Hebrews are already God’s people as has been seen since Moses presented himself before them in Exodus 4 – all the way through until now.

But there is another group of people who belong to God as well – the Gentiles. Jethro pictures the spiritual leader of these people; Zipporah the overall church; Gershom the church before the rapture; and Eliezer, the Gentile tribulations saints. They come to the mountain of God.

Moses had “dismissed” Zipporah when he went back to Egypt. The unusual word *shillukhim* was used at that time. It is a picture that the Lord’s focus was back on Israel, just as Revelation describes. Despite His focus being on Israel, he had not left the Gentiles completely, but cared for them in the process.

After the tribulation period, the Gentiles return to join Israel; all are accepted by God at His holy mountain. Moses, picturing Jesus, receives the Gentiles, pictured by Jethro, in the grandest way.

After that, Moses recounted the works of the Lord for Israel to Jethro, and Jethro uses two terms to describe what had occurred, “out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh” and “from under the hand of the Egyptians.”

It is a picture of both their calling out as a people from the devil and the world – something which occurred in the Exodus, and it is also their calling from under the power of the world; something which only will occur after the tribulation.

In the recounting of the works of the Lord, Jethro realized through hearing the word that the Lord is the true God and so he offered his sacrifices to Him. What this pictures is exactly described by Paul in Ephesians 5 –

“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” Ephesians 5:1, 2

The last thing noted in these verses is that “Aaron and the elders of Israel” came to eat bread with Moses’ father-in-law before God. It is a picture of what occurs at the end of redemptive history when *all* will eat in the presence of the Lord, both Jew and Gentile, who have been saved by faith and faith alone.

Aaron, the high priest is specifically mentioned to show a picture of Christ, our true High Priest who has accepted our offerings. The reason this was placed out of chronological order is to show that it is by faith, and not by the law, that all people are saved. This account precedes the law in the Bible, even though it actually comes after the giving of the law in reality.

The entire account can be summed up in the single thought that not only Jews, but Gentiles as well, can have peace with God through faith and only through faith. While collective Israel will fall out of favor with God in their later history, individual Jews as well as individual Gentiles are shown to remain in His favor.

It is not about a mark on the body or a physical line of descent. Rather it is about faithfully approaching the One true God and acknowledging Him as such. If you have not yet called on this marvelous God who has shown us, in advance, how to be right with Him, please let me tell you how you can, even right now...

Closing Verse: *“There shall be a root of Jesse;
And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles,
In Him the Gentiles shall hope.” Romans 15:12*

Next Week: Exodus 18:13-27 He is not a man of great demanding. He is (A Man of Wisdom and Understanding) (51st Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Jethro

And Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law
Heard of all that God had done
For Moses and for Israel His people |
That the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt, as a favored son

Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law |
Took Zipporah, Moses' wife
After he had sent her back
During that most important time of his life
With her two sons
Of whom the name of one was Gershom
For he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land
I was foreigner in a land not my home

And the name of the other was Eliezer
For he said, "The God of my father was my help, its true
And delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh
Wonderful things for me He did do

And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law
Came with his sons and his wife, to him they did trod
To Moses in the wilderness
Where he was encamped at the mountain of God

Now he had said to Moses
"I, your father-in-law Jethro
Am coming to you with your wife
And her two sons with her, just so you know

So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law
Bowed down, and kissed him as well
And they asked each other about their well-being
And they went into the tent for a spell

And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done
To Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake

All the hardship that had come upon them on the way
And how the Lord had delivered them, the rescue He did make

Then Jethro rejoiced for all the good
Which the Lord had done for Israel
Whom He had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians
With mighty deeds that did excel
And Jethro said, "Blessed be the Lord
Who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, it is true
And out of the hand of Pharaoh, according to His word
And who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians too

Now I know than all the gods that the Lord is greater
For in the very thing in which they behaved proudly
He was above them – He Israel's vindicator

Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law
Took a burnt offering and other sacrifices to offer to God also
And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread
With Moses' father-in-law before God, "the" God as we know

The Lord has a plan which includes Gentiles too
When their heart is turned toward him rightly
Stand fast on what He alone can do for you
Hold on to Him and to His work ever so tightly

Don't trust in yourself; don't try to earn His favor
Instead, by faith reach out and Him receive
And in His gift of eternal life you can savor
Because in His work alone you did believe

Faith... this is what God would ask from you
Believe the gospel, that God has done it all
And the Lord who is ever faithful and true
Upon His glorious name, please do call

And for eternal years we will together sing His praise
And we shall walk in His glorious presence for eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 18:13-27

(A MAN OF WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING)

In the previous sermon, we saw that the account here in Exodus 18 actually belongs in the middle of Numbers 10 chronologically. However, it is placed between the war with the Amelekites and the giving of the law for several reasons. The placement after the war with Amelek was explained.

However, the second half of the verses in this chapter is partly given prior to the giving of the law to teach us that even though the law is given, there needs to be structure in how it is dispensed to the people. God gave the law to Moses who then instructed the people in the execution of the law.

But this was cumbersome and tedious. Today Moses will be given instruction in how to better handle the things of God and the things of man. It is accounts like today's that convince me that God does not speak to individuals at this time, except through His word.

He spoke to Moses and then through the prophets. He spoke to the people of Israel through His Son, Jesus. And then He spoke through the apostles. When He finished speaking through the apostles, with that the final word of the Bible in Revelation 22:21, which is "Amen," He finished His speaking.

We have now been given the full and complete revelation of God in this manner, and so He expects us to read it, teach it, pass it on, assimilate it, be obedient to it, and not stray from it. And we are especially not to add to it, nor subtract from it. We neither need extra-biblical revelation, nor would it be productive to His people to provide it.

Text Verse: *"Hold your peace, and I will teach you wisdom." Job 33:33*

When you read the words of the Bible, you are receiving God's instruction to you. It is a large book and it can easily be mishandled, and so it takes thoughtful care and wise and prudent teachers to share it properly. Today we will see the best framework for how the word should be shared.

There are easy aspects of the word which can be taught and decided upon at the lowest levels, and there are more difficult issues which need to be handled at higher levels. A

small group may need an issue resolved which the deacons can handle. The deacons may need to go to the elders. And the elders may need to go to the pastor.

If the pastor is competent and was selected according to biblical guidance, he should be well qualified to handle the matter at hand. In the end, God wants His word understood because it tells us of His love for us in the giving of His son. And his Son is found revealed throughout this precious, superior word.

And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Moses Sat to Judge the People (verses 13-16)

Moses has already pictured Christ as the human redeemer of his people. In today's account he will picture Christ as the lawgiver and judge of his people. However, he will also be seen to pass on those duties in part to subordinates below him. In this, he will picture Christ as the one to pass on the penning of His laws to His apostles and those below them in the church as well. And so we begin today with verse 13...

¹³ And so it was, on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people;

The next day after Jethro's arrival and after the sacrifice and feast that was held, Moses went directly back to his duties as the judge of the people. What the coming words imply is that Moses actually left his duties on the day of Jethro's arrival rather than calling him to appear before him while he continued his duties.

It shows immense respect and honor was afforded to Jethro upon his arrival. What was seen in those verses where he went out to meet him, bowed down before him, and kissed him was really only a portion of the honor bestowed upon him. Even more is seen now, in that he was willing to leave the duties he held in being the judge of Israel in order to meet and fellowship with Jethro.

However, the next day finds him, once again, in his position as the judge of Israel. As is seen in the Bible, and in the history of extra-biblical nations as well, the ruler of a nation also often acted as the judge of the people.

This tradition carried on in Israel throughout their history. During the time of the judges, the people came to the judge, who was also Israel's leader. This continued on through Samuel, but it didn't end with him. The king also judged cases. An example is found in the account of the woman from Tekoa in 2 Samuel 14.

She appeared before David and petitioned him concerning a legal matter involving her son. It's a great story and today would be a good day to take a moment and read it. You'll be quizzed on it next week. In this great tradition, Moses didn't let even the visit of Jethro continue to keep him from his duties of judging Israel.

Let's remember from last week's passage, that this is occurring *after* the giving of the law. The account is not in chronological order. This would have occurred most probably between Numbers 10:10 and 10:11. Therefore, the tabernacle is already built. Moses would probably be sitting at the entrance to the tabernacle. In the book of Judges, the tabernacle was located at Shiloh. It was to this place that the people would come. Like there, the tabernacle is the logical place for Moses to have sat and judged Israel.

¹³ (con't) **and the people stood before Moses from morning until evening.**

The number of people in the camp was probably between 2 and 3 million. This is the size of a rather large city and so the record of Moses sitting all day long judging cases is not only probable, it would be chaos if he didn't. He had received the law and therefore he had to make the law known and to judge cases as they arose.

As no directions for a governmental structure were given by the Lord during the giving of the law, there would only be the ruler and the priests designated to minister to the people at this point. Moses would have been as busy as a bee discharging these duties.

Many scholars tie in his judging of the people with the war of the Amelekites of the previous chapter, saying he was busy deciding about war booty and the like. This is not correct. This account was placed here out of chronological order. Even without a war, there would still be multitudes of cases to judge every day.

¹⁴ **So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people?"**

As a reminder, the word *khathan*, or father-in-law, is probably better translated as brother-in-law, but it can't sure either way. Whatever he was in relation to Moses, he was in such a standing that he could openly question him over his practices.

The question he asks is intended to get Moses to first think through his position before he gives his advice. We do this all the time in order to prepare the person we're

speaking to for the giving of advice that will follow. To Jethro, it's obvious what Moses is doing, but his words pierce into the problem he perceives with it. And so he continues...

14 (con't) Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?"

Along with the probing questions to get Moses to consider the advice which is coming, he includes several nuances for his ears. First, he uses the terms "sit" and "stand" to contrast Moses' position as the judge and the people's position as those petitioning the judge.

Secondly, the word "alone," which in Hebrew is *badad*, is emphatic – *l'badekha*. "Why do you sit *alone* in this particular manner?" Jethro, in advance of his advice, is continuing to prepare Moses for conducting his duties in a better way.

And to fully set the tone for what is coming, he completes his thoughts with the mentally tiresome words *min boqer ad arev*, or "from morning until evening." Each word has been selected to prompt Moses to first think through and then to defend what should not be defended. When this is done, Jethro will then give advice that will literally change the world for many people throughout the ages.

And as a squiggle for your brain, the word alone, or *badad*, is used for the first time here in the Bible. In this noun form, it will be used just 12 times. It gives the idea of separation, like a shoot branching off from a plant, or something solitary and alone. When a person had leprosy, they were to dwell *alone*. This is the idea of this word. Moses was *alone* in his duties.

15 And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God.

Moses will supply Jethro with two reasons for his actions. The first is in this verse. It is a clear statement, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God." However, this needs to be explained. Moses didn't sit in his chair as an oracle and speak words as if the Lord was speaking *through* Him like charismatic preachers do.

Nor did he simply make up things as he went, speaking as if he were speaking words *for* God as cult leaders do. Instead, he had received the law, and he was interpreting that law according to how it was revealed *to* him, just as a sound preacher

should do. If a matter arose which had not been delineated in the law, he would go to seek God's guidance instead of deciding on his own. We will see an example of this later.

In this, Moses is picturing Christ again who said these words to Israel in John 12 –

“And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. ⁴⁸ He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. ⁴⁹ For I have not spoken on My own *authority*; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. ⁵⁰ And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.”

-John 12:47-50

Moses set the pattern in that he did not speak under his own authority, but under the authority of God and only those words he had received from God. When Jesus says in John 12 that He did not come to judge the world, it does not mean that He is not the judge of the world, but that as the judge, it is in accord with the word of God. This is the same as Moses.

Moses was the judge, but his judgments were based *on the word of God* which had been revealed to him. This is seen in his second reason which he now relays to Jethro...

¹⁶ When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another;

Benson almost humorously notes that “if the people were as quarrelsome one with another as they were with God, he had many causes brought before him, and the more because their trials put them to no expense.” Joseph Benson

In other words, the people had been constantly quarreling *to* Moses, *among* one another, and *about* God since the moment they left Egypt. If they did this towards their leader and their God who could hold them accountable, how much more between one another who really couldn't!

And further, one could bring suit against another and it wouldn't cost them a dime for the legal process. Think of how litigious our society is and then double that because

there were no lawyer fees to worry about. Poor Moses! He would sit all day and hear their whining. But in the end, it was he who had their laws and he who needed to show them God's will as it was revealed to him...

16 (con't) **and I make known the statutes of God and His laws."**

There is an article in front of "God" in this verse. It says, "...and I make known the statues of 'the' God and His laws. It is not a superfluous addition, but it is a necessary emphasis to show that when they inquire of him, it is not his own statutes and laws.

The word God in the previous verse simply said *elohim*. Elsewhere in the Bible, judges are called *elohim*. To ensure that it was understood that the laws came from God and not from Moses, the definite article is placed in front of *elohim*. It says *ha'elohim* or "the God." It is He alone who gives the law to Israel.

Unfortunately, not one Bible version, or one commentary highlights this. And yet it is a key and principle tenet of doctrine which is being displayed in this single definite article. Benson provides a wonderful thought on verses 15 and 16 –

"The people came to inquire of God — And happy was it for them that they had such an oracle to consult. Moses was faithful both to him that appointed him, and to them that consulted him, and made them know the statutes of God, and his laws — His business was not to make laws, but to make known God's laws: his place was but that of a servant." Joseph Benson

Who will tell us of the laws of God?

Who will reveal to us His will?

How can we live rightly in this world we trod?

/Unless with His word our souls we fill

Where can we go to know His laws for us?

Who has spoken the things for us to do?

I have heard about the word of God, Jesus

And that it is what He speaks that we should pursue

And so I will open up this marvelous book

I will search out the mysteries of this superior word

All of my life I will open it and look

And through it I will be pleasing to Jesus my Lord

II. And God will be with You (verses 17-23)

¹⁷ So Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you do is not good.

I should remind you that the name "Jethro" was used 7 times in verses 1-12. However, it is never mentioned in verses 13-27. Instead, five times he is simply called Moses' *khathan* or relation through marriage – father-in-law, brother-in-law, whatever. In this capacity, he is acting as a wise counselor and not a mere relative or friend. And so, with his ears filled with Moses' reply, he responds with an honest, direct, and poignant rebuke – *lo tov ha'davar asher atah oteh*, "Not good is the word you accomplish."

Moses' words have failed to convince him that the arrangement is a satisfactory one. There is a moral element to his logic here which needs to be addressed. It is not *morally good* to give one person such power. It is wrong because of where it could lead, either intentionally or unintentionally through abuse.

Jethro doesn't mention this, but it is a truth which permeates both Scripture and the history of human governments. And there is also another moral reason which he will address directly...

¹⁸ Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out.

The verse in Hebrew begins with the words *navol tibbol gam attah gam ha'am* or something like "wearing away you will wear away also yourself and also the people." Jethro pulled out his Hebrew dictionary and introduced a new word into Scripture, repeating it twice for emphasis. It is the word *nabel*.

It gives the idea of "disgrace, dishonor, lightly esteem, come to nothing, make vile, or wither." In the context of his words, withering or wearing out is appropriate – as if Moses were a leaf which would wither and fall from a tree. His words imply that it is morally unacceptable to continue to pursue this path because it will lead to his inability to properly perform his duties.

At the same time it will lead to the inevitable dissatisfaction of the people having to wait extended periods of time to obtain justice. In this, they would eventually either rebel or take matters into their own hands. Either way, moral deficiency is the inevitable result.

18 (con't) For this thing *is* too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself.

This portion of verse 18 is the key to the entire passage. He informs Moses that the burden is too heavy (*kaved*) for him to carry it alone. It is a task which he is incapable of performing alone. Again he uses the same word with the same emphasis that he introduced into the Bible in verse 14 – *l'badekha*. “Moses *alone* you cannot accomplish this massive task!”

19 Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you:

Again, Jethro introduces a new word into the Bible, *yaats* – to advise, counsel. It is interesting that a Gentile is noted as the first *counselor* in this manner in the Bible, and he to the leader of God's people! The significance of this shouldn't be missed.

Enoch was a non-Hebrew and yet it was he who walked with God and was no more because God took him. Such interesting clues are given throughout Scripture to show that God looks on the heart, not at the externals.

In his counsel, he notes that God will be with Moses in his decision concerning his advice. In his first words he removes the thought of Moses *sitting* in judgment which was noted in verse 13 and which Jethro highlighted in verse 15. Instead, he tells him to “*stand*” ...

19 (con't) Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God.

In this, the legislative function is reserved to God – He is the one who sits. Moses will perform the mediatorial function of receiving the law *from* God, as well as carrying the requests of the people *to* God for Him to hear and act upon. And again, another new word is introduced into Scripture from Jethro's mind – *mul*.

It means “front” or “in front of” and thus it gives the idea of being a representative *before* God. It is derived from the word *mul* which means “to circumcise.” The idea is that just as circumcision stands in front of a person, and acts as a representative of their status, so Moses would stand as representative before God. In this verse, God is mentioned three times. In the last two, there is an article placed before the word God. Here is how it would properly read –

“Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before **the** God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to **the** God.”

As you can see, the article is important in obtaining the correct sense of what is being relayed. Jethro knows that God is God and so he doesn't use the article in the first instance. However, to emphasize that Moses is ministering before the only God on behalf of the people and not just administering his own justice, he uses the article.

²⁰ And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do.

Again, Jethro introduces a new word for us to consider – *zahar* or “teach.” This comes from a word which means to gleam, or figuratively, to illuminate. Even in English we get the sense of that when we speak of teaching and learning. When something is understood, it is said to illuminate our minds – “Aha! Now I see.”

Here the word is in the emphatic form. Jethro is emphatically stating that Moses is to be the teacher in four specific areas.

- 1) The statutes (*ha'khuqim*), which are the specific enactments for the people to live by.
- 2) The laws (*ha'torowt*), which are those items which regulate and govern conduct and behavior.
- 3) The way (*ha'derek*), which is the proper path and course of duty in accord with the ordinances and laws.
- 4) The work (*ha'maaseh*), which is the specific acts associated with the ordinances and laws.

In reality, this list which Jethro gives to Moses is now almost a mirror reflection of the duties of a preacher today. Paul sums up the same basic thought to his protégé Timothy—

“If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. ⁷ But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. ⁸ For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. ⁹ This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. ¹⁰ For to this *end* we

both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is *the* Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. ¹¹ These things command and teach.” 1 Timothy 4:6-11

²¹ Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them *to be* rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

Again, a new word is introduced for “shall select.” It is *khazah* and it means to see or behold. It comes from a root which means to gaze at or contemplate. The advice isn’t just that Moses should go point out people to be leaders, but that he should carefully evaluate those he is going to select.

They were first and foremost to be able men. The word is *khayil* or literally, “men of valor.” It is the same word used to describe Boaz in the book of Ruth. To define what such a man is like, he first says they are to “fear God.” Without this attribute, no other attribute will be unyielding in the face of trial.

Only after that does he say they should be men of truth and hating covetousness. If they don’t fear God, then neither lesser attribute can be truly assured. Jethro’s words here follow through, even into the New Testament.

Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 3 use the same general sentiments for the selection of both elders and deacons as are given here. With these qualifications set, Jethro now divides the entire congregation according to the decimal system.

It is a bottom-heavy system which gradually works up according to the steps of a pyramid until finally reaching the highest point at the top. It is, in essence, the very foundation of the original idea of the American government which looked to the diffusing of power to the lowest level possible so that the top would only be necessary in the most difficult of cases.

²² And let them judge the people at all times.

The lowest level possible is given the authority to judge. In this, Jethro has pointed out that it is one thing for Moses to lay down the principles, but it is another thing entirely for them to be applied. The application belongs as close to the source of the matter as is possible and it is to be this way at all times.

Instead of scheduled times of judgment with a single judge where delays could occur, there could be an immediate resolution to each and every case, or it could be quickly passed up the line to the next level for decision. It is a concept which Solomon writes about in Ecclesiastes –

“Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” Ecclesiastes 8:11

Whether there is a delay *of* judgment or a delay *for* judgment, only discontent and greater moral decay will result. Jethro’s recommendations will alleviate both.

²² (con’t) **Then it will be *that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge.***

In the church, God is the lawgiver through His prophets and apostles. From there different sized churches are organized to handle the problems at the lowest level possible for that denomination.

Greater problems are to be elevated to the point where they can be resolved without troubling each higher authority. It is also not at all unlike large corporations today. Jethro set a standard 3500 years ago which has proven the most effective model of all for the governing of man, be it in religion or in business.

²² (con’t) **So it will be easier for you, for they will bear *the burden with you.***

The word for “so it will be easier” is *v’haqel*. It means to make light. It is then in contrast to the *kaved* or “heaviness” of verse 18. That which was heavy and tiring would become light and manageable for Moses. Jethro’s words are both calming and comforting to the certainly weary leader of Israel.

²³ **If you do this thing, and God *so* commands you,**

Of the twenty versions I review for this, all of them but two give the sense of Moses going to God and receiving approval for these instructions – “If you do this thing and God *so* commands you...”

One that doesn’t follow this is the Douay-Rheims which says, “thou shalt fulfil the commandment of God.” This doesn’t make sense as there is no specific commandment of God concerning it. However, the ESV says, “If you do this, God will direct you.”

Of these versions, to me this one seems to carry the idea correctly. First, there is no record of Moses asking God whether this was right to do or not. Secondly, there is no article in front of God here. In line with his other words, it would be likely that if Moses were to receive instruction from God concerning this, he would have said, “if **the** God so commands you.” However he didn’t.

And finally, it is in line with his words of Deuteronomy 1 where he recounts the story we are looking at –

“And I spoke to you at that time, saying: ‘I alone am not able to bear you. ¹⁰ The Lord your God has multiplied you, and here you *are* today, as the stars of heaven in multitude. ¹¹ May the Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times more numerous than you are, and bless you as He has promised you! ¹² How can I alone bear your problems and your burdens and your complaints? ¹³ Choose wise, understanding, and knowledgeable men from among your tribes, and I will make them heads over you.’ ¹⁴ And you answered me and said, ‘The thing which you have told *us* to do *is* good.’ ¹⁵ So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and knowledgeable men, and made them heads over you, leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, leaders of tens, and officers for your tribes. ¹⁶ “Then I commanded your judges at that time, saying, ‘Hear *the cases* between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the stranger who is with him. ¹⁷ You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man’s presence, for the judgment *is* God’s. The case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it.’ ¹⁸ And I commanded you at that time all the things which you should do.”

-Deuteronomy 1:9-18

Throughout these words in Deuteronomy, Moses never says that he was commanded by God. Instead, it shows that he took the initiative. It implies that God allowed Moses to determine how His law would be carried out. In other words, His concern is that they are carried out. Moses’ concern was how to make that possible.

²³ (con’t) **then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace.”**

For the sake of Moses and the people he led, he gave the sound advice which was both followed by Moses and which eventually did lead them to their place, meaning Canaan,

in peace. In Canaan, the format of government was modified for national living, but it maintained the same general concept found in Jethro's words here.

*Keep the authority in the hands of those you can trust
But keep it at the lowest level too
You need to do this, it is a must
And if you do, it will go well with you*

*Don't let the government get too heavy at the top
If you do, there will be unhappiness in the land
People will lose heart and their anger will pop
And the breakdown in society will be sadly grand
Oh! If we only paid heed to the lesson of Jethro
And continued in this land with lower levels in control
But those days have passed us and surely we know
We have dug ourselves into a heavy government hole*

III. Return to Midian (verses 24-27)

²⁴ So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said.

This verse seems to confirm that Moses was given the authority to decide the structure of the government under him. There is no indication that he went to God and asked if this advice was ok. Instead, he simply implemented it. As Adam Clarke points out –

“As the counsel was doubtless inspired by the Divine Spirit, we find that it was sanctioned by the same, for Moses acted in every respect according to the advice he had received.” Adam Clarke

It was already seen in the first 12 verses of the chapter that Jethro was accepted by God; therefore, his advice is likewise acceptable for the administration of God's people.

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.

As recommended by Jethro, Moses followed through with the advice, appointing rulers in a bottom-heavy manner. However, there is one point which isn't evident here, but which was seen clearly in Moses' words of Deuteronomy 1.

Instead of selecting all of the rulers personally, it says he gave the right of choosing the capable men to the people and he then approved them. This is perfectly in line with Jethro's intent and his words. It is the same pattern that was later used by the apostles in Acts 6 when selecting deacons for the ministry –

“Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; ⁴ but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.’

⁵ And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, ⁶ whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.” Acts 6:3-6

Like the later apostles, this organizational structure kept the matters of less importance where they could most easily be handled. And this is exactly what resulted with Moses...

²⁶ So they judged the people at all times;

This is a confirmation of verse 22 which said, “And let them judge the people at all times.” Just as Jethro had recommended, so they did. The lower levels of authority administered justice anytime it was needed and were there to do so at all times.

²⁶ (con't) the hard cases they brought to Moses, but they judged every small case themselves.

The words of this verse are actually confirmed in several stories which intersperse the years of Israel in the wilderness. In Numbers 15, they had just such a case –

“Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. ³³ And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation. ³⁴ They put him under guard, because it had not been explained what should be done to him. ³⁵ Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.’ ³⁶ So, as the Lord commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died.” Numbers 15:32-36

Another such case involved the five daughters of Zelophehad and concerned inheritance rights. The lower levels could not agree on how to handle the matter and so it was brought to Moses who then went to the Lord concerning it. Take time to read Numbers 27:1-11 today. It is a story that is so important, that parts of it are repeated in five different parts of the Old Testament, from Numbers to Chronicles.

One final note on the account of Jethro's advice before we look at our last verse of the day – we should note with care that the term “Lord” or Yehovah has not been used once in the verses we looked at. Though it was used 6 times in the previous 12 verses, it is excluded from these last 15 verses.

The reason is that even though Yehovah is God, just as Jesus is God, there are roles assigned within the Godhead. The issuing of the Word comes *from* God, even though the Word *is* God. This is perfectly in line with Jesus' words of John 12 that were cited toward the beginning of the sermon.

27 Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way to his own land.

If you remember, I highlighted the fact that the name Jethro is never used in these last 15 verses. The reason for this now becomes evident. This same departure is given more detail in Numbers 10, where a different name is used for him, Hobab.

“Now Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, ‘We are setting out for the place of which the Lord said, “I will give it to you.” Come with us, and we will treat you well; for the Lord has promised good things to Israel.’

³⁰ And he said to him, ‘I will not go, but I will depart to my *own* land and to my relatives.’

³¹ So Moses said, ‘Please do not leave, inasmuch as you know how we are to camp in the wilderness, and you can be our eyes. ³² And it shall be, if you go with us—indeed it shall be—that whatever good the Lord will do to us, the same we will do to you.’” Numbers 10:29-32

Jethro is Hobab – they are the same person, but the name Hobab comes from the verb *khavav* which means “loves.” Thus *Khovav* means “Beloved” or “Cherished.” It is obviously the name by which he was remembered after this wonderful account, probably having been renamed by Moses because of his more than gracious advice which brought *ease* to Moses and *order* to Israel.

In picture, Jethro... or Hobab, is a type of Christ as well. He introduced the Bible to the term *yaats* or “counsel” in verse 19 and it is the same word used to describe the coming Messiah in Isaiah 9 where He is called, *pele yoets* or Wonderful Counselor. Hobab, the Beloved of Moses certainly fulfilled that role for him just as Jesus, the Beloved of God fulfills it for us.

Throughout the Bible, there are many people who come in, fulfill a role and then depart from the scene. Each is selected to show us a small picture of the Lord – His power, His wisdom, His love, His grace. Hobab was such a person. Together with Moses, they instituted a framework for society, both in the church and out, which has produced the most marvelous of results.

The farther we get from the counsel found in the Bible, the further we get from what is right and appropriate for sound living. Like the prodigal son who decided he could do things better without God, we eventually end in very bad straights and we will ultimately find out that life without our Father just doesn't work.

Maybe today you need to return to your heavenly Father and be reconciled to Him. The Bible tells you how you can... it tells us that it is through Jesus, the One whom all Scripture points to. Please let me tell you how He can bring you back home to God...

Closing Verse: *“The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd.” Ecclesiastes 12:11*

Next Week: Exodus 19:1-9 (If You Will...) (52nd Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Wonderful Counsel

And so it was, on the next day
That Moses sat the people to judge
And the people stood before Moses
From morning until evening, everyone with a grudge

So when Moses' father-in-law saw
All that he did for the people, he said
"What is this thing that you are doing for the people?
Keep it up and you will lose your head

Why do you alone sit
And all the people stand before you
From morning until evening?"
It's just not right, the thing you do

And Moses said to his father-in-law, when he did prod
"Because the people come to me to inquire of God

When they have a difficulty
They come to me
And I judge between one and another, you see
And I make known the statutes of God and His laws – quite plainly

So Moses' father-in-law said to him
"The thing that you do is not good
Both you and these people who are with you
Will surely wear yourselves out; this is understood

For this thing is too much for you; put this away on a shelf
You are not able to perform it by yourself

Listen now to my voice
I will give you counsel, and God will be with you
Stand before God for the people
So that you may bring the difficulties to God, this you should do

And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws
And show them the way in which they must walk
And the work they must do, avoiding life's flaws
Listen to me Moses, as I continue to talk...

Moreover you shall select from all the people able men
Such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness
And place such to be rulers of thousands over them

Rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens
Yes, do as I address

And let them judge the people at all times
Then it will be that every great matter, every weighty grudge
They shall bring to you
But every small matter they themselves shall judge

So it will be easier for you, it's true
For they will bear the burden with you

If you do this thing, and God so commands you
Then you will be able to endure and the difficulties will cease
And all this people will also go, it's true
To their place in peace

So Moses heeded the voice instead
Of his father-in-law and did all that he had said

And Moses chose able men out of all Israel
And made them over the people each a head
Rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds as well
Rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens; not just him instead

So they judged the people at all times
The hard cases to Moses they brought
But they judged every small case themselves
They did as Jethro to Moses had taught

Then Moses let his father-in-law depart
And he went his way to his own land
To administration of the law, this was a great start

Moses paid heed, to his elder, a man so wise
And the advice he took became a standard in Israel
The advice was acceptable in God's eyes
And so Moses and the people carried it out quite well

We can learn from this story a lesson
That keeping authority at the lowest level is best

We then won't need to be a guessin'
If our lives will be fully blessed

When we handle the small stuff in life
And only pass up the big things to those above us
We will avoid a lot of unnecessary strife
A model approved in the Old Testament by Jesus

And when we have real cares or woes
We can skip every level and go straight to the Lord
For He alone every difficult resolution knows
And most are already laid out in His word

Thank You for the lessons Your word shows us
And thank You above all, O God, for the wisdom of Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 19:1-9 (IF YOU WILL...)

Was anyone here at the giving of the law at Mount Sinai? No? I didn't think so. And yet, in today's passage, God speaks of His voice as something that is to be obeyed by the people at all times. How can His voice be obeyed if it was only that one time in history that He spoke to the people in this way? How is that possible?

It's because even though there is no audible voice issuing forth, there is still the written account of His voice – at Sinai, through the prophets, through the mouth of Christ Jesus, and through the hand of the apostles. The word is the voice, merely in written form.

And so it is incumbent on us to pay heed to that voice as it slowly reveals the plan of redemption found in the pages of the Bible. As we read it, we should tremble, knowing with all certainty that it is the voice of our Creator.

Text Verse: *“Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel assembled to me, because of the transgression of those who had been carried away captive, and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.” Ezra 9:4*

In Ezra's time, there were those who had transgressed the law of the Lord. This distressed the people because they had already been punished once for having rejected the word of the Lord. They were hardly back in the land from that exile and the people had started down the wrong path once again.

Those who trembled at the words of God gathered together in hopes of withholding His wrath from coming upon them once again. It is people like this that are rewarded for their faithfulness before God. Do you tremble at the words of God? Do you feel fear and remorse when you sin against Him?

He is a loving Father, but He is also a just Judge. Let us tremble at the words of God and do our utmost to be obedient and faithful to them. This is what He will tell the people that He expects of them in today's passage. So let's look into this word and let us accept it for what it is, the very words of our Creator revealed to us. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Israel Camped before the Mountain (verses 1-3)

¹In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt,

The words *ba'khodesh ha'shelishi* or, "In (the) new moon the third..." indicate that this is the first day of the third month. The new moon sets the timing of the new month in the Hebrew calendar. It is commonly accepted that unless the day of the month is given, then the first day of the month is the default day to be considered. The Bible provides specificity, but it also requires study and understanding to grasp its nuances.

This then would be the month of Sivan. It corresponds with around the end of May to early June. It is now the 47th day after departing from Egypt. The Passover was on the 14th of the first month and Israel departed in the night on the 15th day of the first month.

Counting 15 to 30 equals a total of 16 days. Then the second month would be 30 days long. This then would equal day 46. Now it is the first day of the third month, or day 47. Why should we care about this? Stay tuned to this same channel and you will soon see.

^{1 (cont)} on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai.

Three names are given in this first verse – Israel, Egypt, and Sinai. Israel means, "He strives with God." It is a double entendre. He strives with God – either on His behalf or against His will, but either way Israel strives with God. Egypt means "Double Distress." Sinai means "Bush of the Lord."

A picture is being formed already in verse 1 for us to think about and contemplate. If, as traditional scholars believe, Mount Sinai is in the Sinai Peninsula, then the Wilderness of Sinai is a spacious plain around it known as Er Rahah.

The mountain itself, there in Sinai, is actually a collection of three peaks which consist of Jebel Musa, Mount Catherine, and Ras Sufsafeh. This corresponds with the writings of Josephus and many other ancient witnesses.

Other scholars disagree and place Sinai in various other locations, but the trek so far, the meticulous recording of the trek, and the timing involved in that trek seems to lead to this area of the Sinai Peninsula. It is where St. Catherine's Monastery is. Ellicott eloquently describes the choice of Mount Sinai for the giving of the law –

“Mount Sinai was a place which nature, not art, had made conspicuous, for it was the highest in all that range of mountains. Thus God put contempt upon cities and palaces, setting up his pavilion on the top of a mountain, in a barren desert.” Charles Ellicott

² For they had departed from Rephidim, had come to the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness.

The last time Rephidim was mentioned was in Exodus 17:8 in the war with Amalek. After that came the insert account of Jethro and his advice to Moses which was placed there prior to the giving of the law even though it chronologically came almost a year later. That encompassed all of chapter 18.

Now we are told they have departed Rephidim for the Wilderness of Sinai without any intervening stops. This then corresponds with Numbers 33:15. It agrees that there were no stops between the two. Rephidim today is accepted to be a place called Wady Feiran.

To get to the wilderness of Sinai, or Er Rahah required one of two treks. One would be about 18 miles and the other about 25 miles. Both distances are attainable in a single long day of walking and so the account of the past matches what is acknowledged today.

^{2 (con't)} So Israel camped there before the mountain.

This area of Er Rahah is described as a plain which is about two miles long and about a half-mile wide which is “enclosed between two precipitous mountain ranges of black and yellow granite, and having at its end the prodigious mountain block of Ras Sufsafeh” (Stanley, Sinai and Palestine, p. 74).

It is rather flat and stunted tamarisk bushes cover the ground. According to writings about it, of all of the places in the Sinai Peninsula, it has the most abundant supply of water to be found.

³ And Moses went up to God,

What is implicit, but unstated, is that the pillar of cloud and fire moved to the mountain and rested there. Moses having been to this spot before now returns to it and ascends the mountain in order to determine God’s will for the people after their long, arduous trek.

Unfortunately, unless you are reading this in Hebrew, it is pretty certain your Bible doesn't translate these words properly. Again, as has occurred at important points throughout the Exodus account, there is a definite article in front of "God." It says *u'mosheh alah el ha'elohim* – "And Moses went up to **the** God."

What is happening here is what was spoken about in Exodus 3 when Moses first met the Lord in the burning bush. The term God was used many times in that chapter, but the term *ha'elohim*, or "the God," was used just five times at key points in the narrative. In verse 3:12, using the definite article it said, "I will certainly be with you. And this *shall be* a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve **the** God on this mountain." The term "the God" or *ha'elohim*, will be used three times in this chapter.

^{3 (con't)} **and the Lord called to him from the mountain,**

Suddenly, after going up to "the God," it says that the Lord, meaning Yehovah, called to him from the mountain. This is the same idea, but in reverse, as what occurred in Exodus 3:4 –

"So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, 'Moses, Moses!'" Exodus 3:4

The same Lord who called from the bush is the God who now calls to Moses from the mountain. The promise of Exodus 3:12 is now coming to its fulfillment. The God, who is the Lord, will be worshipped on this mountain. Moses has accomplished the mission he so reluctantly accepted and he has led Israel to their anticipated meeting with the God, who is Yehovah. The name Lord, or Yehovah will be used 18 times in this chapter.

As a side note, Stephen refers to this account in Acts 7:30 where he says Moses met an Angel of the Lord. What is implied there is that it is the Lord Jesus, the Messenger of God, with whom Moses met.

^{3 (con't)} **saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel:**

This is a unique and interesting set of words. The name Jacob has not been mentioned since Exodus 3:6 when we read this –

Moreover He said, “I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of **Jacob**.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. Exodus 3:6

However, the name “Israel” or “Israelite” has been used 104 times. And further, the term “house of Jacob” is rare in Scripture. This is the second of only 18 times it is used. The book of Isaiah uses it the most, nine times. The first time it was used was in Genesis 46:27 during the record of those who went to Egypt with Jacob.

Here, both terms, the house of Jacob and the children of Israel, are named in the same verse. This group of people who once was lowly and humbled when they entered Egypt, just as Jacob was when he fled to Padan Aram, had increased to become great just as their father when he returned home.

Thus the term “the children of Israel” is the increase of Jacob. Both terms are used here to reflect their humble origins as well as their national status. The only time the term is used in the Psalms, the same general thought is recorded –

“When Israel went out of Egypt,
The house of Jacob from a people of strange language,
²Judah became His sanctuary,
And Israel His dominion.” Psalm 114:1, 2

It is to this house of Jacob, who are the children of Israel, that he now very precisely and succinctly states three things which He has accomplished for them...

*I have borne you on eagle’s wings, tenderly caring for you
Raising you out of the nest, you are ready for a new way
I will show you marvelous things, in all that I do
In obedience you I will test, and in you marvels I will display*

*How I love you O Israel
But do you love Me? Will you follow and pay heed?
In advance to you I will tell
That you will fall away, and do so with speed*

*But after My anger subsides, I will gather you again to Me
And once more I will place you high among the nations*

*My word is My oath and surely you will see
So believe My word and rejoice in those expectations*

II. If... (verses 4-6)

⁴‘You have seen

atem reitem – The words in this verse are plural. The Lord is speaking to all Israel when He says “you.”

⁴ (con’t) what I did to the Egyptians,

asher asiti l’mitsraim – “What I did to Egypt.” Most translations say “the Egyptians,” but what occurred happened to people, animals, and land. The words are surely speaking in an all-inclusive manner concerning the great deeds of the Lord.

In only a few words, a recap is made concerning the marvelous miracles and wonders which He brought upon them, from the first plague of blood all the way until the waters of the Red Sea closed over Egypt’s armies.

⁴ (con’t) and how I bore you on eagles’ wings

wa’essa etkem al kanpe nesharim. Secondly, He notes how He bore them on eagle’s wings. The word translated as “eagle” is *neshar* and is used for the first of 26 times in the Bible. It doesn’t necessarily mean an eagle though. The HAW notes that “...the Semitic languages actually tend to lump the large soaring birds into one family.”

Therefore it can include the eagle, hawk, harrier, vulture, and so on. In the case of this verse, the eagle more naturally brings out the sense for our imagination. It is a powerful and beautiful bird of prey. The theme here concerning being borne on the eagle’s wings is mentioned elsewhere in Scripture. It is highly refined in Deuteronomy 32 –

“As an eagle stirs up its nest,
Hovers over its young,
Spreading out its wings, taking them up,
Carrying them on its wings,
¹² So the Lord alone led him,
And *there was* no foreign god with him.” Deuteronomy 32:11, 12

The eagle will hover over its young, protecting them from the sun, from the cold, and from other potentially harmful elements which arise. During the entire time of their growth in the nest, the mother feeds them and prepares them for the moment when they will first take to flight.

Eventually, when the young eagle has developed enough, the parent will stir up the nest in order to lure the now-ready fledgling for that precious moment. As they take to flight, the parent will hover around them, fluttering in an encouraging manner.

The idea of being lifted up on its wings comes from the parent flying beneath the young one, probably to provide lift for the tired bird and to ensure it wouldn't fall to the earth. However, there are no reliable reports of a bird actually flying on its parent's wings and thus this is speaking in a phenomenological sense. Probably the most famous of such passages in Scripture is that of Isaiah 40 –

“Why do you say, O Jacob,
And speak, O Israel:
'My way is hidden from the Lord,
And my just claim is passed over by my God'?
²⁸ Have you not known?
Have you not heard?
The everlasting God, the Lord,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Neither faints nor is weary.
His understanding is unsearchable.
²⁹ He gives power to the weak,
And to *those who have* no might He increases strength.
³⁰ Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall,
³¹ But those who wait on the Lord
Shall renew *their* strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint.” Isaiah 40:27-31

In looking at these passages, we can see that like the eagle developing in a nest, Israel developed as it were in Egypt. When the time was right and she was ready for her flight,

the Lord aroused like the parent and fluttered in order to prompt Israel to depart the nest. The symbolism is both highly tender and exceedingly beautiful.

They went from embryo to fully developed, and at that time, the Lord carried them *upon* Himself, even *to* Himself...

⁴ (con't) **and brought you to Myself.**

va'avi etkem alai – This is the third thing which the Lord claims to have done thus far for Israel. He brought them to Himself. There are two major ways in which these words are viewed. The first is that He brought them to Himself at Sinai where they could fellowship with Him. This is the prominent view.

But this then neglects the fact that the Lord was there with them in Egypt as an eagle is there with the young, protecting them and watching over them until they are ready for flight. It also neglects the fact that the Lord has been with them throughout all of the plagues and throughout the past 47 days of wilderness wanderings.

Instead, He is certainly saying that “I have brought you out of where you were. You were in a land of corrupting influences, you were living in a manner contrary to My glory and My righteous standards, and You have been brought to the place where I will reveal these to You. I will show You what is right, proper, and acceptable concerning worship of Me, your Creator and now your Redeemer.”

This is certainly what is intended by the words *va'avi etkem alai*. He is speaking in a manner as if the matter is accomplished because He is God and He will complete what He has begun.

⁵ **Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice**

v'attah im shamo'a tishmeu – “and you, if listening you will listen.” It is asking for obedience. The Hebrew word *im*, or if, is a conditional word. “If you hear the words, it doesn't mean that you will truly listen to them. But if you do, if you hear them when they are proclaimed and then act on them as intended, then there will be a relationship between us which is unique in all the world.”

It needs to be noted that the word *qoli* or “My voice” is equated directly with the word of God. In other words, it is true that the people at Sinai will hear the word of God

spoken, but those after this time will not. And yet, they are asked to continue to hearken to *qoli*, or “My voice.”

Thus, the written word of God carries the same weight and authority as the spoken word of God, because *it is*, in fact, the spoken word of God. If this isn't a terrifying thought for those who would misuse Scripture, then that heart is hardened even to foolishness. The Lord is asking them to hear and to apply the words of His voice to their lives

^{5 (con't)} **and keep My covenant,**

Adam Clarke very well sums up these words and their significance for us. These words mean that they were to...

“...not only copy in their lives the ten commandments, but they must receive and preserve the grand agreement made between God and man by sacrifice, in reference to the incarnation and death of Christ; for from the foundation of the world the covenant of God ratified by sacrifices referred to this, and now the sacrificial system was to be more fully opened by the giving of the law.” Adam Clarke

Clarke is right in that the covenant which will be presented to Israel is in reference to the death of Christ. The sacrificial system which they will be introduced to is explicitly explained in the book of Hebrews, particularly chapters 9 and 10. At this time, the Lord is asking them to do these things. And if they do, there will be an honor bestowed upon the people which is unmatched and without parallel in all of human history...

^{5 (con't)} **then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people;**

The words here are about as important to understand as any to be found in Scripture. Israel is promised that *if* they are obedient to the word of the Lord and faithful to His covenant, they will be a “special treasure” to Him. The word for “special treasure” is *segullah*. This is the first of eight times it will be used in Scripture. The last being Malachi 3:17.

What the Lord means by this term will be explained in the next verse, but to the people, it was a word that held meaning in and of itself, and so they would understand it immediately. It comes from an unused root meaning “to shut up.”

The idea is that something precious like a jewel or a peculiar treasure would be shut up because it was special. This word, though only used a limited number of times, is filled with both spiritual and theological treasure. Solomon uses the term in Ecclesiastes 2 –

“I also gathered for myself silver and gold and **the special treasures** of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, *and* musical instruments of all kinds.” Ecclesiastes 2:8

However, after only a few more verses, Solomon will note that it, along with all of his other riches, were mere vanity. In Solomon’s words, we can see that special treasure, apart from God, has no meaning at all. This is all implied in the Lord’s words to the people here. The conditional word “if” was given to show them this.

And this word of warning, “if,” can be summed up perfectly in the last use of the word *segullah* in the Old Testament. In Malachi 3, we read this –

“Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another,
And the Lord listened and heard them;
So a book of remembrance was written before Him
For those who fear the Lord
And who meditate on His name.

¹⁷ ‘They shall be Mine,’ says the Lord of hosts,
‘On the day that I make them My **jewels**.

And I will spare them
As a man spares his own son who serves him.’

¹⁸ Then you shall again discern
Between the righteous and the wicked,
Between one who serves God
And one who does not serve Him.” Malachi 3:16-18

Those who feared the Lord are those included in the “if” of His promises. The grace of the promise to Israel is given in advance of the giving of the law, but it carries a very large and consequential word within it... “if.”

Only those who hold the Lord in such high esteem as to hearken to His voice and be obedient to His covenant will likewise be esteemed by the Lord. How sad that so many missed this and how many still miss it today.

^{5 (con’t)} **for all the earth is Mine.**

The previous words said that they would be the Lord's special treasure *above* all people, not "out of" all people. These words now explain that – "for all the earth is Mine." The words, however, have to be taken in light of what is later said in Luke 4 –

"Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ And the devil said to Him, 'All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. ⁷ Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.'"

-Luke 4:5-7

The earth is the Lord's but the control of it was delivered to the devil when Adam fell in the Garden of Eden. In order for Israel to be the Lord's special treasure, He redeemed them. In the act of redemption, they again belonged to Him. But does this mean that all of Israel is, by default, the Lord's? The answer is, "No." This is seen from Jesus' own words in John 8 –

"You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it. ⁴⁵ But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me." John 8:44, 45

In this, we see that physical redemption does not automatically follow through to spiritual redemption. Man remains in sin and sin must be atoned for. The Lord will provide a means for the atonement of sin within the covenant which He will make with Israel. But even that only points to the true atonement which is found in Christ Jesus alone.

⁶And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests

The word "kingdom" implies a king. Israel was intended to be a theocracy. It was a nation with the Lord as its King. In this position as a people, they were to be priests. The word "you" is emphatic and thus it is making a distinction between them and all the other nations. This should be taken in two ways. First, all Israelites were entitled to come near before God without an intermediary.

In 1 Samuel 1, Hannah came before the Lord and prayed to Him directly. The Lord heard her prayer and responded to it, giving her a son, Samuel. In 1 Chronicles 4, Jabez called

out to the God of Israel and He heard and granted his request. These are just two of countless times the Bible records the prayers of the people, performing the priestly role of speaking directly to God.

The people also brought their offerings to Him directly, they paid Him their vows, and they communed intimately with Him at feasts and even in the common days of the year.

The second way they can be considered as a kingdom of priests is that they *had* priests, the sons of Levi and Aaron, to conduct specific priestly duties on behalf of the people before the Lord, their King. No other nation had such a system and no other nations had priests who were considered acceptable to conduct these priestly functions in connection with His law.

⁶ (con't) **and a holy nation.'**

The idea of "holy" is that it is set apart. Israel was to be a holy nation because they were to be set apart from the world, living in a manner acceptable to the Lord based on the laws He would give them. They were to be consecrated to His service and then conduct themselves according to that consecration.

This holiness wasn't something conferred and which then carried on all by itself. This is shown throughout the entire law. When someone did something wrong or had a certain type of defect, such as leprosy, they were to be cut off or kept separate from the congregation. Probably the most explicit example of something defiling that which is holy is found in the book of Haggai –

"Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Now, ask the priests *concerning the law*, saying, ¹² "If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?"'"

Then the priests answered and said, "No."

¹³ And Haggai said, "If *one who is unclean because of a dead body* touches any of these, will it be unclean?"

So the priests answered and said, "It shall be unclean."

¹⁴ Then Haggai answered and said, "'So is this people, and so is this nation before Me,' says the Lord, 'and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean. Haggai 2:11, 12

Where holiness does not transfer to that which is defiled, that which is defiled does corrupt that which is holy. Being a holy nation implied first being purified and then being separate in order to maintain that holiness through adherence to the law of the Lord.

The holiness of Yehovah is the origination and cause of the holiness of the people. The giving of the law is how that holiness will come about. Without that, they would have remained defiled. Adherence to that law is how it is maintained. From this process they became acceptable to Him as a people to dwell among and receive their praise and worship.

⁶ (con't) **These *are* the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.**"

Out of curiosity, I counted the total number of words in the Hebrew which comprise the Lord's words to Moses for him to repeat to Israel. This is from verse 4 through the first part of verse 6. It is just 37 words. The conditions were laid down and the promises were made in a mere 37 words. As the Pulpit Commentary notes –

"The question was a very simple one. Would they accept the covenant or no, upon the conditions offered? It was not likely that they would reject such gracious proposals."
(Pulpit Commentary)

The decision of the people, based on these 37 words, has carried them through much blessing and many, many curses for the last 3500 years. But through it all, Israel has survived. The Lord has remained faithful to His end of the deal, despite their chronic faithlessness.

*A kingdom of priests, holy to the Lord
Those whose prayers and offerings are acceptable to Me
This is what you will be if you heed My word
I tell you this now, speaking plainly*

*I shall purify you and you shall be holy
And you shall continue to observe as I command you to do
If you continue in obedience it will go well, you see
I have a wonderful plan of the ages which includes you*

*And someday a New Covenant I will make
It will be between you and Me, yes between us*

*The covenant will be made for your sake
And it will come through the shed blood of My Son, Jesus*

III. All that the Lord has Spoken We Will Do (verses 7-9)

⁷ So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him.

In order to transmit the message to the congregation, Moses called for the elders and relayed the words to them. Several translations use the literal words of the Hebrew, translating them directly by saying that Moses “laid before their faces” all the words of the Lord. “Before their faces” is an idiomatic Hebraism that simply means “before,” or “in the presence of.”

After speaking to the elders of the tribes, the words would go from tribe to family to household to individual. Very quickly the message would have been distributed to the ears of the congregation.

⁸ Then all the people answered together and said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do.”

Without even hearing the words of the covenant, the people as a united whole agreed to its terms. The word for “together” is *yachad*. It signifies that they were *as one*, wholly united in their approval. The 37 words were agreed to, including its conditional nature concerning obedience, as well as the benefits which will stem from a positive discharge of those expectations.

^{8 (con't)} So Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord.

Although not explicit, to communicate the message to the people and then to carry it back to the Lord would have made it the next day. Therefore, this is now the 48th day since the exodus.

Moses’ carrying back the words of the Lord was not a necessary thing for His information. The Lord is fully aware of all things. Rather, it is necessary as a part of the people’s instruction. Moses is shown to the people to be the messenger and the mediator of the coming covenant.

⁹ And the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever.”

In response to the affirmation of the people to accept the stipulations they had been presented, the Lord tells Moses what to expect. “I will come to you in the thick cloud.” The word “thick” is *av* and is introduced into the Bible at this time. The Hebrew reads, “I will come to you in the thickness of a cloud.”

This thickness will be explained in verse 18 as the smoke of a furnace. The cloud is not the glory of the Lord, but that which veils the glory of the Lord. God is Light and in Him there is no darkness. But in order to conceal His majesty and save the people from perishing, the cloud was given to obscure His radiance.

Even the shining countenance of Moses which merely reflected His glory had to be veiled from the people. In giving this marvelous manifestation of Himself, two purposes would be made known. The first is the absolute Divine majesty of the Lord which they were to remember and fear, understanding that He wasn't just a magician's trick conjured up by Moses.

Secondly, it was to validate that Moses had, in fact, been chosen as the Lord's representative before the people and the people's representative before the Lord. The “you” in “and believe you” is emphatic. They were expected to accept and believe Moses for all time. In part at least, this has been realized.

Moses is revered among the people and is considered their great lawgiver. Unfortunately, the actual significance of both who the Lord is and what was Moses' role was for the people has been warped and twisted in a million ways over the centuries. But there is a germ of understanding at least in most Jewish people.

What the people will be prepared for is to be an eternal obligation on all men. Jesus, speaking of the very law that the people are about to receive, says this about it –

“For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.” Matthew 5:18

^{9 (fin)} So Moses told the words of the people to the Lord.

Doesn't it seem odd that this is an almost identical repeat of the statement made in verse 8? It seems both out of place and unnecessary in the extreme, unless one

considers the significance of the words. “So Moses told the words of the people to the Lord.”

This isn't a repeat of information that transpired between the two parties, Moses and the Lord. Rather, it is a statement *concerning* the two parties, *Israel* and the *Lord*. The repetition is given to show that the words *of Israel* had been transmitted *to the Lord*. In essence, it is the sealing of the agreement. Israel has obligated itself to its future with these words. The words of the Lord through Ezekiel sum up this statement which is given here in verse 9 –

“What you have in your mind shall never be, when you say, ‘We will be like the Gentiles, like the families in other countries, serving wood and stone.’”

-Ezekiel 20:32

Israel as a people committed itself to the Lord and the Lord committed Himself to them. But we cannot forget that conditional word concerning this coming covenant – “if.” Israel will be holy *if* they maintain holiness. Israel will be secure *if* they rest in the Lord, but when they fail to meet the conditions, it would be different.

Within the covenant are promised blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. Israel could not claim to be the Lord's special treasure if they were disobedient to His word and to His covenant. Instead, they could only expect His wrath.

The rest of the Old Testament will reveal Israel's complete inability to either heed His word or keep His covenant. In the New Testament, Paul gives several reasons for the giving of the law. The first is to show us God's perfect standard.

The second is to show us the impossibility of any person meeting that standard. The third is to show us how utterly sinful sin is to God. And the fourth is to show us our desperate need for something else; it is to show us our need for Christ Jesus. The law was intended to lead Israel directly to their need for their Messiah. And so in Jeremiah 31 we read this –

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— ³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. ³³ But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds,

and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." Jeremiah 31:31

The New Covenant was not given to the Gentile people of the world; it was given to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. However, as a nation, they rejected it and as Paul explains, took another path –

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. ⁴ For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

-Romans 10:3, 4

Therefore, God set Israel aside and did something rather unexpected, He allowed Gentiles to partake of the commonwealth of Israel until Israel was ready to receive God's righteousness instead of their own futile attempts at doing so.

During Israel's time of being set aside, which Paul explains in detail in Romans, the terms of the New Covenant were offered even to Gentiles who heard and gladly received it. The kingdom of priests moved from Israel to the church, regardless of national heritage.

We are now His *segullah*, his special people. Paul, writing to Titus, the church planter of Gentile-led churches, writes this for us to see who we are because of our faith in Christ –

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, ¹² teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works." Titus 2:12-14

And we are now His nation of kings and priests, called out from the world – both Jew and Gentile. John informs us of this in the last book of the Bible when writing to the seven Gentile-led churches in Asia –

“To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Revelation 1:6

However, and to the shame of replacement theologians everywhere, God is not done with Israel. The structure of the Bible itself shows us the pattern of redemptive history. Paul’s letters come after the book of Acts to indicate the time of the Gentile-led church age, but immediately following that come the books addressed once again to the Hebrew people; the nation of Israel.

Peter, whose letter is not addressed to Gentiles, but to Jews – and which is placed after the Gentile-led church-age epistles, says this to his audience –

“But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.”

-1 Peter 2:9, 10

In these verses, Peter quotes the same words from Hosea that Paul used in Romans 9 to show that the Gentiles who were once not a people had now become the people of God. Peter, using those same verses, now shows that the Jews, who were not a people, are once again the people of God.

It is the restoration of Israel which is based on the words of the Lord found in today’s verse, specifically, that humongous word “if!” The New Covenant was given in place of the Old. The Old is obsolete, but the promise to Israel is not. The New Covenant was promised while the Old was in effect and therefore it pertains to those who are coming out of the Old Covenant.

This is the very purpose of the last 7 years of Daniel’s 70 7s, a 490-year period given to Israel to do exactly this, receive their Messiah and be reconciled to God through His shed blood. Has God abandoned His people Israel? Perish the thought! They abandoned Him, but He not only will not... He cannot abandon them.

The God of the Bible is unswervingly faithful to His word. It is the most reliable word of all. If He says He will accept you, then believe it. Trust that all of your mistakes can and will be washed if you just believe what He has accomplished for you. If you would like to receive Jesus today, let me explain to you how you can...

Closing Verse: *“Heaven is My throne,
And earth is My footstool.
Where is the house that you will build Me?
And where is the place of My rest?
² For all those things My hand has made,
And all those things exist,”
Says the Lord.
“But on this one will I look:
On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit,
And who trembles at My word. Isaiah 66:1, 2*

Next Week: Exodus 19:10-25 (A Law of Death and Condemnation) (53rd Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

“If” is a Conditional Word

In the third month after the children of Israel
Had gone out of the land of Egypt, by and by
On the same day, as the record does tell
They came to the Wilderness of Sinai

For they had departed from Rephidim
Had come to the Wilderness of Sinai by God’s care
And camped in the wilderness
So Israel before the mountain camped there

And Moses went up to God
And the Lord called to him from the mountain, He did tell
“Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob
And tell the children of Israel:

“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians
And how I bore you on eagles’ wings

And brought you to Myself
I have done all of these things

Now therefore, if you will indeed
Obey My voice and keep My covenant so divine
Then you shall be a special treasure to Me
Above all people; for all the earth is Mine

And you shall be to Me a kingdom
Of priests and a holy nation
These are the words which you shall speak
To the children of Israel, the congregation

So Moses came and called
For the elders of the people as the Lord demanded
And laid before them all these words
Which to him the Lord commanded

Then all the people answered together and said
“We will do all that the Lord has spoken
So Moses brought back the words
Of the people to the Lord, as a humble token

And the Lord said to Moses
“Behold, I will in the thick cloud come to you
That when I speak with you the people may hear
And believe you forever: this they will do

So Moses told the words of the people to the Lord
He told them this, according to the holy word

O God, “if” is such a big and difficult word
When we face daily trials, we usually fail
But Hallelujah to Jesus our Lord
Who over the law did prevail

In Him we have a greater hope, one solid and sure
Because of Him we too can stand in victory
And praise You all with lips cleansed and pure
And praise You eternally there at the glassy sea

Thank You, O God for our Lord Jesus!
Thank You, O God for all You have done for us!
Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 19:10-25

(A LAW OF DEATH AND CONDEMNATION)

A few months ago, a friend asked me to watch the Ancient Aliens series on the History Channel. He wanted to know specifically about the things which don't seem to match the biblical account. I watched all of them that were available on Netflix and gave him a few short reports, but haven't had time to completely go over them.

The thing about that show, or any like it, is that when you have a presupposition about something, it will immediately affect your perspective on everything which you view in the world you live in. In other words, our worldview will naturally lead us to make conclusions, whether they are sound or not.

For the "ancient alien theorists," everything they see is biased by a worldview that ancient man was less, not more developed, and that he could only accomplish the great feats of the past by external help. As far as ancient religions, they want to see aliens everywhere and so they do.

Today's passage was one they spoke of. They believe that aliens, not the Lord, descended on Mount Sinai. As with each time they quoted the Bible in their series, their analyses of it were flawed and they would insert things which are not recorded in the Bible.

If they did this with the most studied and plainly available text on earth, the Holy Bible, then they certainly did it with all the other ancient texts they cite which very few have ever looked at and which lack a large body of textual support.

Be advised today, aliens did not descend onto Mount Sinai. The account is plain, clear, and it is tied directly into the work of Jesus Christ, as is every account in Scripture.

Text Verse: *"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith." Romans 12:3*

Paul asks us to not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to. That idea will come into play later in our sermon today, but it also comes into play when we evaluate the Bible. We shouldn't think of ourselves as knowing more than God. Rather, let us take His word at face value and respect it for what it is.

Israel didn't have a close encounter of the third kind. Rather they had a close encounter of the wondrous kind when they stood before the Lord of Creation and received His law. Today we will see the beginning of that marvelous event. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Be Ready for the Third Day (verses 10-13)

¹⁰ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow,

In order to be an acceptable group of people, holy to the Lord, Moses is now given instructions concerning the people. He is told to "consecrate" them. This means to sanctify or purify them. What is coming in the manifestation of the Lord upon the mountain required this above all else.

This consecration is actually a two-fold process. The more important of the two, inward purity, was to be prompted on by the external acts of purification. The external cleansing for the people is given so that those who conduct the rites would understand that these externals necessitated internal cleansing to be meaningful.

During the time they purified themselves externally, they should be working on the internal purification through prayer, contemplation of who they were in relation to the Lord, and putting away thoughts of self. Instead, they should regard what was coming as sacred and holy. All this was to be spurred on by the external rites.

In calling on Christ, we are immediately sanctified by the sealing of the Holy Spirit. However, in our natural lives, we are still not pure. In this life, as we conduct the external rituals – for example giving up on wrongdoing and replacing it with what is proper – we are inwardly renewed and purified. The external should lead naturally to the internal.

However, this isn't always the case. Nothing external, even if commanded, can secure inward purity. Someone who is simply giving up being an alcoholic may replace that vice with something else. The idea for growing to be like Christ is to replace that which is unholy with that which is holy.

The sanctification of the people for various reasons will continue to be seen during the time of the law. In both Joshua 3 and 7 the people were instructed to sanctify

themselves in preparation for certain events. In Joshua 7, when a man committed a major transgression against the Lord, all of the people were to sanctify themselves in preparation for meeting with Him for a time of inspection –

Get up, sanctify the people, and say, ‘Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the Lord God of Israel: “*There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you.*”¹⁴ In the morning therefore you shall be brought according to your tribes. And it shall be *that* the tribe which the Lord takes shall come according to families; and the family which the Lord takes shall come by households; and the household which the Lord takes shall come man by man.¹⁵ Then it shall be *that* he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel.”

-Joshua 7:13-15

Of the external rites which they conducted, the washing of their clothes is explicitly mentioned and it is so first...

¹⁰ (con’t) **and let them wash their clothes.**

The first ordinance is pronounced here. It is the rite of washing their clothes. In these words is the second use of the word *kabas*, or wash, in the Bible, but it is the first time used in the sense of sanctification. In total, it will be used 51 times and almost always it will be for consecration, or sanctification of the people.

In the law itself, there will be numerous references to the washing of clothes for purification. The word comes from a primitive root meaning to trample; hence, to wash specifically by stamping with the feet. The washing is then either literal which included the fuller process, or figurative such as in Psalm 51 –

“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” Psalm 51:7

As alluded to already, and as David shows in the Psalm, it isn’t that the Lord regards the clothes of a man, but the inward change of the heart. However, this preparation mandated to the people by the Lord is right. If a person washes their clothes, their hearts may still be filled with wickedness. However, with the washing there would be

time to think why they were doing this and how there should also be an internal cleansing that goes along with it.

Benson wisely notes that, “It becomes us to appear in clean clothes when we wait upon great men; so clean hearts are required in our attendance on the great God.” Even prior to this time of the law, the washing of clothes was already seen in the Bible. In Genesis 35, Jacob instructed his household as follows –

“And Jacob said to his household and to all who *were* with him, ‘Put away the foreign gods that *are* among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments.’”
-Genesis 35:2

However, if you followed the details of Jacob’s life, and that particular sermon, you would know that his words to them pictured not just external cleansing, but the internal as well. In the end, it was given as a picture of the dispensational model of history and the final cleansing of God’s people. And so ultimately, these washings picture the work of Christ. One example of this is recorded in the book of Hebrews where it says –

“...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful.” Hebrews 10:22, 23

The book of Revelation gives three explicit examples of this for us to consider. Remember, that the external garments are only given as emblems of the internal conversion of a person to Christ –

“You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. ⁵ He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.”
-Revelation 3:4, 5

The white garments in which the redeemed are clothed may be real garments, but they symbolize their sinless nature because of the work of Christ. On the last page of the Bible we read this –

“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.” Revelation 22:14

This is inclusive of all of the redeemed throughout history. But before that final time comes, there are those who, after the church age, will have to go through the tribulation in order to be purified. This is seen in our final verse to consider on such purification which is first being pictured here today at the foot of Mount Sinai –

“Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, ‘Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?’

¹⁴ And I said to him, ‘Sir, you know.’

So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

-Revelation 7:13, 14

In the end, the Geneva Bible sums up this concept rather well and quite succinctly –

“Teach them to be pure in heart, as they show themselves outwardly clean by washing.” Geneva

¹¹ **And let them be ready for the third day.**

This requirement of being ready “for the third day” is to mark the extremely sacred nature of what was to occur. If it was just a matter of washing one’s clothes, they could appear the following day. Two days of cleansing showed it as far more than just an external rite.

Concerning this “third day,” it now becomes important to understand what was relayed in the last sermon concerning verse 1 in this chapter. At that time, I explained in detail that the first day of the 3rd month was the 47th day since their departure.

Understanding that, Moses came back down from the mountain and spoke to the people the words reviewed during the first nine verses of the chapter. What is not explicitly stated, but which is to be inferred, is that it is now the 48th day of the account.

The reason for this is that Moses had to go back down and get an answer from the people and then go back up the mountain the next day. This is assured because of the words of verse 10 which said “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow.”

If all of the events of verse 1-9 are included on the same day as this, there would be no time to consecrate for that day. Therefore, verse 10 begins the 48th day after the exodus. The importance of this is found in the next words of verse 11...

11 (con't) For on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

In the Bible, the Lord is noted as dwelling in heaven. This is seen, for example, in Psalm 123 –

“Unto You I lift up my eyes,
O You who dwell in the heavens.” Psalm 123:1

However, He is seen to not exclusively dwell there, but especially there; it is His abode. Because of this, when He appears on earth, He is said to “come down.” This is seen not just here, but numerous times in Scripture. If this is the 48th day and the Lord will come down “on the third day” then that means He will come down on the 50th day. They are to consecrate themselves on the 48th day and on the 49th day.

Thus the Lord will appear to them on the 50th day, which corresponds to the 4th day of the Hebrew month Sivan. The reason why this is important is two-fold. First it looks forward to the Feast of Weeks, or Shavuot, which is found in Leviticus 23. In the instructions for that feast we read this –

“And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. ¹⁶Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord.” Leviticus 23:15, 16

There is a period of fifty days which is counted off from the Feast of Firstfruits until a particular event occurs, which is the Feast of Shavuot. In Greek it is known as Pentecost. This leads to the second reason for the detail. It then corresponds to the giving of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament which is recorded in Acts 2 –

“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ²And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. ⁴And they

were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Acts 2:1-4

In type then, the giving of the law prefigures the giving of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost because of the 50 recorded days in each. As there was no Feast of Firstfruits at the time of the exodus, the feast is counted from the first day after the Passover rather than from the set date in Leviticus 23.

However, both events are preceded by a fifty-day period of learning from the Lord and anticipating a meeting with Him. In the end, unless a number of days are not recorded at this camp before the receiving of the law, the time here only matches the period leading up to the events – the giving of the law and the giving of the Holy Spirit – but the events don’t match by calendar day of the month. It is possible, but not explicitly stated.

It should be noted that the term Sinai is used instead of Horeb. This is the same place that the elders were brought to in Chapter 17, but then it was called Horeb. Why has the Lord used the name Sinai? It is because of what it pictures.

¹² You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, ‘Take heed to yourselves *that* you do *not* go up to the mountain or touch its base.

Explicit instructions are given here concerning the setting of bounds using a new word introduced into the Bible. It is *gabal* – a verb used just five times, and two of them are in this chapter. It is the verb form of the more common noun *gebul*.

Both come from a root which means “to twist as a rope.” Thus it indicates to bind or make a border. This is the idea given here. Whether the border was to be a trench dug around the mountain or if it was to be a rope braided for the purpose, it was necessary because the mountain at points rises directly out of the earth.

Therefore, a person or an animal could simply walk up to it and touch it. Such specific limits then were to be set and adhered to or the most serious of consequences would result...

¹² (con’t) Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death.

The consequences for merely touching the mountain are set. The person who does so is to be executed. The Hebrew uses the term *mowt yumat* – “dying he shall die.” However, it wouldn’t be possible to seize that person without also transgressing the command

and so provisions for his execution were given in advance so that this wouldn't occur. Ellicott notes that –

“Unless it had been forbidden, there might have seemed to be no reason why pious Israelites might not have ascended the height, to draw near to God in prayer. It is a praiseworthy feeling which breathes in the words, ‘Nearer, my God, to thee;’ but the nation was not fit for close approach.

In contemplating the strictness of coming near to God during this dispensation of time, we should truly feel blessed that we have, under the Dispensation of Grace, the honor of being indwelt with the Holy Spirit and the joy of being allowed to come to the very throne of God in prayer. That is recorded in Hebrews 10 –

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:16

Unlike us today though, for one who tried to get “Nearer, my God, to thee” there was to be a penalty...

¹³ Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot *with an arrow*;

The KJV completely botched this verse by saying, “There shall not a hand touch it.” This is speaking not of the mountain, but of the person who has touched the mountain who was referred to in the previous verse. It is to signify that the sin of touching the mountain by that person would then transfer to the person who touched him.

Instead of this, that person was to be stoned or shot. Thus it implied that a distance was kept between the offender and the executioners. This is now the third time stoning is mentioned in the Bible, but it is the first time it is given as a penalty from the Lord for a transgression of His law. The Hebrew says, *saqowl yisaqel* – “stoning you shall stone him.”

Or if someone had an arrow handy, they were to shoot him with that. The word for “shot” is *yarah*. It specifically means to teach because in shooting or throwing a demonstration is made. Thus one learns by example. In this case, the person would learn their lesson by being on the receiving end of the arrow.

¹³ (con't) whether man or beast, he shall not live.'

Adding in that a beast was to be killed may sound unnecessary or even vindictive, but this is not the case. The holiness of God is something that is referred to throughout Scripture. The fallen nature of creation is also mentioned explicitly by Paul in Romans 8. Even animals with no sense of reason were to be killed if they violated this precept.

Secondly, if an animal were to be allowed to live after touching the mountain of the Lord, it could then be turned itself into an idol by the people who saw it. In essence, “Holy Cow! This is a holy cow because it was sanctified by the Lord atop the holy mountain.” If you don’t believe this is possible, take a peek at the millions of relics, or beasts, adored and worshipped by countless false religions.

¹³ (con’t) **When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain.”**

This is the first mention of the *yobel*, or trumpet, in the Bible. It specifically refers to a ram’s horn, but it also means “jubilee.” It is used 27 times from Exodus through Joshua. There is no reason to assume that this isn’t a literal trumpet as so many scholars do. Throughout the Bible, and even into the NT, trumpets are recorded both from an earthly and a heavenly perspective.

When this trumpet sounds, it says “they shall come near the mountain” using the same words as verse 12 which *forbids* the people from coming near the mountain. Why? The answer to this is that “they” or *hemmah* in Hebrew is emphatic. The “they” then is not given to speak of the congregation, but it is to explain those who will be allowed to go up in verses 20-24.

In all, verses 10-13 have been given to show the absolute holiness of the Lord and the penalties for violating His standards. It is an advance picture for us of the four purposes for the giving of the law to the people of the world –

- 1) To show us God’s perfect standard.
- 2) To show us that no person could meet that standard; all are unqualified without God’s grace and mercy being bestowed on them.
- 3) To show us how utterly sinful sin is to God. And,
- 4) To show us our need for something else – that grace which can only come by someone fulfilling that law on our behalf. And as only God can do that, He sent His Son, Jesus Christ – fully God and fully Man – into the world to do so. It is the grace which we cannot do without.

*With the law there is death and condemnation
It is God's standard, which no one can meet
Who is there from any people group or nation?
Who can claim that through the law, sin they did defeat?*

*Where can we go? This law stands against us
When we heard its words, death came through our door
O God! Please send the Messiah – send us Jesus
And through Him we shall live again, yes live forever more*

*Only He can bring us to the Holy Mountain
Only He can bring us up to the very throne of God
From Him alone can come the cleansing fountain
So that for eternal days, in Your light can we trod*

II. Meeting with God (verses 14-17)

¹⁴ So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes.

In obedience to the word of the Lord, Moses descends and sanctifies the people. They are being prepared for the meeting which was originally promised back in Exodus 3:12 where Moses was told that when he had brought the people out, they would serve Him on this mountain. That time has now come and the necessary preparations are being made.

¹⁵ And he said to the people, “Be ready for the third day;

This explanation is certainly given for the consecration, but it is also for the construction of whatever type of barrier would be made to keep the people from the mountain. Whether by ditch, mound, rope, or something else, the people needed to be ready for the day, just as directed by the Lord through Moses.

¹⁵ (con't) do not come near *your* wives.”

This prohibition is given for at least one and possibly two reasons. The first was to avoid ritual uncleanness. Though the law had not yet been given, it is a standard of the Lord's

law which is found in Leviticus 15:18. This is seen explicitly in the life of David in 1 Samuel 21 when David was offered the holy bread of the priests –

“And the priest answered David and said, ‘*There is no common bread on hand; but there is holy bread, if the young men have at least kept themselves from women.*’” 1 Samuel 21:4

The second reason can only be inferred. That would be so that the people’s minds would be on the Lord and on what lie *ahead* of them when He would appear *to* them. Rather than thinking about the carnal, they could reflect on the spiritual. There is a New Testament parallel to this in 1 Corinthians 7 –

“Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.” 1 Corinthians 7:5

¹⁶ Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain;

This verse, at least in part, is given as a parallel to the resurrection of Christ which occurred on the morning of the third day. Both events were predicted in advance to occur on that day, and though the displays are somewhat different, they were given for the people to believe –

“And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. ³ His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. ⁴ And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead *men*.” Matthew 28:2-4

There in the morning on the third day, the Bible describes the scene as an amazing display of splendor. It first mentions *qolot*, or “voices” which are translated as “thunders.” It is probably accurate because in Revelation 4 which describes the scene of the throne of God in heaven, it says that “from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices” (4:5).

Along with the voices or “thunderings” came “lightnings.” This is the first time they are mentioned in the Bible. It is the noun *baraq*, which comes from a verb which means “to flash forth.” Along with these two came *anan kaved* or “a dense cloud.” The scene

would have been marvelous to behold. In what was probably a perfectly clear day otherwise, the majesty of the Lord would be highlighted there atop the mountain.

16 (con't) and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.

As another amazing display of God's majesty, it says *v'qol shophar khazaq meod* – the voice of the trumpet was mighty, very. The word for trumpet here is not the same as in verse 13. There it was *yobel*, now a new word is introduced to the Bible, *shophar*. Like the *yobel*, this *shophar* signifies a ram's horn. It is used 72 times in the Old Testament, an opposite of the 27 times *yobel* is used. They are used somewhat interchangeably at times. This trumpet would be the sound of the herald calling the people's attention to this most significant moment in redemptive history.

That same trumpet sound was blown throughout the land by the people of Israel on Yom Teruah, or the Feast of Trumpets, on the day when Christ Jesus was born. The people, while celebrating their feast day, unknowingly hailed their true King as He lay in a manger in Bethlehem.

The heavenly *shophar* will be blown again at the rapture of the church according to 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4. And heavenly trumpets will also sound during the tribulation period, marking out awesome events which will occur during that terrible time on earth.

17 And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.

From this, it's obvious that the camp was spread out in the area and not directly at the mountain's base. When the great and awesome display began, Moses personally led them out to the base of the mountain. Measurements of the base of Mt. Sinai prove that there was enough space for even such a large congregation to gather.

Here again is a poor rendering of the Hebrew. The word *ha'elohim* or "the God" is used. The Israelites were not being brought out to "a god." Instead they were being brought out to "the God." Elohim is mentioned three times in this chapter, and all three contain the definite article.

Throughout the chapter Yehovah or “the Lord” is mentioned 18 times and so the article is given to show that “the God” is the Lord, Yehovah. The wording is specific so that we won’t miss what is being relayed.

*A trumpet blast is sounded, one that brings death to all
It warns that the law is about to be heard
And with thunderings and lightnings comes the deathly pall
Soon is coming that most terrifying word*

*There is smoke as judgment comes down in fire
Smoke like a furnace, God’s wrath is on display
There at Calvary comes the heavenly pyre
And as the Savior dies, the sin is washed away*

*A trumpet blast is heard, one that brings life once more
The dead shall be raised not in condemnation, but in victory
It will raise the redeemed and carry them across to the other shore
Where we shall sing the praise of the Lord, there by the glassy sea*

III. The Blast of the Trumpet (verses 18-25)

¹⁸ Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire.

The word “smoke” here is the word *ashan*. This is the first time it is used in the verb form in the Bible. The World English Bible gives the *proper* sense of what occurred – “Mount Sinai, all it, smoked.” But it’s important to understand the symbolism here. Smoke in the Bible is a metaphor for “wrath.” For example, in Psalm 74 we read this –

“O God, why have You cast *us* off forever?
Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?” Psalm 74:1

The smoke then is not just for a majestic display, but it is seen with the giving of the law to show that God is utterly wrathful at the sins of humanity. God’s standard is revealed in this law which we continuously violated and as Paul says in the New Testament –

“For if those who are of the law *are* heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, ¹⁵ because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law *there is* no transgression.” Romans 4:14, 15

But there is also another aspect in the majestic display. It says the LORD descended upon it in fire. Fire is given for two main reasons. The first is for judgment and condemnation; the second is for purification. The law would bring judgment on any who violated its precepts or it would purify those who perfectly adhered to it. Unfortunately, as Paul noted, the law brings about wrath as none can perfectly adhere to it.

However, in Christ who fulfilled the law, there is purification. All of this is being seen in this marvelous display, recorded for us to participate in and to understand. And to ensure that we do understand that this is exactly what is being seen, we continue...

¹⁸ (con't) **Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly.**

The word *kibshan*, or furnace, is used just four times in the Bible – once at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, twice in Exodus 9 during the plague of boils, and now here. Each of these points to wrath and judgment.

And one more time, in Revelation 9, the same terminology will be used at the blowing of the fifth trumpet judgment. The picture we are seeing here at Sinai reflects the wrath of God at the sins of man. And yet, it also shows us a picture of the grace to come.

The Lord descends upon Sinai, the Bush of the Lord, in fire and smoke which ascends like that of a great furnace. It is a picture of the cross where Christ, adorned and capped with a crown of thorns, once and for all-time judged the sins of man through fulfillment of the very law that He gave to show us our desperate need for Him.

How people have missed this symbolism is simply beyond me. Not a commentary I read equated what occurs here with the work of the Lord on Calvary. And yet, it is as plain and obvious as it can be when looking at the particular words used.

¹⁹ **And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice.**

The word for “sounded long” here is not the same as in verse 13. This word means “to go.” Therefore, this is a series of blasts which increased in sound, probably to a

frightening degree. Though it doesn't say what Moses spoke to God, it is probably the words of Hebrews 12:21 – "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling."

However, to reassure him, it says that *ha'elohim* or "the God" answered him by voice. If there was fear in the man, then there was tenderness from the Lord to calm him. The Lord displayed His awesome majesty to the people below while at the same time He revealed His benevolent grace to his servant through tender speech.

²⁰ Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain.

If this occurred at the traditional location held to as Mount Sinai, then the Lord would have come down, not on the highest point of the mountain, but at the highest part visible from the plain of Er-Rahah. This would be on the peak known as Ras Sufsafeh.

²⁰ (con't) And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

In order to demonstrate that Moses alone was qualified to mediate for the people, the Lord calls for him to come up. It will be a quick climb for a very specific purpose and then a quick descent which will follow.

²¹ And the Lord said to Moses, "Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the Lord, and many of them perish.

No sooner had Moses come to the Lord than he was immediately given instructions to go back down and warn the people. What is happening here concerns personal feelings of self-worth. Instead of speaking to Moses from the mountaintop as He did in the previous verse so that the people could hear, He called Him up to show that they were *not* set apart in the way they thought they were.

His first words are that the people shouldn't break through and gaze at the Lord. First, to attempt to gaze at the Lord would inevitably result in leaving an impression in their minds of which they could then form an image. This in turn would lead to idolatry.

Secondly, it's apparent that even though they were already told not to break through, they had the inclination that because Moses could, then so could they. This same attitude will be seen after the giving of the law as well –

"They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, '*You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of*

them, and the Lord *is* among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?" Numbers 16:3

But they were mistaken. There was a penalty for gazing upon the perfection of the Lord which is that many of them would perish. This was warned to the priests in Numbers 4:20 and a magnificent example of it is seen in 1 Samuel 6:19. This idea of the people thinking more of themselves than they ought is confirmed by the next verse...

²² Also let the priests who come near the Lord consecrate themselves, lest the Lord break out against them."

Although the Levites have not yet been established as priests, this does not mean that the people didn't have priests who ministered to God for them. In Exodus 24:5, which is before the assignment of the priests under the law, certain men "offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord."

Therefore, this verse is telling us that these priests thought they were already consecrated because of their duties and so they didn't bother purifying themselves as they were instructed. The Lord is telling them that, in fact, they had thought too highly of themselves and they were about to get rubbed out.

²³ But Moses said to the Lord, "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai; for You warned us, saying, 'Set bounds around the mountain and consecrate it.'"

Moses, not fully comprehending either the gravity of the situation, nor yet the full holiness of the Lord, attempts to placate Him by telling him the people have already been instructed. It is as if he thinks the Lord is unaware of the circumstances around him.

The Lord is thinking on the terms of *national transgression* – the entire congregation breaking though, but Moses cannot comprehend this. The "You" is emphatic. "'You' warned us." He cannot believe that one would transgress because the penalty was death. And so he certainly couldn't comprehend that the whole nation would transgress.

He then mentions that bounds have been set around the mountain to consecrate it. Nothing has been said about the mountain being consecrated to this point although it is inferred in having separated the people from it. So far only the consecration of the people has been noted, but this explains what is going on.

The people were consecrated; the priests thought they were already consecrated; and the mountain is consecrated. If Moses can climb up it, then surely they could too. It is presumptuous thinking on the part of the entire nation and it is a pattern which will be seen throughout their history, even into the New Testament times and which is even seen in them in a great measure today.

Moses simply doesn't understand, but the Lord does and His next words are words of urgency...

24 Then the Lord said to him, "Away! Get down and then come up, you and Aaron with you."

There is a rebuke in the words. Moses thought He could change the unchanging mind of the Lord. Unlike us, He does not change like shifting shadows. He understands the nature of man better than any man. And so he simply says *lek, red* – "Away! Get down!" And then he follows up with the basic instructions which are actually intended for the entire congregation to understand – "Come back, just you and Aaron." The people were ready to come up and they will learn that it isn't in the cards. Only Moses and Aaron will ascend the mountain to meet with the Lord.

24 (con't) But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the Lord, lest He break out against them."

For the second time, Moses is told that the Lord will break out against the people if they violate the pre-set standards. Neither priest nor common person would be allowed to come up.

What is rather unfortunate is that in verses 21 & 24, the word for the people breaking through is *haras* which gives the idea of break down or tear down something. But in verses 22 & 24, the word for the Lord breaking through is *parats*, which gives the idea of breaking through, maybe like a ram. It is a completely different word and yet translations use the word "break" for translating both.

The idea is that if the people break *down* that which has been established, the Lord will break *through* them in judgment. Again, it is a picture of the giving of the law itself. When we break *down* the precepts of the law, God will *break out* against us. Without understanding what the words are saying, the picture that is being made is lost. Adam Clarke poetically describes the need for Moses to communicate to the people –

“God knew that they were heedless, criminally curious, and stupidly obstinate; and therefore his mercy saw it right to give them line upon line, that they might not transgress to their own destruction.” Adam Clarke

²⁵ So Moses went down to the people and spoke to them.

These concluding words of Chapter 19 come directly before the giving of the Ten Commandments. The people had been, as it were, rebuked. They assumed that they could come forward and fellowship with this terrifying and holy God because they had been consecrated. Moses told them otherwise.

They were merely consecrated to hear the words of condemnation which would soon follow. They had not been consecrated to come near to Him in an intimate way. That would not come about for another 1500 years when those same commandments were fulfilled by the Lord when He came to dwell among us in human flesh.

The words they are about to hear will not make them holier. Instead they will only show them how utterly miserable they are in the presence of true holiness. They will show them how utterly sinful sin is to God and they will reveal the glory of the Lord *alone* who can meet those awesome words.

Let us never think more highly of ourselves than we ought. Instead, let us be infinitely grateful that God put us on the other side of the cross, where faith in Christ leads us not to condemnation, but to salvation. Matthew Henry understood this –

“...the Divine law is binding as a rule of life. The Son of God came down from heaven, and suffered poverty, shame, agony, and death, not only to redeem us from its curse, but to bind us more closely to keep its commands.” Matthew Henry

The law which stood opposed to us is fulfilled and nailed to His cross. And our sins are nailed to it as well, covered by the blood which ran down and removed those frightening words of condemnation. Thank God for Jesus Christ. If you have never received God’s forgiveness through His shed blood, let’s get that fixed today – even right now...

Closing Verse: *“For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest,¹⁹ and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore.²⁰ (For they could not endure what was commanded:*

'And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.' ²¹ *And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, 'I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.'*)

²² *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴ to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel."* Hebrews 12:18-24

Next Week: Exodus 20:1-12 (Ten Not So Simple Commands, Part I) (54th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Lord Came Down

Then the Lord said to Moses

"Go to the people and them today and tomorrow consecrate

And let them wash their clothes

To be ready for the magnificent date

And let them be ready for the third day

For on the third day will come down the Lord

Upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people

This is according to My word

You shall set bounds for the people all around

Saying, 'Take heed to yourselves that you do not

Go up to the mountain or touch its base

Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death on the spot

Not a hand shall touch him

But he shall surely be stoned or with an arrow shot

Whether man or beast, he shall not live

He shall die there on the spot

When the trumpet sounds long tell them not to fear
To the mountain they shall come near

So Moses went down from the mountain
To the people and he they sanctified
And they washed their clothes
This was done so that God would be glorified

And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day
Do not come near your wives, this to you I do say

Then it came to pass on the third day
In the morning, that thunders and lightnings there were
And a thick cloud on the mountain
And the sound of the trumpet was very loud for sure

So that all the people who were in the camp trembled
The awesome sight had them all humbled

And Moses brought the people out
Of the camp to meet with God
And they stood at the foot of the mountain
Certainly trembling in the shoes with which they were shod

Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke
Because the Lord descended upon it in fire
Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace
As if there were an enormous, even heavenly pyre

And the whole mountain quaked greatly
And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long
And became louder and louder
Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice so strong

Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai
On the mountain at the top
And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain
And Moses went up

And the Lord said to Moses, heed my word
“Go down and the people warn
Lest they break through to gaze at the Lord
And many of them perish as I have sworn

Also let the priests who come near the Lord
Themselves consecrate
Lest the Lord break out against them
For them it would be a terrible fate

But Moses said to the Lord
“The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, to wit:
For You warned us, saying
“Set bounds around the mountain and consecrate it

Then the Lord said to him, “Away!
Get down and then come up, you and Aaron with you
But do not let the priests
And the people break through

To come up to the Lord
Lest He break out against them
According to His word

So Moses went down to the people and to them he spoke
That the words of the Lord were not just a joke

Lord, with this awesome display of who You are
It makes knowing Jesus all the more glorious
Instead of fire and smoke, judgment and wrath
You have shown grace and mercy to unworthy us

Thank You for the cross of Calvary
Thank You for the judgment which in turn has set us free
Thank You for what He did on that marvelous tree
For Your goodness we shall praise You eternally

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 20:1-12

(TEN NOT SO SIMPLE COMMANDS, PART I)

Last week we saw the terrifying sight that Israel beheld as the Lord descended on Mount Sinai. The land quaked, the fire burned, and there was smoke like a furnace billowing to the heavens. All of it pictured not just glory, but also wrath. The Lord was about to give His law and with it came a demonstration of the greatest of wrath.

Today, we will begin to see why. Ten simple commands! Yes, seemingly so. But in reality, the truth is no, no, no! Who can look at this terrifying body of law and say, “I have lived these perfectly?” Only a fool would contemplate them carefully and then say, “Yep, I’ve done it. I deserve a seat next to God in heaven. He owes me... big time.”

Text Verse: *“You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord.” Leviticus 18:5*

How many of us have children here? Did any of you have to teach them to do wrong? Can anyone here say, honestly and with a straight face, “My son or daughter has never told a lie?” How about this, “My son or daughter has never done anything to upset me?” Anyone?

If you answered one or both questions in the positive, I question your truthfulness. And if you didn’t, do you think your parents would have answered any differently? No, certainly not. The law has its purpose, but it isn’t to show us how good we are. Let’s get that straight.

We’ll go over the reasons for the giving of the law again today which we looked at last week. It will be a good reminder for us as we try to grasp the magnitude of the laws we are to contemplate and reflect on. There is a lesson in the giving of the law and it is revealed slowly and methodically in the pages of God’s superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The First Three Commandments (verses 1-7)

¹And God spoke all these words, saying:

Chapter 20 begins with a verse of preparation. As happens from time to time, the words are offset as a single verse and don't include anything of what is said. They simply tell us that something was said. The eager anticipation for our ears is, "What did God speak?"

It is of note that "God" was mentioned three times in chapter 19 and all three times a definite article was used – *ha'elohim* or "the God." However, chapter 20 begins with the assumption that the One speaking is the One and only God by leaving off the article. It simply says "*elohim* spoke." Later in verses 20 and 21, the article will again be included, but until then it will be left off each time.

The coming commandments are known to us as "the Ten Commandments." However, in Hebrew, they are called *asheret ha'davarim*, or "the Ten Words." Other names will be given for them when they are referred to in the Old Testament, such as "the tablets of the covenant," "the two tablets," and so on. In the New, they will be referred to simply as "the commandments."

In this chapter, we are told that it is Yehovah who speaks the words of the law. However, three times in the New Testament – in Acts, Galatians, and Hebrews – it speaks of the law being given through "angels," plural. There are two things to consider on this.

First, in Acts 7:38, Stephen says that the Angel spoke to them on Mount Sinai and the word is singular. Thus it refers to the Lord Jesus. Secondly, the word for "angel" does not necessarily mean a heavenly being. It simply means "messenger."

When they are referring to the law in those passages, it is speaking of the entire law, including the Ten Commandments. Verse 19 will explain the giving of the law. Moses will be the mediator between the people and the Lord as he receives it.

Further verse 24 of the previous chapter says Aaron was with him. Thus, they are both considered *messengers* of God for the giving of the law to Israel, even if Aaron wasn't with Moses at all times. This then explains the words of the New Testament where the law was administered through angels, or "messengers." It is speaking of Jesus, Moses, and Aaron.

² "I *am* the Lord

anokhi Yehovah – These words, are the first words of the Ten Commandments from the mouth of the Lord. In them, they identify that He is Yehovah, the self-existent Creator of

all things. To more fully understand what the name Yehovah encompasses, you can go back and watch the sermon on Exodus 3:14. Suffice it to say that He is the One and only true God and yet despite that, he is not the only “god.” This is evidenced quite clearly in the next words...

² (con’t) **your God,**

elohekha – Yehovah asserts the right to call Himself “your God” to the people of Israel. They had agreed with their own mouths to receive Him as such in the previous chapter –

“So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him. ⁸ Then all the people answered together and said, ‘All that the Lord has spoken we will do.’ So Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord.” Exodus 19:7, 8

Though He is the Creator of all things and the Lord of all in reality, He does not push Himself upon either Israel or the people of the world. Even today there are many “gods” in the world. But there is only One true God. Based on the words of their agreement, He now establishes His right to exclusivity over Israel with the words *anokhi Yehovah elohekha* – I am Yehovah your God.

Note though that this is an individual address to *each person*. It is not an address to the nation collectively. The singular is intended for all individually. From this moment on He has claimed title and authority over each person of Israel. They now have a God and He now has a peculiar people reserved for Himself.

² (con’t) **who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.**

The Lord claims the right to be their God not because He created them, but because He had redeemed them. It was He who brought Israel out of Egypt. They were in bondage and He delivered them from that bondage. This is actually rather interesting because the Lord gave Adam a direct command in the Garden of Eden which was based on Him being the Creator –

“Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the

garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

-Genesis 2:16, 17

In the garden He gave the law as the Creator, and so the question arises as to why He didn't do that again for Israel. The answer is that man is in bondage to another and he belongs to him. This is found all the way towards the end of the Bible in 1 John 3 –

“He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” 1 John 3:8

All belong to the devil unless redeemed by God. He redeemed Israel out of Egypt and therefore He appeals to them as their Redeemer, not their Creator. His commands then are based on a hope of loving respect from His people and not out of fear. Adam's command was given out of fear – “in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die.”

However, in these 10 Commandments, there is no note of penalty for disobedience as if they were slaves. Instead they are given as an appeal to conscience as to free men. This does not mean that penalties won't be forthcoming from the law.

The wellbeing of the entire nation necessitated statutes and penalties for disobedience, but these were not to be the basis of obedience for the true Israelite. For such a person, it was based on love for his Redeemer. However, there is the truth which was seen in the last chapter. In verse 18, we read this –

“Now Mount Sinai *was* completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly.” Exodus 19:18

The symbolism given was explained at that time as that of wrath and condemnation, not salvation. What was implied is that the law that was to be introduced could never bring salvation. Even the true Israelite who loved God's law could never fully meet the strict standards of the law. None could meet them perfectly.

Were it not for the provision within the law itself for an annual day of atonement, the law would only bring wrath and condemnation to any and all who attempted to live by it. Thus, the display was messianic in nature. The wrath of God would be poured out on

the only One who could ever fulfill this law; the One who embodied it through keeping it. Paul explains this in Galatians 3 –

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree’).” Galatians 3:13

And this brings us to one more point before we look at these ten magnificent laws. As all men are bound under sin and are thus of the devil, and as only God can redeem them from their sin, then it follows logically that Jesus must be God.

Jesus’ appeal to His people, like the appeal here in the giving of the Ten Commandments, is based on redemption, not creation. We are saved by a Savior and redeemed by a Redeemer. As this is so, then Jesus must be the One true God. How so many miss this and reinsert either the law, or defer back to Jehovah, or do both, into their theology is unimaginable. Paul says this in Galatians 4 –

“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” Galatians 4:4, 5

If the law was given to Israel who had been redeemed from the house of bondage, and as they were given the law based on that redemption, then why would those who had been given this law still need to be redeemed from the law? The answer was given in the last sermon and which I will repeat now. There are four major reasons for giving this law –

- 1) To show us God’s perfect standard.
- 2) To show us that no person could meet that standard; all are unqualified without God’s grace and mercy being bestowed.
- 3) To show us how utterly sinful sin is to God. And,
- 4) To show us our need for something else – that grace which can only come by Someone fulfilling this law on our behalf. And as only God can do that, He sent His Son, Jesus Christ – fully God and fully Man – into the world to do so. It is the grace which we cannot do without.

And so we begin with the first of God’s Ten Commandments...

³ **“You shall have no other gods before Me.**

The first word. The command begins with an absolute negation – the word *lo* or “no.” The majority of the commandments come in the negative form, stating the prohibition which they then explain. The reason for this is that “they presuppose the existence of sin and evil desires in the human heart” (Keil and Delitzsch).

In other words, the commands, like the one given to Adam, point to our limitations. Adam lacked the *knowledge* of good and evil; we lack the *ability* to properly exercise the knowledge of good and evil which we now possess. The laws then are given to us because of this. This is well explained by Paul in Romans 3 –

“There is none righteous, no, not one;
¹¹ There is none who understands;
There is none who seeks after God.
¹² They have all turned aside;
They have together become unprofitable;
There is none who does good, no, not one.” Romans 3:10-12

In its entirety, the first command reads *lo yihyeh lekha elohim akherim al panaya* – “No you shall have to you gods other, before my face.” The verb is singular but the word “other” is plural. What this infers is that it isn’t speaking of just other gods, meaning deity, but other gods of any kind such as idols in thoughts, words, or deeds.

If a person were to make an idol of work, it would be a violation of this command. If a person made an idol of their intelligence, it would be a violation of this command. If a person made an idol of his personal strength, it would be a violation of this command. Anything we place alongside the Lord would be a violation of this command. Adam Clarke defines the sense of this first word –

“This commandment prohibits every species of mental idolatry, and all inordinate attachment to earthly and sensible things. As God is the fountain of happiness, and no intelligent creature can be happy but through him, whoever seeks happiness in the creature is necessarily an idolater; as he puts the creature in the place of the Creator, expecting that from the gratification of his passions, in the use or abuse of earthly things, which is to be found in God alone. The very first commandment of the whole series is divinely calculated to prevent man’s misery and promote his happiness, by taking him off from all false dependence, and leading him to God himself, the fountain of all good.” Adam Clarke

However, although this may be the intent, if we were to stop with this first word and go no further, we can see how clearly it brings wrath. No person can say that they have fully kept this one precept without breaking it. Not only are we not good because of our inclinations, we are not good because of our actions.

Each of us has set up an idol in our heart in one form or another during our lives. We have failed by attempting to find another source of joy instead of seeking the Lord. This law can never bring salvation. It can only bring condemnation. And as James says towards the end of the Bible –

“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all.” James 2:10

From the very first word, we are guilty of all of the law because we have broken this *one point*. How terrible is this law upon the hearts and souls of men! And yet, how many stubbornly cling to it and claim that they stand guiltless before God.

Each individual of Israel agreed to this command, and thus each person, as well as the nation as a whole, violated it when they strayed from it. The words of both personal and national violation are many, but Jeremiah 2 gives a good example of Israel’s failure to meet this law –

“But where *are* your gods that you have made for yourselves?
Let them arise,
If they can save you in the time of your trouble;
For *according to* the number of your cities
Are your gods, O Judah.” Jeremiah 2:28

Concerning this first command, something else was needed. The first word only condemns, it cannot save.

⁴“You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness *of anything*

The second word. The first command asserted the unity of God in Israel’s worship. This second command is intended to ensure that the first command is adhered to in a physical sense. Yehovah showed them no form of Himself and therefore no form was to be assigned to Him in worship.

Further, no form was to be worshipped as a god other than Him either. As He is the Creator, then all else is created. Therefore, to worship any physical part of the creation was to worship less than the Creator. This command then shows what is to be considered unlawful worship.

It also introduces two new words into Scripture. The first is *pesel*. It means an “idol” or “image” and it comes from *pasal* which means “to cut” or “to hew into shape.” The second is *temunah* which means “likeness” or “form.”

These words combined thus signify any physical idol or image. The command says *lo taaseh lekha* – “no make for yourself.” There is an important point to consider here. The Bible does not forbid the making of shaped things such as cherubim for the Ark of the Covenant. It prohibits shaped things for personal use as an idol and it will go further to explain this in the next verse.

The reason I say this is because people who challenge the Bible will say that the making of the things for the tabernacle is a violation of this very commandment. This is not the case. Bible deniers get a demerit for misevaluating the command.

⁴ (con't) **that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth;**

These words form a triple-division of the sphere of man’s existence in the material universe. It is thus an all-encompassing statement concerning it, and it prohibits against making anything resembling whatever exists in it. This goes from the sun, moon, and stars, to the birds which fly in the sky.

It goes from the plant and animal life on earth to fish in the sea or to any other part of the created order. Nothing in creation is to be likened to God, nor is anything in creation to be likened as a god.

⁵ **you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.**

This further defines what was stated in the words, “You shall not make for yourself.” If one makes an image for himself, the intent is that this image is then to be bowed down to and served. This is forbidden.

It needs to be noted that the Roman Catholic version of the Ten Commandments leaves this command out completely, and they do so without any Scriptural support at all. In

order to maintain Ten Commandments, they then divide the tenth command into two separate commands. Adam Clarke rightly sums up this matter –

“This corruption of the word of God by the Roman Catholic Church stamps it, as a false and heretical Church, with the deepest brand of ever-during infamy!” Adam Clarke

Though the law is set aside in Christ, it is still a part of God’s word. To manipulate it such as they have done is the most damnable of offenses. Israel, likewise was guilty of violating this command throughout their history. In fact, they openly sought to violate it, but the Lord told them that they would suffer because of it –

“What you have in your mind shall never be, when you say, ‘We will be like the Gentiles, like the families in other countries, serving wood and stone.’”

-Ezekiel 20:32

^{5 (con’t)} **For I, the Lord your God, *am* a jealous God,**

Here the Lord claims that He is a jealous God. The word is *qanna*. This doesn’t indicate jealousy of success in another; rather it speaks of a defense of His honor and glory. When one bows to another god, the Lord isn’t jealous of that false god receiving worship. His jealousy is directed to the violation of depriving Him what He is justly due. His words in Isaiah show the thought well –

“I *am* the Lord, that *is* My name;
And My glory I will not give to another,
Nor My praise to carved images.” Isaiah 42:8

This is the first use of the word *qanna* as an adjective in the Bible. It will only be used six times, always in connection with the Lord, and only in Exodus and Deuteronomy.

^{5 (con’t)} **visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me,**

This verse, although scorned by those who hate the God of the Bible as showing a vindictive nature, is intended to show us consequences which naturally result from misdeed. It shows nothing vindictive in the Lord. Rather it shows what is just.

Adam sinned and his sin continues to trouble us 6000 years later. When a person is punished for stealing, he may lose his estate and earnings. That certainly causes the

next generation, and even many generations later, to receive the sentence of the offender.

The very person who dismisses God for being vindictive, may sue another person for wrongdoing against them. If they do, then they will actually visit the wrongdoing of the one they sue on the subsequent generations in exactly the manner described here.

To argue against God who is infinitely just and righteous concerning his judgments is an incredibly small-minded thing to do for a person who lacks any true wisdom or knowledge at all.

⁶ but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

The “thousands” here is not speaking of the number of people, but the number of generations. It is explicitly defined that way in Deuteronomy 7:9. The length of this mercy, or loving-kindness, is for those individuals who love Him and keep His commandments. It doesn’t mean the children *who don’t*, but the individuals *who do*. If a generation is conservatively said to be 40 years, then this would mean 40,000 years. As the Bible speaks of a 7000-year plan for the world we currently enjoy, then the term here is obviously meant to symbolize “forever” or “eternity.” This is demonstrated in the words of the 103rd Psalm –

“But the mercy of the Lord *is* from everlasting to everlasting
On those who fear Him,
And His righteousness to children’s children,
¹⁸ To such as keep His covenant,
And to those who remember His commandments to do them.” Psalm 103:17

However, as none are able to meet this standard perfectly, then none can be granted such eternal mercy apart from Christ who fulfilled the law on our behalf. All those who came before Christ and trusted in the Lord’s provision are covered by His *future* mercy. Only those who trust in Christ after His advent will be covered by His *present* mercy. It was this mercy of the Lord which called for Christ to fulfill the law for fallen man. Israel individually, and as a whole, is shown throughout the Old Testament to fall short of this second command. Even very quickly after the giving of this command, the entire congregation violated it –

“And Aaron said to them, ‘Break off the golden earrings which *are* in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring *them* to me.’³ So all the people broke off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and brought *them* to Aaron.⁴ And he received *the gold* from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, ‘This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!’” Exodus 32:2-4

Concerning this second command, something else was needed. The second word only condemns, it cannot save.

⁷ **“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain,**

The third word. The Hebrew here is ambiguous and can be taken to mean either forbidding false swearing only, or to include profane or vain swearing. If we look to the words of Jesus in Matthew 5, it appears that false swearing is what is being referred to here. He says –

“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’” Matthew 5:33

The word for “vain” in Hebrew is *shav* and is used here for the first time in the Bible. It means falsely, lying, vain, etc. The intent of this command is that one should never invoke the name of the Lord in a false manner. And should they presume to do so...

^{7 (con’t)} **for the Lord will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in vain.**

This doesn’t mean that there will be immediate punishment on the offender. Rather, it is something that may come in this life as the perjured man is found out and punished, or it may be in the day of God’s judgment in the future. Malachi shows us this –

“And I will come near you for judgment;
I will be a swift witness
Against sorcerers,
Against adulterers,
Against perjurers,
Against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans,
And against those who turn away an alien—

Because they do not fear Me,
Says the Lord of hosts.” Malachi 3:5

Of the first three commandments, Lange wisely notes –

“The sin against the first commandment banishes the name of Jehovah by means of idol names; the sin against the second obscures and disfigures it; the sin against this third one abuses it.” John Lange

Abusing God’s name is something that is forbidden. A transgression of this command is a violation the entire law. And yet, the Bible demonstrates that Israel as a whole, individually and collectively, violated it –

“Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem;
See now and know;
And seek in her open places
If you can find a man,
If there is *anyone* who executes judgment,
Who seeks the truth,
And I will pardon her.
² Though they say, ‘As the Lord lives,’
Surely they swear falsely.” Jeremiah 5:1, 2

Concerning this third command, something else was needed. The third word only condemns, it cannot save.

*Just three commands so far and already no hope
Even from the first one I was done in for sure
I used to think I was pretty great, but I see I am just a dope
Compared to God’s standard, I am certainly impure*

*I tremble to think of my guilt, how it weighs me down |
I fear to face God on my own deeds for righteousness
I once thought God would at me smile, but no! It will be a frown
I bear such heavy guilt, My God! I am such a mess*

*Oh, but then I heard of Jesus, sweet Jesus
He lived the life that I could never ever live*

*And He gave it up for sinners like me! Yes, for all of us
In exchange for my life of sin, His perfect life He did give*

*Oh! What a Savior! What a friend He is to me!
Oh! My Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God who set me free!*

II. The Fourth and Fifth Commandments (verses 8-12)

⁸“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

The forth word. This command differs from the others because it begins with the word *zakhor*, or “remember.” They were given the Sabbath in Exodus 16 at the time of the giving of the Manna and they are now told to remember it forever, keeping it holy. This means that they were to separate the day from all others and observe it as a unique and special day, consecrated to the Lord.

The word *shabbat* implies rest and cessation from labor. This cessation of labor for Israel looked forward to a different type of rest. It was to be a foretaste of the blessed eternal rest which man lost. He was created outside of the Garden of Eden and was rested in the Garden to worship and serve His God. This was lost.

Everything from that point on has looked forward to the restoration of that day. And it finally arrived when Christ came. Through His work, the seventh day of rest is offered to all of God’s people. This is why Hebrews 4, after the fulfillment of the law by Christ, says—

“For we who have believed do enter that rest.” Hebrews 4:3

⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

This is actually an imperative. Therefore the week is divided into two sections, active work and active cessation from work. Man was not to be idle when he should be working and man was not to be working when he should be at rest.

Things that needed to be done were to be done *before* the Sabbath so that no work was to be done *on* the Sabbath. This is, however, not to be taken as a command that one *must* work every day. If so, for example, it would violate the mandated feasts of the

Lord when Israel celebrated in Jerusalem. Rather, what should be done was to be done, but not on the Sabbath.

¹⁰ but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.

This translation, following the KJV, is confusing and should rather read, "...but the seventh day is a Sabbath **to** the Lord your God." Otherwise, it seems like the Lord is even now working six days and taking the seventh off. Rather, they were to work and then rest to the Lord, honoring Him on this special day dedicated to Him.

¹⁰ (con't) In it you shall do no work:

The commands are specific. The individual whom the Lord is speaking directly to is to not work on the Sabbath. The word "you" is singular.

¹⁰ (con't) you, nor your son, nor your daughter,

Nor were they to work their children, as if the lesser in the house were exempt from the requirement, or that the work of the stronger should now devolve to the weaker.

¹⁰ (con't) nor your male servant, nor your female servant,

Likewise, the servants – both male and female – who bore the majority of the burdens in the house during the week were to be given rest. The unattended labors of the owner were not to devolve to another, even in one's employ.

¹⁰ (con't) nor your cattle,

What is implied if an animal is put to work? Someone working the animal. Rest is to be rest. Even if someone were to hook up an animal to a grinding mill, he would have to work to do so and he would continue to be profiting from the labors of the animal.

The Sabbath was made for man as a day to the Lord God. If he was thinking about the profit he was making while the cow was grinding grain, then he wouldn't be thinking about the things of God. Also, these words show that the animal who is a servant of man, was to be given a break from its labors.

The Bible is replete with God's care for the creatures of the earth. In the sparing of Nineveh from destruction, the mention of "many cattle" along with the people is noted.

After the flood, it says that “God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that *were* with him in the ark.” Time and again, care for animals is noted. Even the bird of the air that falls to the ground does not go unnoticed by God.

¹⁰ (con’t) **nor your stranger who *is* within your gates.**

The stranger within the gates implies someone not of Israel who has taken up permanent residence within a town. This prohibition was certainly so that they wouldn’t become a snare to Israel. If they saw strangers profiting and gaining advantage because they could work while others couldn’t, it would become a problem for all. This exact scenario is found in Nehemiah 13 –

“Men of Tyre dwelt there also, who brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and sold *them* on the Sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem.

¹⁷ Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, ‘What evil thing *is* this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day? ¹⁸ Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath.’

¹⁹ So it was, at the gates of Jerusalem, as it began to be dark before the Sabbath, that I commanded the gates to be shut, and charged that they must not be opened till after the Sabbath. Then I posted *some* of my servants at the gates, *so that* no burdens would be brought in on the Sabbath day.” Nehemiah 13:16-19

¹¹ For *in* six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

The creation of the heavens and the earth was done in a specific way for a specific reason. It was first to foreshadow the Sabbath day for man on the seventh day. God could have simply created all things at once, but he did it in a set way to picture something else.

And the six days of the week followed by a Sabbath was ordained in order to show the redemptive pattern of history itself. The six days of the week prefigure the six thousand years of man working towards the reign of Christ, followed by the final thousand years of the millennium where Christ reigns; a time of rest on earth.

The Bible assumes that its reader will accept, at face value, a literal six-day creation. Though many views of creation have arisen in the past 150 years, it has always been the assumption of the text itself that God really created in just six days, and he did it for the patterns which the creation only points to. Also, the reason for the giving of the Sabbath here in Exodus is not the same as that of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy –

“And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.”

-Deuteronomy 5:15

The first is based on Creation, the second on Redemption. And yet, the two are tied together. Israel was already redeemed at the giving of the law at Sinai. Therefore, as a sign of God’s rest following His creative efforts, which had subsequently been lost in the Garden of Eden, the redeemed of Israel were given the Sabbath.

Thus there is no contradiction between Exodus and Deuteronomy. One act leads to another. The fallen world could not be redeemed unless it had first been created. Everything is looking forward to God’s rest; a rest which can only be found in Christ. As the law could only bring a curse, then the Sabbath was only a shadow, looking forward to Christ’s fulfillment of it.

Now, with His having fulfilled the law, we do enter God’s rest. The words of Jesus, Paul, and the author of Hebrews all agree that our true rest is found in Christ and in Him alone. The Sabbath was only given as a picture of what was to come, however, it was given. Would Israel obey? The answer is, “No.”

“Yet the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments, ‘which, *if* a man does, he shall live by them’; and they greatly defiled My Sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out My fury on them in the wilderness, to consume them.” Ezekiel 20:13

Concerning this fourth command, something else was needed. The fourth word only condemns, it cannot save.

¹² **“Honor your father and your mother,**

The fifth word. The Ten Commandments are divided up by scholars in several ways. Some see them as logically dividing between commands 1-4 and then 5-10. The first four showing love for God, the last six showing love for neighbor.

Others divide them 1-5 and 6-10. This would then show a distinction between filial and fraternal matters. The first five show obedience to the parent as children, the latter, respect for others. As parents are the image of God to the child until the child can reason out who God is, then this second division makes more sense.

It should be noted that the father is placed first here, but the mother is placed first in Leviticus 19:3 when also speaking of the mandated Sabbath. This shows that both are to be regarded with a like respect, even if there is a hierarchy within the home.

The honoring of the parents is reflective of the honoring of our true heavenly Father. If one is disobedient to their parents, it goes hand in hand that they will be disrespectful towards the Lord. And, as Paul notes in Ephesians 6, this is the first command with a promise attached to it...

^{12 (fin)} **that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.**

Some look at this as a national blessing for Israel. That if they were honoring of their parents, they would be nationally blessed with the land of Israel. This is incorrect. First, the word "land" here is not the usual term for the land of Israel, which is *eretz*. Instead, it is *adamah*. *Adamah* signifies the ground.

Whatever ground the people possessed, they would possess it more fully if they were honoring of their parents. Second, the command is spoken in the singular to the individual, not in plural to the collective whole. And third, both Deuteronomy 5:16 and Ephesians 6:2 explain this verse with words that indicate long life. In essence, "That it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."

This is a general statement that one will prosper through the honoring of the parents. The world of man in which we live is governed by general laws of God, not by laws which are universal. This promised blessing is one that is therefore generally to be expected, but not necessarily universally received.

Despite being a simple command and one which is almost universally accepted as right, Israel failed to keep it. Both Old Testament and New shows their failure to honor their parents. From Ezekiel 22, we read this –

“In you they have made light of father and mother; in your midst they have oppressed the stranger; in you they have mistreated the fatherless and the widow.” Ezekiel 22:7

Concerning this fifth command, something else was needed. The fifth word only condemns, it cannot save.

Today, we have looked at the first five commandments and each shows that something else was needed. Each word only condemns. Should we stop here, close the Bible, and await our destruction? Should we say, “Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die?”

From trusting the law, the answer would be, “Yes.” The law cannot save anything; it can only show us of our utter depravity before an infinitely holy God. But the giving of the law also shows us something else. It shows us a messianic picture.

It shows us that God loves us enough to pour out His wrath on His own Son who did fulfill this law in order to pay the sin-debt that you and I bear. Let this law, and those who lived and failed under it, be a tutor to you. Let it be a learning experience. In the law, there is condemnation; condemnation for you and me; for all.

And in the cross of Christ, there is also condemnation; condemnation of sin. Paul says that “what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.” Thank God for Jesus.

If you have never received God’s forgiveness through Christ, it’s high time you do so. You don’t know your last moment and the law is waiting to condemn you. Be freed from the law through the blood of Christ. Call on Him today to forgive you of the sins that you have heaped up so high. Let God cast them as far as the east is from the west. Do it today.

Closing Verse: *“For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, “The man who does those things shall live by them.”⁶ But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down from above)⁷ or, “‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach):⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will*

be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Romans 10:5-10

Next Week: Exodus 20:13-17 (Ten Not So Simple Commands, Part II) (55th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Not So Simple Commands, Part I

And God spoke all these words, saying:
These are the words He was relaying

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

“You shall have no other gods before Me.

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

Five of ten commands, so simple... and yet impossible to meet
They only bring us a greater consciousness of sin
With them as our hope, there is only defeat
Breaking even one is said to do us in

Oh impossible law, where can I go from you?
Who will from this body of death free me?
To Jesus Christ, I will go; it is what I will do
The law is a tutor to lead me to Him and in Him I am set free

By this law, I have a consciousness of sin
How utterly sinful sin is, by it I can clearly see |
By this law, I am utterly defeated; I am done in
But by faith in Jesus, He has set me free

Thank You Lord God for the giving of Your Son
Thank You that You have broken off the yoke and set me free
By faith alone I am saved; through His cross it is done
Now I can live for You, but when I fail
You have already forgiven me

Thank You for the perfect life of my Lord
Who fulfilled every detail of Your perfect word

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 20:13-17 (TEN NOT SO SIMPLE COMMANDS, PART II)

Someday all people will stand before God and receive their judgment. I can't tell you how many people I've talked to over the years that think they will stand before Him, get a fist bump from Him, and then be given a giant pat on the back for being such a great person.

And I cannot tell you how many people have graded themselves on a bell curve when asked why God should allow them into His paradise. The standard answers, "I'm a good guy," or "I do good things for other people" are where they have placed their hope.

Paul tells us in Romans that the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. There is nothing wrong with the law of God, the problem rests in us. If we truly measure ourselves against God's standard, we would not make the error in thinking that everything is AOK.

Instead, we would be utterly depressed at how miserably we failed in meeting His standard. Israel was given an out. It was called the Day of Atonement. Once a year, they could present themselves before the Lord, deny themselves through fasting, and admit that they had not been perfect in relation to His law.

When they did this, they received atonement for their sins for another year. But we don't have that. All we have is the knowledge that God has a standard and we have not met it. If He hadn't given the law, we might be able to brush off the idea of judgment, but in the giving of the law, we only see an increase in the sin-debt that we owe.

Text Verse: *"Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, ²¹ so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

-Romans 5:20, 21

I said that we don't have the Day of Atonement, but that's not really correct is it? We do have it. The law has gone out and along with the law has come a way for our sins to be atoned for. It is in fulfilling the law. *If we can fulfill the law, then our sins will be covered.* And the Bible gives us two ways of fulfilling the law. The first one is to live it with absolute perfection, never stumbling on a single point. Today we will look at the last five of the Ten Commandments and you can decide if you want to give that avenue a shot. My hope is that you aren't that stupid.

The second option is to allow Christ Jesus to fulfill the law for You. He has already done it and all you need to do is receive what He has done. The law itself allows this. Which option suits your fancy best? Me, I'm all in for Jesus.

He is the One who is revealed in God's wondrous and superior word as doing everything we need in order to be saved. And so in order to see Jesus, and learn how He can do that for us, let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Sixth and Seventh Command (verses 13 & 14)

The first five commandments followed a basic pattern of filial obedience, as children to their parents. The first four were directed to God, but in them and in keeping them, they were as children honoring their heavenly Father. The fifth was specifically in honoring of one's parents.

Now the final five commandments take a different angle. They will deal with interpersonal relationships – between man and his fellow man. Thus the words of Jesus are understood through the structure of the Ten Commandments –

“Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’³⁸ This is *the* first and great commandment.³⁹ And *the* second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

-Matthew 22:37-40

That “first and great commandment” cited by Jesus was a quote from Deuteronomy 6:5 – “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.” The second was a quote from Leviticus 19:18 – “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Jesus pulled those verses directly from the books of Moses as a summary of all of the commands of the Torah, including the Ten Commandments because they encompass every interaction that man has between himself, God, and his fellow man. In essence, they reflect the spirit and intent of the entire law.

Understanding this, it is necessary to remember that stumbling in any point of the law is a violation of the entire law. As James notes in his epistle –

“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all.” James 2:10

In the previous sermon, it was pretty apparent that by the end of the first commandment, we were all guilty before the law. Israel failed, and we have failed. By the end of this sermon, we should all see the utter futility of trying to attain heaven merely through attempting to keep the commandments.

However, this doesn't mean that we are to ignore the commandments we are given, nor should we feel that there is no hope because we have broken any of them. Instead, let us be reminded of the reasons for the giving of the law –

- 1) To show us God's perfect standard.
- 2) To show us that no person could meet that standard; all are unqualified without God's grace and mercy being bestowed.
- 3) To show us how utterly sinful sin is to God. And,
- 4) To show us our need for something else – that grace which can only come by someone fulfilling this law on our behalf. And as only God can do that, He sent His Son, Jesus Christ – fully God and fully Man – into the world to do so. It is the grace which we cannot do without.

Understanding this, let us continue with the sixth of God's Ten Commandments...

¹³ **“You shall not murder.**

The sixth word. *lo tresakh* – no do murder. Like the majority of the other commands, this one begins with an absolute negation, *lo*, or “no.” What follows then is utterly forbidden.

In our interpersonal relationships, this command is given first because it respects the very life of the one we are to love as ourselves. I would suggest that although this deals with interpersonal relationships, it also deals with our duties to God directly as well.

Genesis 1:26 tells us that man is made in the image of God. As this is so, then an attack against God's image-bearer is also an attack against the One whose image they possess. And so murder is not something that can simply be dismissed as merely being on a human level. It is implicitly an attack against God. But this command is still rightly considered under the precept of loving one's neighbor.

The word for “murder” here is correctly translated as such. It is *ratsakh* and this is its first use in the Bible. Barnes notes that “This properly denotes taking the life of another with malice, or with an intention to murder him. The Jews understood it as meaning no more.”

Thus translating this as “kill” as the KJV does, can only confuse the meaning. For example, the Bible mandates that capital offenders such as murderers *are* to be executed. However, the use of the word “kill” instead of “murder” in this verse has led to both a misunderstanding of the intent of the commandment and a misuse of it against what the law actually prescribes in the execution of offenders.

Because of the faulty translation, it has even been used by some in the nonsensical manner of claiming that the killing of animals is wrong. However, this is a complete misuse of the command. In Exodus 12:21, the people were told to “kill the Passover.” But that verse uses an entirely different word than the one used here.

Using the word “kill” in this commandment also sets up other contradictions in the Bible as well because Israel is often instructed to destroy certain people groups in battle. These instances are not to be considered as “murder.” The Pulpit Commentary, among others, adds in this note concerning this precept –

“The Israelites are told that to take life is a crime. God forbids it. As usual, no exceptions are made. Exceptions appear later on; but the first thing is to establish the principle.”
Pulpit

This is incorrect. Exceptions, which *precede* the giving of the law, already exist. In chapter 17, the Lord told Moses, “Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek.” After that, it said, “So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.”

As the incident predates the law, then a distinction is being made between “killing” and “murder.” The word “kill” is too broadly rendered and thus it is a most unfortunate translation. It ignores both previous precedent and later instruction and refinement.

It should be noted that all known codes of societal conduct include this precept, either implicitly or explicitly. It is also a precept which predates the law explicitly. In Genesis 9, after the flood of Noah, the Lord spoke these words to him –

“Whoever sheds man’s blood,
By man his blood shall be shed;
For in the image of God
He made man.” Genesis 9:6

The willful, intentional murder of another human is forbidden. Unfortunately, Israel failed in this command, both individually and collectively, throughout their history. The great king of Israel, King David, violated this precept when he had the husband of Bathsheba murdered.

Likewise, the people as a whole, on several occasions, are noted for their murders –

“Hear the word of the Lord, O children of Israel,
for the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land.
There is no faithfulness or steadfast love,
and no knowledge of God in the land;
² there is swearing, lying, **murder**, stealing, and committing adultery;
they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.”
Hosea 4:1, 2 (ESV)

The law was given to show us God’s perfect standard and Israel failed in meeting that standard. Concerning this sixth command, something else was needed. The sixth word only condemns, it cannot save.

¹⁴ **“You shall not commit adultery.**

The seventh word. *lo tnaaph* – “no do commit adultery.” The word *naaph* deals with literal adultery, but it is also used figuratively in the sense of apostatizing from true faith in the Lord. Again, the command is in the absolute negation, beginning with *lo* or “no.” Lange interestingly notes a connection between the first and second command and the sixth and seventh –

“This commandment holds the same relation to the sixth as the second to the first. Idolatry proper[ly] corresponds with the murder of one’s neighbor, the latter being an offence against the divine in man. Image-worship, however, corresponds with adultery, as this too rests on a subtle deification of the image of man; it is spiritual idolatry, as image-worship is spiritual adultery.” John Lange

And so following the prohibition against murder, the respecting of the bonds of marriage is highlighted. The act of adultery is a violation of the sanctity of marriage and is as if a foreign invasion has been made upon the household.

When a contract of marriage is made, adultery dissolves the intent behind the contract. The offended party no longer has the ability to trust that any other part of that contract applies. This act is so universally accepted as wrong that almost every society known to man had at one time laws against it and punishments, up to death, associated with those laws.

Only in a society of moral decay and increasing wickedness is this sin considered as the norm. But in God's eyes, the command remains in force as much today as when it was first given. And in the case of the Bible, the further defining of adultery will show that this is not just a sin targeted against the woman, but the man as well. For example, Leviticus 20 says –

“The man who commits adultery with *another* man's wife, *he* who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.” Leviticus 20:10

In taking another man's wife, the offender has failed to honor and love his neighbor. For his willful act against God and man, he was to be executed along with the woman.

It should be noted that here in the giving of the seventh command, the word *naaph*, or adultery, is used for the first time in the Bible. What needs to be understood concerning this, or any command, is that until it is given, there can be no imputation of sin. It is certain that many people had committed adultery before the giving of the command, but this is the first time the word is used in the Bible. And so, until this point, there could be no imputation of sin for committing adultery. Paul explains this in Romans 5 –

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—¹³ (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.” Romans 5:12, 13

What this means is that from this point on, any committing of adultery carries with it the imputation of sin when the command is violated. As Paul notes later in Romans 7 –

“I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. ¹⁰ And the commandment, which *was* to *bring* life, I found to *bring* death. ¹¹ For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed *me*. ¹² Therefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.” Romans 7:9-12

Paul is specifically speaking about any command which is given. It may be given for a good purpose, but in the end, because of our failure to meet the requirements of the command, it results in death. This is what occurred in the Garden of Eden. Man was given one command and it was in the negative –

“Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Genesis 2:16, 17

Had the Lord not given Adam this command, when Adam ate of the fruit, there could be no imputation of sin. But because the command existed, sin was imputed. Now consider again, before the command to not commit adultery existed, there could be no imputation of sin for the act.

But the word and the command are now introduced into the Bible. From this point on, any act of adultery will result in the imputation of the sin. If you can see it, the law does not bring life, it only brings death. It shows us how utterly sinful sin is to God. When we violate it we stand condemned because of our misdeed.

And more, Jesus the Lord, who wrote the command, further explained it to Israel when He came and taught among them –

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Matthew 5:27, 28

Can any one of us here today say that we have fulfilled this law in the manner the Lord expects? Of course not! But let us set aside what Jesus said for a moment and consider Israel’s adherence to it apart from Jesus’ further explanation of it.

Was Israel free from guilt from this seventh commandment? The Old Testament shouts out, “No!” Like murder, Hosea 4 shows that the people of the land reveled in sin, including the sin of adultery –

“Hear the word of the Lord,
You children of Israel,
For the Lord *brings* a charge against the inhabitants of the land:|
“There is no truth or mercy
Or knowledge of God in the land.
² *By* swearing and lying,
Killing and stealing and committing **adultery**,
They break all restraint,
With bloodshed upon bloodshed.” Hosea 4:1, 2

But Israel was even guiltier because they were told that not only was adultery to be considered a sin of the flesh against one’s fellow man, it was also a sin when committed against God. The prophets, time and time again, told the people that when they bowed to other gods, they committed *spiritual* adultery against the Lord.

And throughout the Old Testament, the people are shown to have committed exactly this against Him. They had forsaken their Husband and gone after others. They had violated the marriage contract that He established with them in the giving of the law; the law that they agreed to with their own mouths.

As is evidenced throughout Israel’s history, concerning this seventh command, something else was needed. The seventh word only condemns, it cannot save.

As an extra note on this command, it is not true that Jesus abrogated it when he had mercy on the adulteress in John 8. The law demanded that she was to be stoned for her crime. When He was asked for His guidance, the response He gave has been often twisted to justify tolerance in the matter –

“He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” ⁸ And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ Then those who heard *it*, being convicted by *their* conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest *even* to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. ¹⁰ When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, ‘Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?’

¹¹ She said, ‘No one, Lord.’

And Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you...’” John 8:7-11

If that were the end of the account, which is often where the morally deficient leave off with it, then we may come to a different conclusion about the matter. However, there were a few more words to her before He finished –

“...go and sin no more.” John 7:11

What is implied is that Jesus called her actions sinful and that she was to not continue in her sin.

*Murder, me? No, I've never done that
Only bad people do that kind of stuff
I've said some mean things though, during an angry spat
But calling that murder, it's just not enough*

*Adultery? No! I've never strayed from my wife
She's too good to me, so I just stay at home
Sure, I think about the girl at 7-11 every day of my life
But,,, nope! Never from my wife did I roam*

*Wait, I never noticed this before...
The Bible says whoever hates his brother, a murderer is he
And he who looks at a woman in lust, is an adulterer for sure
I've done both of those things... O! Woe is me!*

*Because of this law, I'm digging an awful deep hole
A pit which is set to consume my very soul*

II. The Eighth and Ninth Command (verses 15 & 16)

¹⁵ **“You shall not steal.**

The eighth word. *lo tgenov* – no do steal. This eighth commandment corresponds well to the third. In the making of, and bowing down to, carved images we in essence rob God of His just due. In like manner, when we steal from others, we deny them of what they have a right to. The structure of the commands is not arbitrary, but rather it is precise and purposeful.

The word *ganav* means to carry away, secretly bring, steal away, or get by stealth. What is obvious is that something is being removed in an improper fashion. The word has already been used several times in Scripture. It is what Rachel did when she stole her father's household idols.

It is also what the brothers of Joseph denied doing when they had been accused of taking his cup used for divination. In both of these instances, and in the giving of the command itself, there is the implied concept of "personal property."

The Bible takes this as an axiom and then solidifies it in this command. People have a right to their possessions. To unjustly deprive them of what they own is theft. In the pre-law biblical references, in the moral guidelines of civilized culture, and even in the simple knowledge of right and wrong instilled in man, the concept that stealing is wrong is well testified to.

Charles Ellicott gives us a most basic and simple description of the moral nature of private property for us to consider –

"Here, again, law has but embodied natural instinct. The savage who hammers out a flint knife by repeated blows with a pebble, labouring long, and undergoing pain in the process, feels that the implement which he has made is his own, and that his right to it is indisputable. If he is deprived of it by force or fraud, he is wronged. The eighth commandment forbids this wrong, and requires us to respect the property of others no less than their person and their domestic peace and honour." Charles Ellicott

Who could rightly argue that the flint knife made by that man belonged to anyone but him? The answer is the one who is in power. In the greater sense, we would call them the government. Just because the government has the *ability* to take away one's personal possessions, it does not mean that it is *morally right* for them to do so.

Further, for them to pass laws which benefit their own personal agenda at the expense of the efforts of the private individual is theft. At what point something which is good for all, such as proper taxation for the continuance of the government becomes theft may be debatable, but such a point does exist.

Unfortunately, by the time that point is passed, and normally by the way it comes about, there is nothing that the individual can do about it. Adam Clarke rightly states it this way –

“Crimes are not lessened in their demerit by the number, or political importance of those who commit them. A state that enacts bad laws is as criminal before God as the individual who breaks good ones.” Adam Clarke

Clark is right and it shows the immense guilt of those in power, especially the left, who steal from the rich to give to the poor. Albert Barnes notes that, “The right of property is sanctioned in the eighth commandment by an external rule: its deeper meaning is involved in the tenth commandment.”

The idea that the deeper meaning of the tenth commandment, meaning coveting, is affected by the right to private property is beautifully seen in the account of King Ahab and the vineyard of Naboth in 1 Kings 21.

He coveted Naboth’s vineyard, he had others lie in order to bring accusation against him, he then had him murdered because of the lie, and then he stole the property that was left. The violation of one command often results in the violation of several.

Was Israel able to keep from violating this commandment? The answer is, “No.” From the common people even to its leaders, their hands were tainted with thefts. In Jeremiah 7, we read this –

“Will you **steal**, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know, ¹⁰ and *then* come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, ‘We are delivered to do all these abominations’? ¹¹ Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen *it*,’ says the Lord.”

-Jeremiah 7:9-11

As with the previous seven commands, Israel proved that the law of the Lord only brought guilt. Sin was imputed for the thefts of the people because the law had instructed them that they were not to steal. Concerning this eighth command, something else was needed. The eighth word only condemns, it cannot save.

¹⁶ **“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.**

The ninth word. *lo taaneh bereakha ed shaqer* – no do against your neighbor witness false. The word for “false” in this verse is *shaqer*. It was first used in Scripture by Pharaoh where he ascribed the word of the Lord which had been proclaimed to him as false.

Unfortunately for him, he had a long and painful lesson ahead of him for not simply taking the word of the Lord at face value. But he neither knew the Lord, nor did he understand the nature of the Lord who is perfectly true in His very being.

In fact, in the book of Titus, it explicitly says that God cannot lie. Because this is His very nature, He is asking us to resemble Him by always testifying to the truth. Further, Israel was given this commandment as a protection of the people. Shakespeare said –

*“Who steals my purse, steals trash,
But he who filches from me my good name,
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
Yet leaves me poor indeed,”—*

Not bearing false witness against one’s neighbor includes a whole multitude of things. We are not to deprive another of their right to life or property by making false claims. We are to not slander another, tell false tales about them, or even imply that they have committed a wrong which they have not committed.

Further, suppressing the truth when it is known in order to harm our neighbor must be considered a violation of this command. All of these precepts are stated in one way or another in the law itself. Adam Clarke notes that this law should go even to the most incredible extremes –

“He who bears a false testimony against or belies even the devil himself, comes under the curse of this law, because his testimony is false. By the term neighbor any human being is intended, whether he rank among our enemies or friends.” Adam Clarke

We have seen that the first eight commandments could not save Israel. They failed each one alike and the Bible witnesses against them, and thus against us. But surely the ninth commandment was adhered to by them, wasn’t it?

They were a group of people called out to be separate from the nations and to be truthful, just, and upright. They must have seen the value of truthful testimony and upheld this one commandment. Well... no. The Bible witnesses against them once again.

In Isaiah 28:15, the rulers of the people are said to have made lies their refuge and they hid themselves under falsehood. In Jeremiah 6, the same charge is levied against all of the people –

“Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them,
Everyone *is* given to covetousness;
And from the prophet even to the priest,
Everyone **deals falsely.**” Jeremiah 6:13

The law was given and it was disobeyed. Israel failed to uphold even this basic commandment. Harm was done to others, the Lord was offended through their actions, and judgment for violating the words of the covenant was due.

Once again, the law which had been given resulted not in man’s blissful reconciliation with God, but rather in the imputation of sin. Concerning this ninth command, something else was needed. The ninth word only condemns, it cannot save.

*Steal? Me? No, I never did such a thing
Everything I have I earned on my own
Such an accusation, well, it makes my ears ring
All the grain I have popped up from what I’ve sown*

*And bear false witness? Come on, no way, Jose
I never say anything that isn’t true
My record smells as sweet as a fresh red rose’
It’s the truth! Why would I lie to you?*

*Well, yeah I did take that kid’s toy back in first grade
And I got caught lying about “not lying” in High School too
It’s just a couple little mistakes that I’ve made
God doesn’t care... it’s all past. On a bell curve, I’m a lot better than you*

III. The Tenth Command (verse 17)

¹⁷ “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that *is* your neighbor’s.”

The tenth word. In short, *lo takhmod* – no do covet. However, this needs to be explained and so the Lord gives examples. The word *khamad* simply means to desire or to take pleasure in. Elsewhere in the Bible, the same word is used in a positive sense,

such as in the 19th Psalm. There we read these beautiful words about Scripture which are to be desired, using this same word –

“The law of the Lord *is* perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the Lord *is* sure, making wise the simple;
⁸The statutes of the Lord *are* right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the Lord *is* pure, enlightening the eyes;
⁹The fear of the Lord *is* clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the Lord *are* true *and* righteous altogether.
¹⁰ **More to be desired** *are they* than gold,
Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
¹¹ Moreover by them Your servant is warned,
And in keeping them there is great reward.” Psalm 19:7-11

Therefore, the desiring of a thing is not in and of itself wrong. It is desiring a wrong thing, or desiring something in an unhealthy way, which violates this commandment. And so, *surprisingly* this tenth commandment is a commandment solely of intent. What it implies is that we are truly being searched out at all times. The Bible says nothing is hidden from the eyes of the Lord and here we have an explicit reference to that. My coveting, unless acted upon, belongs in my head alone. And yet it is not unknown to the Lord.

And though this commandment is one solely of *intent*, it is that very intent which can so easily lead to disaster. The first two uses of the word *khamad* in the Bible are found right there at the beginning of it all. Just after forming the man, and even before the Bible records any words having been spoken to him, we read this, which includes the word *khamad* –

“And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow **that is pleasant** to the sight and good for food. The tree of life *was* also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Genesis 2:9

After this, man was given his single command –

“Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Genesis 2:16-17

However, on the next page comes the most unfortunate of verses which uses this same word, *khamad* –

“So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree **desirable** to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.” Genesis 3:6

The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life all stepped in and took hold of our first parents. They coveted that which was forbidden and the world was plunged into darkness, pain, and death.

Now, for the third time in the Bible, the word *khamad* is recorded. The thing which seems so innocuous and so relatively unimportant compared to all the rest of the commandments is that which has caused the greatest of troubles for man ever since. And what is equally surprising is that the first command ever broken, started with the last of the Ten Commandments! What we think is relatively unimportant is that which has led to every other sin that has ever been committed.

Now, the word has been given and any infraction of it results in the imputation of sin, even if we don't outwardly act upon the desire within. Isn't that a scary thought! It is hardly worth guessing whether Israel passed or failed this test.

If this is an evaluation of the inner being of the man, and the Lord is He who searches the minds and the hearts, then who can say they stand guiltless before God? Can Israel? The answer is, of course, “No.” From the time of the giving of the law, until the very last pages of the Old Testament, Scripture is *replete* with the failure of both individuals and the collective whole to meet this inward test.

In Numbers 11, the congregation craved after meat; in Joshua 7, Achan the son of Carmi coveted the plunder of Jericho; in 2 Samuel 11, David coveted another man's wife; in 1 Kings 21, Ahab coveted another man's vineyard, and in Micah 2 we read this about the people –

“Woe to those who devise iniquity,
And work out evil on their beds!
At morning light they practice it,
Because it is in the power of their hand.
²They **covet** fields and take *them* by violence,
Also houses, and seize *them*.

So they oppress a man and his house,
A man and his inheritance.” Micah 2:1, 2

As with all of the previous commandments, Israel *failed*. Today we would use the term EPIC FAIL. The word of God stands as a testimony against them and against us. We are all guilty of having violated the command, broken the law, and are justly sentenced to eternal punishment. One finite sin against an infinitely pure God infinitely separates us from Him.

Concerning this tenth command, something else was needed. The tenth word only condemns, it cannot save. The law itself says that the man who does the things of the law will live by them. But then the rest of the Old Testament goes on to show that no one could do the things of the law. All stand condemned before it and because of it. Paul wrote these pitiful words in Romans 7 concerning the law, which he calls “a body of death” –

“I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. ²² For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” Romans 7:21-25

The marvelous words of the Bible are that we have *failed*, but Christ has *prevailed*. Where the law brings us *condemnation*, Jesus Christ brings us *salvation*. The terrible display of smoke and fire and noise which was seen and heard at Mount Sinai during the giving of this law pointed to, and pictured, wrath.

God has a standard, man fails that standard, and man stands condemned in relation to it. But that condemnation doesn't necessarily have to be imposed on the offender. It is true that every violation of the law must be judged. If God were to simply ignore our sin, then He would be neither righteous nor just. And He certainly would not be holy.

But God is love. He is also love. And we... amazingly, we are the objects of that love. We desired, that urge turned into action, and that action led to death. But God sent something seemingly undesirable into the world to fix that.

The same word used to describe the desirable nature of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is used to describe Jesus in the opposite way. In Isaiah 53, we read this which uses the same word, *khamad* –

“For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant,
And as a root out of dry ground.
He has no form or comeliness;
And when we see Him,
There is no beauty that we should desire Him.” Isaiah 53:2

The very person who seemed *undesirable* to those He came to save is the very One who could in fact, save them. Isaiah 53 goes on to describe the things this wonderful Savior would do for us, if we would just receive Him.

He came from heaven’s throne and joined with humanity in the womb of a woman. With no earthly father, He was born into the world without sin. And He was born under this same law which all of us have clearly violated. And not only was He born without sin, He lived His life *perfectly* under the law, never sinning.

He thus embodied the law; the very same law which He had given 1500 years earlier. And in the most astonishing aspect of it all, He then received the very wrath and judgment which was pictured at the giving of that law. All of the terror of God’s anger was poured out on the One who personified that same law.

Think of it! As each commandment was being given, He was looking forward to the penalty for each violation of it, knowing... knowing that He would someday assume that penalty for us. To stumble in any command brings guilt for violating the entire law. That penalty of death *must* be executed and no violation or violator may be overlooked. And so to take away what we deserve, Christ became sin for us. He bore our guilt and our iniquity right up the hill of Calvary and to His death so that we could live. Imagine it... with each step, He remembered the day He gave this law to the people there on Sinai and reflected on the terror in their hearts as they witnessed the sight and heard the sounds...

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. “You shall have no other gods before Me. Exodus 20:2,3

And the anger of God was poured out on the Lord Jesus in exchange for our false worship. His own people spat on His face and beat Him.

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. Exodus 20:4,5

We disobeyed God the Father, setting up every kind of idol imaginable. But in His love for us, He instead punished His own Son in our place. Again, His own people beat Him with the palms of their hands.

“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

We profaned the Lord’s name, and yet Jesus took our guilt upon Himself. A crown of thorns was twisted and placed on His head.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

Instead of honoring God, we have spent our lives in worthless pursuit of the wind. And yet, Jesus received what we justly deserve. The Gentiles whom He came to save also spat on Him and struck Him on the head with reeds.

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

In contrast to us, Jesus never disobeyed His Father. And yet, though He was without guilt, He was scourged as if a hardened criminal.

“You shall not murder.

We have hated our brothers, we have aborted the unborn, and our hands are filled with blood. And yet, it was Jesus who was led up to Calvary where He was crucified. His hands and His feet were pierced through, securing Him to the instrument of His death.

“You shall not commit adultery.

It is our hearts which are filled with adultery, and yet Jesus was punished in our place. His own people sneered at Him and mocked Him as He hung on the cross.

“You shall not steal.

Every one of us has taken what is not rightfully ours. But God instead poured out His fury upon His own Son. The Gentile soldiers mocked Him and treated Him shamefully.

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

The words of our mouths are filled with lies and deceit, and yet Jesus, who was without any such fault, gave His life in exchange for ours. When the punishment of the crucifixion had met its purpose, He gave up His spirit and died. God’s precious child died so that we could be called children of God.

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.”

And God’s anger was poured out on the Lord Jesus because we failed to obey. In one final humiliation, they thrust a spear into His side and out flowed blood and water. The cup was drained, the wrath was spent. Out flowed the cleansing life from His death.

I wept as I typed these words, and I wept as I practiced them, because Christ Jesus was punished for *my* sins. If there were no other person but me, He would have done it just for me. And if there were none other than you, He would have gone to the cross for you too. What a God we serve.

Closing Verse: *“For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” Romans 8:3, 4*

Next Week: Exodus 20:18-26 (The Earthen Alter)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Not So Simple Commands, Part II

The first five commands condemned; in them no hope is found
Five more only add to our guilt, this is plain to see
Through the next five, sin does even more abound
A heavy burden surely rests upon you and me

“You shall not murder.

“You shall not commit adultery.

“You shall not steal.

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.”

Five of ten commandments, so simple... and yet impossible to meet
They only bring us a greater consciousness of sin
With them as our hope, there is only defeat
Breaking even one is said to do us in

Oh impossible law, where can I go from you?
What will from this body of death free me?
To Jesus Christ, I will go, it is what I will do
The law is a tutor to lead me to Him and in Him I am set free

By this law, I have a consciousness of sin
How utterly sinful sin is, by it I can clearly see
By this law, I am utterly defeated; I am done in
But by faith in Jesus, He has set me free

Thank You Lord God for the giving of Your Son
Thank You that You have broken off the Yoke and set me free
By faith alone I am saved; through His cross it is done

Now I can live for You, but when I fail
You have already forgiven me

Thank You for the perfect life of my Lord
Who fulfilled every detail of Your perfect word

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 20:18-26

(THE EARTHEN ALTAR)

The Lord came down on Sinai and gave the Ten Commandments. After hearing His voice and seeing His splendid majesty so strikingly revealed, the people begged to not hear His voice any longer. He agreed and from that point on it would be to Moses that He would speak and then Moses would relay the rest of the law to the people.

No sooner had this come about than He began to relay the words of the law to Moses. The first words are to avoid idolatry and then immediately came the instructions for the building of an altar to Him for offerings. On the surface, it does seem a bit disconnected. Doesn't it? But it is not. One thing follows logically after the next.

The details are in the words and the words are there to reveal what is on the Lord's mind. And so let's look into them today with a sense of anticipation that we will learn more about His marvelous plan as it slowly unveils before us.

Text Verse: *"Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; ²³ for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:*

TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you."

-Acts 17:22, 23

Altars are found throughout the world because people throughout the world believe in "God." They may have it wrong, but they intuitively know He is there. In today's passage, the instructions for the building of an altar to the Lord are precise but simple. Why are we being told about it? What purpose do the details serve and what can they tell us about our interactions with Him?

Well, the answers are all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Spoken Word of God (verses 18-21)

¹⁸ **Now all the people witnessed the thunderings,**

It is not unusual for one sense to be applied to all of them. The sense of sight then is given to describe not only what was visual, but also that which follows in the other senses – hearing, tasting, feeling, and smelling.

Here the thunderings which their ears *heard* are recorded in the sense of the mind's eye as being *seen*. As a squiggle for your brain, this form of writing is known to grammarians as zeugma. It is where a word applies to two others in different senses. A funny example of a zeugma would be "John and his license expired last week." Poor John.

The word for "thunderings" is *ha'qolot* – literally, the voices. Rather than the actual word for "thunder" which is *raam*, the idea of thunder has to be inferred from other passages in Scripture where the Lord's voice is said to thunder.

This metaphor for thunder is used many times in connection with the Lord, and the sense of His power and His glory is seen in connection with it. But often His judgment is seen in connection with it as well. The thundering of the Lord in this manner was seen in the seventh plague upon Egypt where we read this –

"And Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven; and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire darted to the ground. And the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt."
-Exodus 9:23

Elsewhere throughout the Bible, the voice of the Lord is noted and it is often in the sense of judgment. A classic example of this is found in Isaiah 66 –

"Hear the word of the Lord,
You who tremble at His word:
'Your brethren who hated you,
Who cast you out for My name's sake, said,
'Let the Lord be glorified,
That we may see your joy.'
But they shall be ashamed.'
⁶The sound of noise from the city!
A voice from the temple!
The **voice** of the Lord,
Who fully repays His enemies!" Isaiah 66:5, 6

The people of Israel heard this terrifying voice and they shuddered. And along with the voice came more as well...

¹⁸ (con't) **the lightning flashes,**

ha'lappidim – literally, “the torches.” From this, we infer the idea of “lightning.” Interestingly, this word *lapid* wasn't used to describe the scene in Exodus 19. It is, however, brought in now to explain a portion of the marvelous sight which was seen by the people. The word has only been used once before, in Genesis 15.

This was at the time that Abraham received the covenant promises from the Lord. At that time, this was what occurred –

And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning **torch** that passed between those pieces. ¹⁸ On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates— ¹⁹ the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.” Genesis 15:17-21

As I noted at that time, and again in Exodus 19, the two accounts are being tied together. The promise to Abraham and the Exodus, including the giving of the law at Sinai, are showing us the horror and dread of the Lord's majesty.

¹⁸ (con't) **the sound of the trumpet,**

v'et qol ha'shophar – literally, “the voice of the trumpet.” The sound, or voice, of the trumpet can be used as the herald of good news or of bad news. The symbolism which we are seeing at the giving of the law is that of warning.

Each law was spoken out with a terrifying display and it was intended to instill in the people that these words are God's standard. They must be fulfilled or there can only be the expectation of wrath.

This is true with the sound of the shophar here and elsewhere. In Joel 2, we read these words concerning the coming of the Day of the Lord. It is a time of wrath on earth, specifically for rejecting the way of the Lord –

“Blow the trumpet in Zion,
And sound an alarm in My holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble;

For the day of the Lord is coming,
For it is at hand:
²A day of darkness and gloominess,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,
Like the morning *clouds* spread over the mountains.
A people *come*, great and strong,
The like of whom has never been;
Nor will there ever be any *such* after them,
Even for many successive generations.” Joel 2:1, 2

Every detail of what occurred at Sinai speaks not of grace, but of judgment, condemnation, and wrath. The law was given to terrify the people concerning the absolute majesty of the Lord, and the absolute perfection that He demands. Who can attain to such perfection? Surely we are all condemned by these words.

The book of Revelation shows us that God’s judgment will come heavily upon the world. This judgment will include the seven trumpets which will be blown to usher in great and terrible destruction. This is the high cost of shunning the grace of Christ and deciding instead to pursue one’s own perverse course.

And this is why when we talk to people about the Lord. We need to explain to them that the law is what we must face if we reject His offer of grace. Adam Clarke notes this about the giving of each of the Ten Commandments in relation to the thunderings, lightnings, and the sound of the shophar –

“...here they seem to have been repeated; probably at the end of each command, there was a peal of thunder, a blast of the trumpet, and a gleam of lightning, to impress their hearts the more deeply with a due sense of the Divine Majesty, of the holiness of the law which was now delivered, and of the fearful consequences of disobedience.” Adam Clarke

He is probably right about this. Each individual commandment carries the penalty of the entire law. This is why James notes that to stumble at one point of the law thus breaks the entire law. In order to get the people to understand this, each command uttered was probably followed by the terrible sights and sounds.

18 (con’t) **and the mountain smoking;**

v'eth ha'har ashen – This is the first of only two times that the adjective form of smoke will be used in the Bible. The entire time that the law was being given, the mountain remained smoking. As I explained in Exodus 19, this smoke is a metaphor for “wrath.” With each utterance the mountain continued to smoke because wrath, not love, is associated with the words. It is wrath at how man refused to even attempt to live in a godly manner. And the Lord knew that they would continue to refuse.

In Jeremiah 18, the Lord warned the people once again, as He had many times before. Rather than remember the terror of Sinai that they had been told of, or maybe because of the terror that they had been told of, they said that it was hopeless –

“Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Behold, I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.”’”
¹² And they said, “That is hopeless! So we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one obey the dictates of his evil heart.” Jeremiah 18:11,12

What the people refused to see was that under the law, there was also grace to be found. The Day of Atonement was available to those with faith. But Israel of old, like the world today, has rejected both God’s commands and His grace.

Again, the smoke was seen to reveal God’s wrath at the sins of humanity. His standard is revealed in this law which is endlessly violated. If only people could see that the grace of Christ can and will free them from this wrath if they would just receive it.

¹⁸ (con’t) **and when the people saw *it*, they trembled and stood afar off.**

This isn’t the best translation of these words. Instead of “trembled” it should say, they “moved” or “removed.” The word is *nua* and it means “to wander.”

When Moses first went up the mountain, it became apparent that some of the people actually thought that they could break through and come to the mountain where God was. Moses told the Lord that they had been warned, but He knew that they were going to push forward anyway. And so He spoke quickly and firmly –

“Away! Get down and then come up, you and Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the Lord, lest He break out against them.” Exodus 19:24

The haughty, arrogant attitude which was displayed before the law began to be given was quickly replaced with horror, fear, and dread. As each commandment blasted forth with its accompanying display of awesome splendor, the people probably backed up a little further.

This is what is implied by the word *nua*. By the speaking of the last commandment, it says they “stood afar off.” Imagine the sight! The first commandment blasts out and the congregation backs up. The second blasts out and they back up more. With each new utterance, they continued to back up until they were completely removed from the mountain.

The people of the world, all around the world, speak of someday meeting God as a friend. Maybe a pat on the back; maybe a question or two about why He was so unfair to them in their lives. If we understand who God truly is and the nature of His majesty, we would never speak in such a proud and overconfident manner.

Instead, we would shudder at the day of our death, pleading for it to never come about. And the fact that man fears death should show him that it is written deep in his heart. It won't be a time of fist-bumping, but a time of terror. But there is good news for those who trust in Christ.

Probably thinking of exactly this verse, where the people backed up as they heard the terror of the law, the author of Hebrews shows that there is a difference in the New Covenant. Instead of removing ourselves from the presence of the Lord, we are welcomed to draw near to Him –

“For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, ¹⁹ for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is the* bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.” Hebrews 7:18, 19

Thank God for Jesus Christ who takes away the terror and replaces it with grace.

¹⁹ Then they said to Moses, “You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.”

The voices that were heard at the giving of the law were so terrible that the people asked Moses to alone speak to the Lord and for Him not to speak to them. Moses

reminded them of this when the law was reiterated to them at the end of their wilderness wanderings and just prior to their entrance into the Canaan –

“The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear,¹⁶ according to all you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.’”

-Deuteronomy 18:15, 16

But it wasn’t just the people that were in fear. Their leader Moses was as well. In Hebrews 12, we read about that –

“And so terrifying was the sight *that* Moses said, ‘I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.’” Hebrews 12:21

The request for a mediator by the people, and the fact that even Moses who was designated as such was terrified at the holiness of the Lord, showed that a different sort of Mediator was necessary. Moses told them that a Prophet would be raised up from among Israel to fill this role.

He would be able to speak the words of the New Covenant in a manner where any and all could hear and accept it. The Covenant at Sinai came with a display of fear and wrath; the Covenant in Christ’s blood removed the fear because He received the wrath. As Adam Clarke notes about this account –

“This teaches us the absolute necessity of that great Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus, as no man can come unto the Father but by him.” Adam Clarke

²⁰ And Moses said to the people, “Do not fear;

al tirau – not fear. Moses wanted them to *not* fear, but to *have* fear. There is a difference. The word here, *yare*, means to be affrighted. They were to receive the words of the Lord, apply them to their lives in the fear of the Lord, and thus they would not have to be *in fear* of the Lord. This is what is implied here because it is made explicit in the rest of the verse...

²⁰ (con’t) for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.”

The word for “fear” here is different. It means fear in a different way. It was first used in Genesis 20:11 in this way –

“And Abraham said, ‘Because I thought, surely the fear of God *is* not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife.’” Genesis 20:11

God was testing the people so that they would have a reverential fear of Him. In turn, this would lead to obedience and the avoidance of sin.

Of importance is that the name Yehovah, or the Lord, is mentioned 8 times in the giving of the law, from verse 1-17. The term *elohim* or “God” is used to refer to him 7 times in those same verses. However, in verses 18-21, only the term *elohim*, not the name Yehovah, is used.

What adds to this is that when the people mention *elohim* in verse 19, there is no definite article. But when Moses refers to him here, and when the text refers to him in verse 21, both times there is an article – *ha’elohim*.

This might sound like, “Who cares!” But it shows that the people still have not grasped that there is but one God who is the Lord. Their failure to call him *ha’elohim* or “the God” in the previous verse perfectly explains why they rejected him and built a golden calf just a short time later.

They failed to grasp the fact that the Lord is the One and only God. Instead, after fashioning the golden calf, they will say this at the base of the very mountain that they are at now –

“This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!” Exodus 32:4

Verse 20, this verse, says that *the* God came to test the Israelites, that His fear would be before them, and that they might not sin. In one fell swoop, they failed the test, they showed no fear of the One they were to fear, and they sinned greatly. So much so that Moses knew what to expect if he did not immediately intercede for them –

“Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! ³² Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.” Exodus 32:31, 32

²¹ So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was.

Here it says that the people stood *m'rahoq*, or at a far distance. The display had been such that they were completely terrified to come near to God. In Deuteronomy, a further explanation is given. Not only were they afar off, but Moses told them they could now go home –

“Go and say to them, ‘Return to your tents.’ ³¹ But as for you, stand here by Me, and I will speak to you all the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe *them* in the land which I am giving them to possess.” Deuteronomy 5:30, 31

While they departed to their tents, it says that Moses alone drew unto *ha'araphel*, or the thick cloud of darkness where *ha'elohim*, or “the God” awaited him. As the people drew away, Moses alone drew near. From this point on, the Exodus account will have a dramatic change in its content.

Instead of being marvelous stories of adventure, excitement, and wonder, there will be minute details and much repetition as the law, and the details for its associated place of worship, is explained. This is the point where many who picked up their Bible for the first time and excitedly read the stories of Genesis and Exodus give up.

I am telling you this now because the sermons during these instructions will often be filled with details which seem unrelated to anything we might expect to be useful to our walk with Christ. It is probable that some of you will give up on attending here or listening on-line, just as some give upon their Bible reading, but God’s word is a unified whole and it is important to take it as such.

For those who remain and continue on through the coming chapters, you will have a far better understanding of the workings of God, even if the time you spend is less exciting than it otherwise could be. I will pray at this moment that you will be blessed as you continue to pursue the Lord’s word from here on out.

*The mountain is filled with terror, an overwhelming sight
There are thunderings and torches of fire ever so bright
And the sound of the trumpet has filled us with fright
Surely this is an awesome display of the Lord’s power and might*

*Let us not again hear the Lord speak to us
Just receive His word and we will be obedient to it
We will obey and never cause a fuss
To His will, and to His commands, we will submit*

*And when the Messiah comes, we will be able to draw near
Through His work we will be spared and safe from harm
We will never again have terror or fear
Because of the comfort of the Lord's right arm*

II. An Altar of Earth (verses 22-26)

²² Then the Lord said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel:

After the terrifying display of the giving of the Ten Commandments, a new means of God's revelation is introduced in order to continue to bring His divine will to the people. He will speak directly to Moses and Moses will then instruct the people.

The words of the law were also recorded in writing and so they form the authoritative word of God. There can be no distinction between the spoken word *to* Moses and the written word *from* Moses. They are one in the same and they bear the same weight and authority.

How terrifying that churches, ministers, and teachers throughout the world cannot see this fundamental truth for what it is. For us to misrepresent the written word of God is to misrepresent the One who spoke those words out in order for them to be written.

And even if the error is unintentional, it is still error. When we err in doctrine, we sin. How much worse then for those who intentionally abuse God's word, dismissing it as a book of mere human origin and one that contains only moral lessons for us to pick and choose from!

²² (con't) 'You have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.

The words of this sentence are in the plural. The Lord spoke to all of the people, and they all saw that He had spoken to them from heaven. What is apparent here is that the words issued out in a way that they could not have been perceived as anything but divine and directly from heaven itself.

Because of this, what will now be relayed to and through Moses to them bears the same Divine source. They had asked for Him to speak *through* Moses, He agreed, and now they were to accept the words *from* Moses as bearing that same authority.

²³ You shall not make *anything to be* with Me—

lo taasun itti – not do make alongside Me. These words are a single proposition and thus they stand alone. Rather than the words of the first commandment which said, “You shall have no other gods before Me,” these say there shall be nothing alongside the Lord.

This is to be taken in one of two ways. The first is to not have anything in a parallel position to the Lord. In other words, there is not to be anything held in the same esteem as Him. There is One God; Yehovah. This was violated when they fashioned the golden calf. When they did, they exclaimed –

“This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!” Exodus 32:4

The second way these words apply is that there is not to be anything fashioned which is to be representative *of* the Lord. In other words, when the Israelites fashioned the golden calf, we will read this –

“So when Aaron saw *it*, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, ‘Tomorrow *is* a feast to the Lord.’” Exodus 32:5

In the first instance, the people placed the golden calf *on the same level* as the Lord. In the second instance, Aaron placed the golden calf *as representative of* the Lord. The wording in this proposition prohibits both of these cases.

The first commandment in the Decalogue was one of honoring the eternal significance of the Lord – He alone is to be worshipped. This law now is one of the proper means of worshipping Him.

The adoration of any images for any purpose is the very germ of idolatry. This is why the actions of many churches, especially the RCC, are so reprehensible. Though the law is set aside in Christ, the warning against idolatry permeates the New Testament as well.

²³ (con’t) gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves.

This second half of the verse is its own proposition as well. It is used to explain the first. The words of the second commandment were more all-encompassing; these here are more specific. Gods of silver or gods of gold would be considered the most precious.

If one were to suppose they could honor the Lord with something tangible, the use of silver or gold would be preferred. But even silver and gold are a part of the creation. To make an image of even these precious metals would be to profane the name and glory of the Lord who created them.

Unfortunately, the rest of the Old Testament shows that these were the preferred elements for the idolatrous worship of the Israelis. Gold and silver are found throughout the rest of the Old Testament as the base material for creating their false gods.

²⁴ An altar of earth you shall make for Me,

In a seemingly sudden transition from idolatry to the law of the altar, the Lord states that it is an altar of earth which is to be made for Him. One must ask, “Why this sudden jump from idolatry to a sacrificial altar?” The answer is that they two are intricately connected. As Keil notes –

“The altar, as an elevation built of earth or unhewn stones, symbolizes the elevation of man to the God who is enthroned on high, in heaven.” Keil

Lange then builds on that and says –

“Most especially it is a monument of the place where God is revealed; then a symbol of the response of a human soul yielding to the divine call.”

From the earliest pages of the Bible, man made offerings to God. The first was immediately recorded after the fall of man. Without any noted instruction, and without any recorded sin by man after Adam’s transgression, we read this in Genesis 4 –

“And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. ⁴ Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat.” Genesis 4:3, 4

In this offering without any recorded sin by the boys, it is implied that man is fallen and this fallen state is inherited. In order to make peace with the Creator, offerings were made. This is found in all places on earth and in all people groups.

To ensure Israel kept from idolatry – either self-idolatry or idolatry associated with the construction of the altar, the people are instructed to build an altar of earth. The interaction of raising to God in sacrifice was not to be defiled through any type of idolatrous practice.

^{24 (con't)} **and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen.**

The way that these words have been stated implies that these types of sacrifices were already in practice and known to the people. The burnt offerings or *olah* were first introduced into the Bible just after the flood. In Genesis 8:20, we read this –

“Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.” Genesis 8:20

Burnt offerings are also seen at the time of Abraham as well. The peace offerings, or *shelem*, must have been known to Moses, but this is the first time that they are mentioned in the Bible. *Shelem* comes from the word *shalam*, which means “to make amends.”

The peace offering then is one intended to satisfy the Lord and to bring about a sense of alliance or friendship. For this reason, some translations call them “fellowship offerings.”

^{24 (con't)} **In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you.**

The regulation for the altar must be one which applies to either special or temporary occasions. The reason why this is true and certain is that Israel is now at Mt. Sinai. They will not depart from this mountain until *after* the tabernacle is constructed. And with the building of the tabernacle comes the place for sacrifices and offerings to be made. Therefore, the Lord is speaking of specially selected places for particular purposes. One of those is recorded in Joshua 8. Others are noted at various places and times. Sacrifices were made at locations other than at the temple. In 1 Samuel, Saul was looking for Samuel. When he inquired about him, we read this –

“As soon as you come into the city, you will surely find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. For the people will not eat until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterward those who are invited will eat. Now therefore, go up, for about this time you will find him.” 1 Samuel 9:13

This would have been such an altar. It was to be erected in the way designated here, even in these earliest instructions to Moses by the Lord. The Lord's words of this verse, "In every place" means there was no need for an impressive altar in a fixed location. Were it so, it would imply that His presence was there and thus not elsewhere.

Rather, He was present at any such altar were He caused His name to be remembered. The Pulpit Commentary notes this concerning such an altar and the Lord coming there and blessing it –

"The promise is conditional on the observance of the command. If the altars are rightly constructed, and proper victims offered, then, in all places where he allows the erection of an altar, God will accept the sacrifices offered upon it and bless the worshippers."
Pulpit

And in order to accommodate the making of such an altar that would be more permanent than one merely made of earth, stone would be considered acceptable for its construction with specific conditions being met...

²⁵ And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone;

A stone altar could be built rather than an earthen one, but it was not to be of hewn stone. The word for "cut stone" is entirely different than the word stone. The word for "stone" is *eben*. The word for "hewn stone" isn't *eben* with some adjective attached to it. Instead it is a single word, *gazith*.

This is the first of only 11 times that this word is used in the Bible and it always indicates stones which have been worked by man, being cut or hewn. To understand this word, we need to look at its root which is *gazah*. This is a word which is used only one time in the Bible, in the 71st Psalm –

"By You I have been upheld from birth;
You are He who **took** me out of my mother's womb.
My praise *shall be* continually of You." Psalm 71:6

The idea is that it is the Lord who fashioned us in the womb and it is He who cut us from the womb. Our fashioning and our birth is a work of the Lord and not of man. So why shouldn't the altar be made of hewn stone? Various reasons have been given, but the continuation of the verse itself gives its own clue...

²⁵ (con't) **for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it.**

One theory is that by using iron on a stone, it would profane it because iron was a taboo metal. This incorrect theory comes from a misapplication of Deuteronomy 27:5 which says –

“And there you shall build an altar to the Lord your God, an altar of stones; you shall not use an iron *tool* on them.” Deuteronomy 2:5

The specificity of iron there is only given because it is the main tool that was used in cutting and shaping stone. Iron is found in rocks and such a rock isn't forbidden from altar construction. Further, this verse in Exodus says nothing about iron.

Rather, the use of a tool profaning the stone is because the stone is something that God created. If man were to shape the stone, then it would include man's efforts in it. Thus it would lead to either idolatry of the altar which man had made in order to fellowship with God, or it would lead to idolatry of self because the man had erected the place where God and man fellowshiped.

Either way, it is a picture of works-based salvation. It is man reaching up to God by his efforts rather than man coming to God through what God has done. He made the rocks. For us to add our effort into what God had made would then be contrary to the premise of the Bible. We are saved by grace, not by works.

The erection of the altar itself cannot be equated to a work anymore than the compilation of the Bible can be. God gave the words, man recorded the words, and through the words man meets with God. Likewise, God made the earth and the stones, man simply arranges them into an altar, and God then meets with man.

And in the specified materials and construction of the altar is a second intent, a picture. The earth or *adamah*, and the stone or *eben*, both picture the human nature of Christ. He *is* the altar where man has a right to fellowship with God.

The word *adamah*, or earth, is from the same root as *adam*, earth or man. In Genesis 2:7, it says that man was taken from the *adamah* or earth –

“And the Lord God formed man *of* the dust **of the ground**, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”

Likewise, Jesus was taken from Adam, being his descendant and the second Adam. Elsewhere, the *eben*, or stone is used to speak of the Lord and of the Messiah, verses which are then cited when speaking of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament.

It is God who cut Christ from His mother's womb, fashioning Him as He chose. Thus to shape a stone for this altar would be to fashion a false "christ" of our own choosing. This is the reason for the specificity of wording. The earthen altar, or one of stone, pictures Christ who was alone fashioned by God.

To hew the stones would then say that *we* are fashioning a Messiah of our own, rejecting the only true Lord who is willing to meet with man. In the end, it is all about Jesus, not us – His work; our faith. He is the Stone of our help; let us not attempt to carve out another in His place.

As we progress through the Bible, we will see other altars that have different constructions. When we get to each, they will also picture Christ, but in different ways. God is slowly and progressively revealing the glory of Christ to us, one step at a time.

²⁶ Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar,

This verse seems like an odd way to end the chapter where the Ten Commandments were revealed, unless one understands the reason for the Ten Commandments. The chapter began with these words –

“And God spoke all these words, saying:

² ‘I *am* the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.’” Exodus 20:1, 2

God is the Creator and the offended party in relation to man. The Lord God, or Yehovah Elohim, is the one who brought His people out of the land of Egypt. Egypt was a very clear picture of the world of sin. Israel was redeemed from Egypt; man is redeemed from the world of sin.

There is a place where man may meet the Lord and that is through offering made at His altar. And that altar is not to be high, thus requiring steps. The word step, or *maalah*, is used for the first time here in the Bible.

It indicates a step, things that come up, high degree, go up, etc. It comes from the verb *maaleh* which means “to ascend.” It is noted that around the world, altars to a god

are usually built high, some exceedingly high. The higher the altar, the closer one feels they have come to their god. Consider of the tower of Babel!

The common thinking then is the more imposing the altar, the more *maalah* you go up and thus the more you will *maaleh*. Said in normal English, one does not *ascend to God* in order to be saved. *God descended to man* in order for him to be saved.

The term “high places” concerning altars of sacrifice is used dozens of times in Kings and Chronicles. It is a note of rebuke to the people of Israel. Even when a good king is noted for his goodness, if he allowed the high places to continue, a note of censure is placed on his record –

“And he walked in all the ways of his father Asa. He did not turn aside from them, doing *what was* right in the eyes of the Lord. Nevertheless the high places were not taken away, *for* the people offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places. ⁴⁴ Also Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel.” 1 Kings 22:43, 44

When a king was specifically said to have “removed” the high places, it was with a note of commendation. If you ever wondered why these were considered wrong, now you know. It is because it was a part of man’s futile attempt to raise himself to God.

Instead, the altar being at a common level with man is a picture of Christ coming down to our common level. It is through His sacrifice, at our level, that the offerings rise to God. Our attempts at reconciling with God are insufficient and worse. They are sinful because they reject what God has first instructed and then what He did for us in what the instruction pictures – Christ.

But Charlie... the last words of the chapter don’t allude to that at all. Just read them! Go ahead Charlie. Ok, I will...

^{26 (fin)} **that your nakedness may not be exposed on it.’**

“See, this is a matter of decency and not letting people see your private parts. See!”

This is the explanation that almost every scholar gives and it has *nothing* to do with that. This verse is reaching back to the first moments of man’s existence on earth and all the way to the last book of the Bible. The translation is correct, “...that your nakedness may not be exposed **on it.**”

It is speaking of the altar and it is referring to the nakedness of sin. In Genesis 3:7, just as soon as Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, we read this –

“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.”

Shame of nakedness is how sin first manifested itself. And it was the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life *by which* that sin came about. Man wanted to be like God, rising to His level. The altar was to be without steps because man *cannot* rise to the level of God.

The higher the altar, the greater the sin is revealed, and thus the more nakedness is exposed. God instead made it known that He would condescend to become a Man and meet us on our own level. In Revelation 3, as Jesus speaks to the churches, He says this–

“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed.” Revelation 3:18

The nakedness of the body only pictures our revealed sin. Christ came to take that away and to cover us with His righteousness. It was He who hung naked on Calvary’s cross so that we could be covered by Him. What a marvelous story and what a beautiful verse to end our passage today.

From the first to the last, it is all about Jesus Christ. Writing about this most marvelous chapter of Scripture, where the law is revealed, and where the sufferings of Christ are pictured, Matthew Henry gives us words to end our thoughts today –

“This law, which is so extensive that we cannot measure it, so spiritual that we cannot evade it, and so reasonable that we cannot find fault with it, will be the rule of the future judgment of God, as it is for the present conduct of man. If tried by this rule, we shall find our lives have been passed in transgressions. And with this holy law and an awful judgment before us, who can despise the gospel of Christ? And the knowledge of the law shows our need of repentance. In every believer’s heart sin is dethroned and crucified, the law of God is written, and the image of God renewed. The Holy Spirit enables him to hate sin and flee from it, to love and keep this law in sincerity and truth; nor will he cease to repent.” Henry

He is right. The law received at Sinai is what all men will be judged by. It is a terrifying law by which *only* condemnation can result. But God, in His wisdom, allows that the condemnation of sin can be through the flesh of His Son on Calvary's cross.

He is the Earthen Altar for our propitiation. Now you can see why the earthen altar is the first thing mandated by the Lord after the giving of the Ten Commandments. There was terror, horror, and dread and the people removed themselves from the presence of God as He spoke.

But at the Earthen Altar, our Lord Christ, pictured by the earthen altars of Israel, we can now draw near to God without fear, but in fellowship. It is Christ who is the center and focus of what we are being shown in the construction of it – His earth, His stones, shaped by Him for a place where the fear is replaced with fellowship.

It is either there in Christ, or God's wrath will fall upon you when you stand before Him. I hope that you will choose wisely and choose Jesus. By God! I pray you will choose Jesus. Let me tell you how you can do it right now...

Closing Verse: *"For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."* Romans 8:3, 4

Next Week: Exodus 21:1-11 (The Law of the Hebrew Slave) (57th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Christ our Altar

Now all the people witnessed the thunderings
The lightning flashes; the trumpet's sound
And the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it
They trembled and stood afar off, not near around

Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us
And we will hear

But let not God speak with us, lest we die
This is the thing that we fear

And Moses to the people said
“Do not fear; for God has come to test you
And that His fear may be before you and so instead
You may not sin; that sin you may not do

So the people stood afar off
But Moses drew near
The thick darkness where God was
Where Moses himself was trembling with fear

Then the Lord said to Moses
“Thus you shall say to the children of Israel:
‘You have seen that I have talked with you from heaven
And these words to you I do now tell

You shall not make anything to be with Me—
Gods of silver or gods of gold
You shall not make for yourselves these certainly
Just as now you have been told

An altar of earth you shall make for Me
And you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings
And your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen
To Me you shall make these profferings

In every place where My name I record
I will come to you, and I will bless you
This is My spoken word

And if you make Me an altar of stone
You shall not build it of hewn stone
For if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it
You shall be obedient to My word alone

Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar, I do submit
That your nakedness may not be exposed on it

Oh! Sin is tempting, especially the sin of pride
We want to work to God instead of trusting Him alone
But it is He who did alone decide
That with His chosen Lamb our sin He would atone

No other way is possible for our reconciliation
It is only through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus
And it is offered to all people in every nation
Great and marvelous things He has done for us

And so we praise You O Lord our God
We will receive what You have done and not add a thing
We receive your grace here on this earth we trod
And to You alone for ever will our praises ring

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 21:1-11

(THE LAW OF THE HEBREW SLAVE)

On 28 October of 2003, I decided to put my commitment to Christ in writing so that I would always have it to refer to in the future. I even took it to the bank and had my wife and a notary witness it. It deals with the passage that we're looking at today.

Subject: An Awl Through My Earlobe

To: My Master and Redeemer, Jesus Christ

As your bondservant, it is my heartfelt desire to give my life entirely to you forever. In accordance with Exodus 21:5 & 6, I declare the following:

I love you as my Master. I and my wife and children have committed our lives to You and do not want to go free from Your presence. May my signature below be acceptable as an awl through my ear into You, the Door of Salvation.

When You brought me out of spiritual Egypt and called me as Yours, it was with the love of a caring and gracious Master. Since that time, you have blessed me in every way. May my every breath and step be in line with Your wishes. When I stray, rebuke me gently and have mercy on my family and me. May Your Holy Spirit indwell me at all times and continue to fill me with each passing moment. I look forward to eternity with You, ever mindful of my position as Your lowly and humble bondservant.

Emlen S. Garrett

A Bondservant of Christ

Text Verse: *"We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,¹⁶ knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified."* Galatians 2:15, 16

Exodus 21 is a part of the law, a law which is annulled in Christ. And so it would seem that my letter to the Lord would not be fitting. We are under the New Covenant, not the Old. But what this Old Testament passage pictures is actually revealed in Christ Jesus in the New Testament. And so it applies.

When I typed that letter, I was young in the faith and my doctrine was still undeveloped, but I realized even then that every word of the Bible points to Jesus. I never in my

wildest dreams would have thought that I would be preaching on this passage to you all at the Superior Word today. It seems unimaginable to me that this would be the case.

But the greatness of God is revealed in the fact that He can use a guy as unworthy as me to preach His word. I mean,, this is an amazingly great God. And I thank Him for His grace and His tender mercies on my life and on that of my family, just as I requested those 13 long years ago.

Well, let's get into this passage and see what got me all stirred up about it back in 2003. Wonderful stuff from His superior word! And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Lord's Freed Man (verses 1-6)

¹“Now these *are* the judgments which you shall set before them:

Immediately following the giving of the Ten Commandments came the people's request to Moses to not let them hear the words of the Lord any longer, lest they die. Directly following that, it says that Moses drew near where God was in order to continue to hear what the Lord would direct for the people.

The first words from Him closed Chapter 20 with a further prohibition against idolatry and the instructions for the earthen altar. Now, Chapter 21 begins a long list of instructions which will form the basis of the regular conduct of the Israelite society. It will comprise most of this and the next two chapters after it.

The words to begin the chapter and the instructions say, *v'elleh ha'mishpatim asher tasim liphnehem*. The word rendered here as “judgments” is *mishpat*. It indicates justice and comes from the word *shaphat*, a verb meaning to “govern” or “judge.”

This word is widely translated as laws, regulations, rules, ordinances, decisions, legal decisions, rights, etc. Matthew Poole gives the full meaning of the word with the paraphrase “the rules which shall guide judicial decisions.” These judicial decisions belong to both civil and criminal law, but they are also used to guide both moral and religious rulings as well.

It has to be remembered from this point on, that the government is established as a pure theocracy. In other governments, humans made the laws and humans decided whether they were violated and what type of punishment to inflict.

This is not the case with Israel at this time. Instead, the laws are given by God and the punishments for violations are often mandated by Him as well. However, He also allows the people to render judgments. When a case was not covered by His words, it could be brought directly to Him.

God is giving Israel general statutes to resolve particular cases under His theocratic rule. It is the first stage of Israelite society and it will continue through the time of the judges in this particular fashion. It will fail due to the people's inability to keep the laws and be obedient to God, and the type of rule will change to a kingship under a human king.

The statutes will continue to be in effect, at that time, but the time of the kings will be used to show that, once again, man fails to adhere to God's perfect standards of justice. Every step of the way, the time of the law is given to show us our need for something else. Only in the coming of Christ is that need filled. Concerning these rules of governance, Adam Clarke notes the following –

“There is so much good sense, feeling, humanity, equity, and justice in the following laws, that they cannot but be admired by every intelligent reader; and they are so very plain as to require very little comment.” Adam Clarke

Despite his comment that these laws require very little comment, Clarke commented quite a bit on them. Such is the joy of reading Clarke and knowing that his comments often override his own comments in his joy to search out the word.

And so let us begin our look into these equitable and just laws which the Lord will now utter. It is these same rules of governance that Moses is instructed to set *liphnehem*, or “before their faces.”

² If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years;

The term “Hebrew” is used only 34 times and 14 are in Exodus. Not only that, but it was last used in Exodus 10:3. That was 30 sermons ago, and now this is the last time it will be used in Exodus. It won't be used again until Deuteronomy 15:12.

It is then of singular importance to understand that this word is being used for a specific reason. The name Hebrew means “to cross over.” The use and its meaning are tied directly to the reason for these instructions now.

The word for “servant” here is *ebed*. It means a servant or a slave. In the context of what is being relayed, it is referring more to a bondman, or a slave, than it is a mere servant. There is no pay involved and the means of one becoming indentured show that this is not mere servant-hood.

The Lord begins these rules of society with slavery probably for at least three reasons. The first is that this physical slavery pictures spiritual slavery. This has already been the case and it will continue to be seen in the Bible’s pages.

The second reason is that the Israelites had been slaves themselves in Egypt. Now, just a couple months later, they were organized as a nation of free people, but some of whom may be brought into slavery for one of various reasons. As this was expected, the new masters who were once under the yoke of slavery would be instructed how to properly handle this issue themselves.

The third reason is that the slave was more likely to be an offender within the household than a member of the household, and the slave was also more likely to be mistreated within the household than anyone else. In order to ensure that none would be mistreated and to ensure the master’s rights were also known, the issue is raised right at the beginning of the judicial laws.

The idea of slavery is taken as an axiom here. It was an existing institution and it would continue under the time of the law. In the New Testament, there is nothing which prohibits the idea of slavery, and it is noted in the New Testament without regards to whether it is right or wrong. It simply exists and is a part of the human experience.

However, there is a truth which needs to be addressed concerning slavery before we actually consider this verse. No man is free. According to the words of Jesus, such as in John 8:34, and elsewhere in the words of the New Testament, we are either a slave of sin, or we are a slave of Christ and to His righteousness. Paul goes into great detail in Romans 6 on this subject.

Concerning Hebrew slaves, there are at least six different reasons why a Hebrew might become a slave:

- 1) If someone became extremely poor, they could sell their freedom. This is found in Leviticus 25:39.
- 2) A father might sell his child. An example is found in Nehemiah 5:5.
- 3) A debtor who couldn't pay his debts could become the slave of the creditor. An example of this is found in 2 Kings 4:1.
- 4) If a thief didn't have enough to pay a fine levied on him, he was to be sold to pay the fine. This is found in Exodus 22:3.
- 5) A Hebrew might become a slave when captured in war.
- 6) A Hebrew who was ransomed from a Gentile might then be sold by the one who ransomed him to another Hebrew. This is found in Leviticus 25:47-55.

The circumstances concerning the slave in each of these will vary based on how they became slaves and to whom they were enslaved.

² (con't) **and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing.**

One of the greatest protections for the Hebrew slave, even if he was a slave because of a crime such as theft, was that they were to be released in the seventh year of their bondage. This means no more than six years of bondage and then release at the beginning of the seventh. There is a dispute as to what this seven year period actually details. In Exodus 23, there is what is known as the Sabbath year –

“Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce,¹¹ but the seventh *year* you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner you shall do with your vineyard *and* your olive grove.¹² Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed.” Exodus 23:10-12

Because of this Sabbath year, some scholars say that Hebrew slaves were to be released in this year whether they had been slaves for one year or six years. In other words, a Hebrew could serve *no more* than six years at the outside.

Other scholars disagree, saying that there is nothing specific to justify this interpretation. I would agree with this. However, there is also what is known as the Year of Jubilee. This is found in Leviticus 25. Any Hebrew slave, with but one exception, was to be released in the fiftieth year, the Year of Jubilee, *regardless* of how many years he had been a slave, one or six.

The word translated as “free” is *khopheshi*. It is an adjective used for the first of just 17 times in the OT. It comes from the verb *khaphash* meaning “to free.” But not only was the slave to be set free, the Lord includes the word *khinnam*. He was to pay nothing on the way out the door. Any further debts he had were to be wiped clean. But even more, provisions for the freed Hebrew slave are noted in Deuteronomy 25 –

“If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. ¹³ And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty-handed; ¹⁴ you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. *From what* the Lord your God has blessed you with, you shall give to him. Deuteronomy 15:12-14

The reason for this care of the Hebrew slaves is explicitly stated at the end of Leviticus 25 –

“For the children of Israel *are* servants to Me; they *are* My servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt: I *am* the Lord your God.” Leviticus 25:55

In viewing slavery as the consequences of sin, those words give us a lovely lesson to remember. The people of God have been redeemed from that life, and so we are to then interact with others as redeemed sinners rather than righteous saints. This is why the master was to treat his fellow Hebrew slaves so generously.

And this limitation on the length of bondage is certainly making a picture of man’s bondage to the devil. The Bible shows that all people are born under the devil’s power. Our sin is inherited and John says that “He who sins is of the devil” (1 John 3:8). As all have sinned, then all are born under the devil’s power and authority.

But the good news is that Jesus came to correct this. In it’s entirety, 1 John 3:8 says –

“He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” 1 John 3:8

When we call on Christ, we move from the bondage of the devil to being servants of a new Master. And so the six years of slavery, followed by the seventh year of freedom, surely has a dual purpose. First, it pictures our time before coming to Christ and then

the freedom we have in Him. This follows in picture from the six days of work followed by the seventh day of Sabbath rest.

And secondly, it is a picture of the six thousand years of man, living in the world of sin from the time of the fall. This is followed by the final thousand years which we call the millennium. It is a time where Christ will rule over all the nations. It is a time of liberty from the yoke of the devil and rest in Christ.

³ If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he *comes in* married, then his wife shall go out with him.

Why would the Lord specify this? If this verse seems peculiar at first, it clears up with a moment of thought. Should a man come in single, it would be obvious that he would leave single unless he got married while a slave. This is further explained in the next verse.

However, if he were married when he came, the master could not say, “Hey, you still owe me from when you stole from me. I’m keeping your wife as my final payment.” In other words, a wife was not considered as property which could be bought and sold by the slave owner.

It is a protection of the family unit and of the woman who belonged with her man. It goes all the way back to the very beginning of the Bible where this is recorded –

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Genesis 2:24

The bonds of a free marriage for a Hebrew were to be considered binding, even above the bonds of slavery. If a woman wanted to follow her husband into his bondage, she was to be allowed to follow him again into his freedom.

As a squiggle for your brain, the word for “by himself” here is *gaph*. It is used just four times in the Bible and three of them are in verses 3 and 4. The only other use is found in Proverbs and is translated in a completely different way –

“She has sent out her maidens,
She cries out **from the highest places** of the city,” Proverbs 9:3

The word comes from a root which means “to arch.” From this comes the idea of the back, which we can arch our back. And from this comes the idea of the body of the

person which alone belongs to the person. Thus it means “by himself” or “alone.” In the case of Proverbs, the arches of the building would be the highest places, where wisdom *alone* cries out.

⁴ If his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master’s, and he shall go out by himself.

This verse may seem contrary to our modern sensibilities, but it is perfectly logical and appropriate. When it was time for the slave to claim his freedom, it does not follow that another slave could also claim theirs.

From this, we see that birth follows the belly. In Genesis 21:10, Abraham was told to dismiss his maidservant Hagar and his son Ishmael went with her. The bond between the woman and the child was to take preeminence.

As she was a slave and the property of the master, then he had a right to keep her and her children just as the owner of the tree has the right to the fruit it bears. If in his kindness to the Hebrew he wanted to allow him to have her for a spell, it didn’t change the right of ownership. Both she, and any children she bore, would belong to him.

Further, this ownership implies that she is not a Hebrew. If she were, she would have to be released in her seventh year of bondage as well. Rather than being unfair, this verse shows grace by the owner to allow his Hebrew slave to enjoy companionship during the time of his bondage.

⁵ But if the servant plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’

By a voluntary act of the will, the servant is given a choice about his status as a slave. Note that the love of the master is mentioned first. The giving of the wife came from the gracious hand of the master. The children who only temporarily belonged to the slave could only have come through the kindness of him as well.

Therefore, it is a devotion *to the master*, first and foremost, to which the rest logically follows. He loves his wife, given to him by his master, he loves his children who came from the wife given to him by his master, and therefore he desires to not be freed from his master. If this is the case, then there are provisions to allow this...

⁶ then his master shall bring him to the judges.

The term here is *el ha'elohim* or “to the God.” This is why some translations say that he is to be brought “to God” rather than “to the judges.” In what this pictures, the term “to the God” is certainly correct, even if it is earthly judges who will witness the affirmation. Even the Greek OT understood this and translates this as *pros to kriterion Theo*, or “to the judgment of God.” In the end, it is God who will see the act and accept it. The wording is specific and necessary for us to see what is being pictured.

⁶ (con't) **He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost,**

el ha'delet ow el ha'mezuzah – to the door or to the doorpost. The door is the access point of the home. It signifies the way in. The doorpost is what holds the door. The doorposts were first mentioned at the time of the Passover when the blood of the lamb was sprinkled on them. That signified an open profession was made in the sufficiency of the death of the lamb to save.

⁶ (con't) **and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl;**

The master is the one to pierce the servant, thus laying claim on the ownership of him and everything that he would possess from that point on. The word for “pierce” is *ratza* and it is only used here in the Bible. The word for “awl” or *martzea* is derived from *ratza* and it is only used here and in Deuteronomy 15, which says –

“...then you shall take an awl and thrust *it* through his ear to the door, and he shall be your servant forever.” Deuteronomy 15:17

In that verse, the words “ear” and “door” are parallels. The two are tied together, as if they have become one.

⁶ (con't) **and he shall serve him forever.**

v'abadow l'olam – The servant-hood is a permanent action described by the word *l'olam*, or “to forever.” Rather than a long time, it is to never be undone. The act is a declaration that the man belonged to the house as long as he lived.

So what is this account picturing, if anything? The answer is that it pictures the work of Christ for each of us. It is we who are being pictured here. We, the bondservants of Christ.

Scholars agree that this boring through the ear is what is being referred to in Psalm 40:6, even though a different word is used which is translated as “open.” Psalm 40 is a messianic psalm which speaks of Christ’s work. There in Psalm 40, we read this –

“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire;
My ears You have opened.
Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require.
⁷ Then I said, “Behold, I come;
In the scroll of the book *it is* written of me.
⁸ I delight to do Your will, O my God,
And Your law *is* within my heart.” Psalm 40:6-8

These words are again used to describe the work of the Lord in Hebrews 10. However, there the author of Hebrews modifies the psalm just enough to show us that Christ’s work *is* what is being pictured here. In Hebrews 10:5, it reads this way –

“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
But a body You have prepared for Me.

Instead of “My ears You have opened,” it says “a body You prepared for me.” The ears are being used in parallel with the entire body. Thus, the piercing of the ear to the door is a picture of Christ’s crucifixion and thus our being crucified with Christ, who is the Door of salvation as He claims in John 10 –

“Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who *ever* came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.” John 10:7, 8

The slave willingly gave up his freedom and his rights in one economy and transferred them to another. When he was a free man of Israel, he was bound to the Law of Moses. As Paul shows in Galatians, the law is bondage. It is what shows us our sin and it is what condemns us. The law is not freedom; it is bondage –

“Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. ²³ But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, ²⁴ which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to

bondage, which is Hagar— ²⁵ for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children— ²⁶ but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.” Galatians 4:21-26

The very thing that we think is freedom is in fact only another type of bondage. But for the slave of his master, it is *his master* who was bound to the law and the slave is bound to his master *under the law*. It is a picture of Christ fulfilling the law on our behalf. He is the Master, we are His slave and we are crucified with Him. Paul could not be clearer in this. In Galatians 2:19-21 we read –

“For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

But there was always the chance that the master might have forced his slave to remain in bondage against his will. Who could tell if no public affirmation of his intent was made known? This is why he had to be taken *el ha'elohim*, or to the judgment of “the God.”

The affirmation is one which is voluntarily made and openly witnessed. The slavery is not forced, but willingly accepted. This is an obvious picture of the free-will of man in his voluntary surrender to His Lord in the presence of “the God.” Nothing could be clearer. We who are in Christ are free from the law because He fulfilled it on our behalf. As Paul says –

“For he who is called in the Lord *while* a slave is the Lord’s freedman. Likewise he who is called *while* free is Christ’s slave. ²³ You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.” 1 Corinthians 7:22

And this freedom we possess as the Lord’s bondservants is, as this verse says, *l’olam*. This one word, used in connection with the marvelous verse, is an explanation of our eternal salvation. We actually need go no further to defend how long we are saved for, or if we could ever lose our salvation. The picture given to us from 1500 years before

the coming of Christ tells us all we need to know. We are His servants forever.
Hallelujah!

*I was a slave to the law which only pointed out my sin
I couldn't meet its expectations though I tried so hard
/But in my place My Lord Jesus, the victory did win
Now my yoke is light and easy, not heavy and hard*

*And so with Him I desire ever to stay
As His slave may I forevermore remain
May the joy of serving Him begin right now today
I give up my freedom to sin and receive heavenly gain*

*My Master is tender and caring; to Him I will cleave
All of eternity in His presence I will stay
Who could say, "I don't want this and so I will leave?"
Why life under my Master gets sweeter each day*

II. Bondage to Whom? (Verses 7-11)

⁷“And if a man sells his daughter to be a female slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do.

The five verses on the female slave seem to offend the senses of our modern society and are frowned upon by feminists who call them shocking, demeaning, etc. And yet, these verses actually provide *more* protection for the woman than the man. Both could be sold into slavery, but the women enjoyed extra protections.

Some translations say, “She shall not go free as male servants do.” But the word isn’t the same as with the man in verse 2. There it said, *yetse l’khapheshi khinnam* – he shall go out free. Here it says, *lo tetze ketzet ha’abadim* – “no she shall go out as do the menservants.”

This isn’t speaking of the man working six years and then being freed. Rather it is speaking of her treatment during the six years. She has a right to be freed earlier if certain conditions aren’t met. This is evident from Deuteronomy 15 which says –

“If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you.”
Deuteronomy 15:12

So any slave who is sold may go free in the seventh year, but the woman’s freedom may come earlier. And the reasons for this become evident as we continue...

⁸ If she does not please her master, who has betrothed her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed.

The word translated here as “betrothed” shows the Elizabethan attitude of the translators. It is *yaad*, and this is its first use in Scripture. It means to agree or to designate. Some translations say “espouse” while others say “married.” What it implies is that a sexual union took place.

A clearer explicit reference is found in verse 10. He has a right to her as his slave just as he had a right to give his female slave to his male slave in verse 4. The body of the slave belongs to the master. However, after whatever time with her he decides he’s not keen on her, then he must allow her to be redeemed.

It doesn’t specify any particular reason for being displeased. Maybe she wouldn’t cook him his favorite meal, maybe she said she was excited about leaving at the end of the six years and it broke his heart. The reason doesn’t matter. What matters are her protections. She could be redeemed earlier if this were the case.

The first time being redeemed was mentioned in the Bible was in Exodus 13, at the time of the Passover. Now the concept is reintroduced into the Bible concerning this slave woman’s rights. This alone shows the care the Lord had for women. He designated that there must be a chance for her to be bought back.

^{8 (con’t)} He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt deceitfully with her.

As a Hebrew, and as a woman that he has dealt deceitfully with, he could not sell her to anyone *not* of Israel. This word “deceitfully” is *bagad*. Again, a new word is introduced into the Bible here. The implication is that he is the offender and he has acted in a treacherous manner toward this woman; he has broken faith with her, not the other way around.

He must let a person of Israel redeem her, or he must continue to care for her, or he must let her go without any further debt attributed to her. Were he to sell her to a foreign people, he would actually violate the theocratic law by stripping her of her rights under the law.

⁹ And if he has betrothed her to his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters.

If a man were to buy a female as a slave intending for her to be given to his son, then that means that he intended her to be within the family as a daughter. As this is so, then she would be entitled to the customary bride-price of a daughter. This is something entirely extra than a male slave would be entitled to. Again, it shows that the Lord has the minutest care for the weaker sex in mind.

Along with this right, she was to be treated as a daughter of the house, with all of the same benefits of a blood borne daughter – food, clothing, and etc.

¹⁰ If he takes another *wife*, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marriage rights.

The question is, who is this speaking of – the master of the house of verse 8? If so, then why wasn't this stated before verse 9? If it is speaking of the son of verse 9, then there has been a change in the subject without any indication of it.

Because of this, and because it precedes verse 11 which says "these three" which are speaking of her marital rights, this is speaking of either the master of the house or the son. Whichever takes her as a wife and then takes another wife, whether she is a slave or a legitimate wife, is still responsible to maintain her *sheerah*, *kesuta*, *v'onatah* – her food, clothing, and marriage rights.

Each of these is a rather unusual word. The *sheer*, or "food," is mentioned for the first time in the Bible. It means "a relative," as in a kin-folk, but in this case it is food which is related to the relative.

The *kesut*, or "clothing," is a word used only 8 times in the Bible and means a covering. And the *ownah*, or "marriage rights", is used only here in the Bible and it corresponds directly to Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 7 –

“Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.” 1 Corinthians 7:3

This refers specifically to her conjugal rights. He cannot deny her this without violating the law of the Hebrew female slave.

¹¹ And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free, without *paying* money.

We conclude verse 11 with a question. Which three things is it referring to? Some scholars say it is the three things in verse 10 – giving her food, clothing, and marital rights. Others say he must do one of the three things of verses 8, 9, and 10, meaning that he is to either marry her himself, marry her to his son, or allow her to be redeemed according to the law.

If he didn't do one of those three things, then he was obliged to let her go out freely without her or her family owing him anything further. Based on what these verses are picturing, the answer is the three things mentioned in verse 10, but as they relate to the other three. In other words, the assumption is made that the woman is taken as a female slave *for* the purpose of a relationship.

Like the previous verses, these are not just telling us a set of laws for individual cases which might arise in Israel. They are also showing us a spiritual picture of how the Lord has dealt, and still deals, with His people. Specifically, this is referring to the people of Israel collectively.

They were purchased and taken in by the Lord becoming His possession. Unlike a male slave, the rights in this type of agreement are immediate and permanent. Thus, Israel is not to be dismissed without considering her rights.

The Lord purchased them in order to be a husband to them, and yet they were found to be displeasing to Him. This is testified to throughout the Old Testament. However, He has set the limitations by showing that He will remain faithful to them despite them not being pleasing to Him. He cannot just arbitrarily reject them.

Instead, He must allow them to be redeemed and He cannot simply sell them to a foreign people. However, as they are His people and as He is their Redeemer, only He can redeem them once again. Until He does so, He must continue to provide for them.

After this, the option is given that He would betroth them to His Son. In doing so, He must deal with them according to the customs of a daughter. And in fact, He did do this. He promised a New Covenant to them in Jeremiah 31:31,32. This covenant was *not made* with the Gentile church. Rather this is how the Bible reads –

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— ³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord.”

It was Israel who was displeasing in His sight, and yet He promised them a New Covenant with them; a new marriage contract with them. As we know, it is with Jesus, the Son of God, and it is testified to through the shedding of His blood. The agreement was made, and God has promised to care for Israel as is according to the custom of a daughter. Isaiah 52 speaks of the daughter’s redemption –

“Awake, awake!
Put on your strength, O Zion;
Put on your beautiful garments,
O Jerusalem, the holy city!
For the uncircumcised and the unclean
Shall no longer come to you.
² Shake yourself from the dust, arise;
Sit down, O Jerusalem!
Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck,
O captive daughter of Zion!
³ For thus says the Lord:
‘You have sold yourselves for nothing,
And you shall be redeemed without money.’” Isaiah 52:1-3

Only He could redeem them and only He has redeemed them. And even more, He has offered them a New Covenant through Christ the Son of God. But, there is still another precept which is included here. It concerns the man taking another wife. Not only did the Lord take Israel, he has also taken a Gentile bride.

This is the reason for including this provision. Despite having received the Gentiles because of Israel’s unfaithfulness, He has levied upon Himself the requirement to not

diminish the rights of the first wife. It is the same wife, Israel, who has been unfaithful to the Lord, not the other way around. And yet, He has remained ever faithful to them.

They rejected Him and yet He redeemed them. He has offered to them every benefit and right that was promised to them. And now, as we draw near to the end of the church age, the redeemed of Israel are seeing that He never forsook them.

He has been there all along waiting for them to return to Him. The maidservant, the Daughter of Zion, has been unfaithful and displeasing in His sight, but He has never been unfaithful to them. Instead, He has fulfilled every provision of His word. What He has instructed man to do is only a picture of what He Himself has done and continues to do.

This same faithful God who looks out for the rights of even the poorest of maidservants also looks out for the rights of those He has redeemed. He will never break His faithfulness with them and He will never let a word of His promises to them fail.

Though these verses today speak of things which seem almost foreign to us, they are actually as relevant to us now as they were when slavery was considered a normal institution of man. The reason is that we are all slaves to something. We are either slaves to sin or we are servants of God. If you have never called on Jesus, then you are a slave to sin and the devil is your master. His yoke is heavy and his burden will only lead to destruction. But Christ came to free us from that. If you have never called on Him but would like to, let me tell you how you can, even right now...

Closing Verse: *“Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed.’ ⁹ So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.”*

-Galatians 3:7-9

Do you wonder why the term “Hebrew” was brought by God into the verses today? It is because it pictures those who have crossed over. Abraham was noted as the first Hebrew. Now all who cross over are also sons of Abraham, by mere faith.

Next Week: Exodus 21:12-27 (Keeping Violence in Check) (58th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it

on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Hebrew Slaves

Now these are the judgments which you shall before them set
They are new judgments which I have not spoken yet

If you buy a Hebrew servant
He shall serve six years
And in the seventh he shall go out free
And pay nothing, nothing is considered as left in arrears

If he comes in by himself
He shall by himself go out
If he comes in married
Then his wife shall go out with him, let there be no doubt

If his master has given him a wife
And she has to him sons or daughters given birth
The wife and her children shall be her master's
And he shall go out by himself, a free man on the earth

But if the servant plainly says
'I love my master, my wife, and my children too
I will not go out free
Then this is what you shall do

Then his master shall him to the judges bring
And you will together do the following thing

He shall also bring him to the door
Or to the doorpost, either will do
And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl
And he shall serve him forever; he will be a slave to you

And if a man sells his daughter
This I now instruct to you
To be a female slave
She shall not go out as the male slaves do

If she does not please her master
Who has her to himself betrothed
Then he shall let her be redeemed
Because she to him was loathed

He shall have no right to sell her
To a foreign people, this would not be right
Since he has dealt deceitfully with her
And only increased to her misery and plight

And if he has betrothed her to his son
He shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters
He shall treat her as if she were one

If he takes another wife
He shall not diminish her food
Her clothing, and her marriage rights
In doing such a thing, to her he would then be rude

And if he does not do these three for her
Then she shall go out free
Without paying money, for sure
These are my judgments and so shall they be

It's pretty wonderful to see God's plan of redemption
Revealed in such seemingly obscure places
But it is everywhere, in each passage we mention
And His plan is realized in all redeemed faes

Are you one of the redeemed of the Lord?
If so, given Him praise and thanks, let it flow from all of us
Let us forever hail God's incarnate Word
Yes, for ever let us hail, Christ the Lord, our Jesus!

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 21:12-27

(KEEPING VIOLENCE IN CHECK)

Today, we will continue on with the Law of Moses and the many fine points which it details. They were given to a people to keep them as a properly functioning society. But of course such laws are only as good as the obedience of the people. And the obedience of the people can only be expected *if* the punishments for infractions are detailed and executed.

And so we will see what was expected of Israel concerning some things which may still apply today and some things which we think might not only be outdated, but even barbarous. But such is not the case. In the end, I think you will see the logic behind each precept that we examine.

Text Verse: *“But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully,⁹ knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,¹⁰ for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine,¹¹ according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.” 1 Timothy 1:8-11*

Paul says the law is good *if* one uses it lawfully. And in fact, it is *only* good if it is used in this way. The trouble with us is that we often use it in unintended ways – be it the Law of Moses or the law of our land. When this occurs, societal breakdown is inevitable. Let us remember this and attempt to use common sense as we evaluate the Bible and as we apply it to our own lives in the place where we live and under the government which we are obligated to. Everything in context... just as the Bible would teach us.

It’s all to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Punishable by Death (verses 12-17)

¹² **“He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death.**

The law concerning violence committed to another follows directly after the law concerning slaves. This is not haphazardly stuck here, but intent is seen in this placement. As Keil notes –

“Still higher than personal liberty, however, is life itself, the right of existence and personality; and the infliction of injury upon this was not only prohibited, but to be followed by punishment corresponding to the crime.”

And, as we will see, there is a difference in how a slave is treated and how a free man is treated. Thus, the law of the slave from the previous section is further refined here in this section concerning violence to another.

For now though, the section begins with just a general statement concerning the striking of another which leads to death. From it, various distinctions will be made between murder, manslaughter, etc., which will all be detailed.

There are two main verses concerning killing another which have already been seen in the Bible’s pages. The first came just after the flood of Noah. In Genesis 9, we read these words which make a distinction between the animal life and the human life which is found in the world –

“So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. ² And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move *on* the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. ³ Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. ⁴ But you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood. ⁵ Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man’s brother I will require the life of man.

⁶ ‘Whoever sheds man’s blood,
By man his blood shall be shed;
For in the image of God
He made man.

⁷ And as for you, be fruitful and multiply;
Bring forth abundantly in the earth
And multiply in it.’” Genesis 9:1-7

What is implied in Genesis 9 is that the killing of an animal is not murder. Words concerning the care of animals are found within the Bible, but the killing of animals cannot be considered murder. Unfortunately, in religions of the world, and in the minds of even many weak or uninformed Christians, confusion over this exists.

It is for the care of man that the Bible's attention is directed. And so, once again in Exodus 20, we read these words –

“You shall not murder.” Exodus 20:13

That is explicit, and yet it leaves as much unsaid as it reveals. What the definition of murder is still requires more analysis from the Bible, including the verses of today's passage. Further, though the command is given, it doesn't detail any penalties for violating the command.

Laws which are not enforced by penalties are rather pointless. They remain inoperative because there is no accountability for a violation of the law. All we need to do is look at obama's America today and this is more than evident. Only anarchy can result. Now the penalty for murder is given – the murderer shall be put to death. The reason for this is explicitly stated in Numbers 35 –

“So you shall not pollute the land where you *are*; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.” Numbers 35:33

Murder is bloodshed and bloodshed defiles the land. Without taking the life of the offender, there is no atonement for the bloodshed and when there is no atonement, then the Lord will respond in judgment. What is implied is that this is an eternal standard of God. This means that when we fail to punish capital crimes in our nations, even today, we heap up guilt upon ourselves.

But Numbers 35 gives more details concerning the murderer –

“Whoever kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the testimony of witnesses; but one witness is not *sufficient* testimony against a person for the death *penalty*.³¹ Moreover you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who *is* guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death.” Numbers 35:30, 31

More than one witness is required in order to find a sentence of guilt concerning murder, and if a person is found guilty of murder, no amount of ransom is sufficient to

redeem the offender from the penalty of death. His life is forfeit. As you can see, there are protections and there are prohibitions associated with the crime.

13 However, if he did not lie in wait,

It would be inappropriate to have the same punishments for different levels of homicide. The willful murder of another bears one type of penalty, the unintentional killing of another is to be handled in another way.

The word for “lie in wait” here is *tsadah*. It is used for the first of just three times in the Bible and this is exactly what it means. It means that someone willfully and with preplanning came to destroy another person.

13 (con’t) but God delivered *him* into his hand,

In contrast to a purposeful action, it says *v’ha’elohim innah l’yadow* – “but the God allowed into his hand.” It is an interesting set of words. First, there is an article in front of “God.” This is speaking of the One true God who has divinely purposed all things. The article is important because *elohim* can mean more than just God. *Elohim* can be judges or spirits or even false gods. *Ha’elohim* is “the God.” He is the One who has predestined all things according to His will. In this case, the tragedy was allowed to occur by Him for His own sovereign reasons.

The rare word translated as “deliver” is *anah*. It is the first of just six times it will be used and it means “to befall.” The Creator God allowed the person to die at the hands of another. The implication is that this *was a part* of his purposes from creation itself.

13 (con’t) then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee.

The one guilty of unintentional manslaughter will have a place appointed to where he may flee. Such a place is known as a city of refuge, and the law concerning it is detailed in Numbers 35:9-28.

These cities of refuge were placed throughout Israel so that the offender could flee quickly to such a city and have his life spared. Because he had killed, even though unintentionally, the near kin of the deceased had the right, and even the obligation to kill him based on Genesis 9.

However, if the offender were to reach the city of refuge, the near kin had no right to take his life. If at anytime he left the city of refuge, the near kin could pursue him and take him. However, at the death of the high priest of Israel, all cases of manslaughter were forgiven and the near kin no longer had a right to kill the offender. He instead could return to his home without fear.

What a picture of Christ, our true High Priest, who removes our guilt through His death! It is a lesson that only through death can the guilt of the shedding of blood be atoned. Thank God for Jesus!

14 “But if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor,

This verse stands in contrast to the previous one. Instead of not lying in wait in order to kill, this person acts with premeditation. The word is *zud* and means arrogantly, or proudly, or rebelliously. *Zud* is the word which describes the sound of boiling (*zud zud zud*) and so it is a metaphor for being boiled up and thus prideful. Instead of the previous example of innocent intent, this example is one of true guilt.

14 (cont’t) to kill him by treachery,

The word for “treachery” is *ormah*. This is its first of only five uses in the Bible. It indicates craftiness or prudence and comes from the verb *arom* which means “to act craftily.” This then is set in contrast to the words of verse 13 which said, “...but God delivered him into his hand.”

14 (cont’t) you shall take him from My altar, that he may die.

The altar is the place of mercy. When one first came into the tabernacle, they would come to the altar of burnt sacrifice. The altar is where sins were expiated, where mercy was granted, and from which a propitious relationship was re-established with God. Charles Ellicott, citing several ancient sources, says that –

“In most parts of the ancient world a scruple was felt about putting criminals to death when once they had taken sanctuary, and those who did so were regarded as accursed ... The Mosaic Law regarded this scruple as a superstition, and refused to sanction it.”
Charles Ellicott

A person who had willfully and intentionally killed another was not to find mercy, even at this place of mercy. Thus this is the antithesis of the words of verse 13 which said, "... then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee."

If the place where restoration with God was not available, then there would be *no other place* that he could flee to. He was to be taken from the altar and put to death. To understand this from an actual account in the Bible, we will take a brief diversion and go to the account of Joab, the commander of David's armies to see this precept come to life.

In 1 Kings 2:5 & 6, David gave Solomon his final instructions before his death. This included a charge to bring the misdeeds of Joab back upon his own head –

"Moreover you know also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, *and* what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner and Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed. And he shed the blood of war in peacetime, and put the blood of war on his belt that *was* around his waist, and on his sandals that *were* on his feet. ⁶ Therefore do according to your wisdom, and do not let his gray hair go down to the grave in peace."

The killing of Abner and Amasa were exactly what this verse in Exodus is describing. He acted on his own accord, and in a prideful manner against David's orders, *zud zud zud*. He used the death of his own brother, Asahel, as a pretext for killing these two men. Because of his actions which brought a stain on David's name, David so charged Solomon. After David's death, Solomon took the requested action against Joab –

"Then news came to Joab, for Joab had defected to Adonijah, though he had not defected to Absalom. So Joab fled to the tabernacle of the Lord, and took hold of the horns of the altar. ²⁹ And King Solomon was told, 'Joab has fled to the tabernacle of the Lord; there *he is*, by the altar.' Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, 'Go, strike him down.' ³⁰ So Benaiah went to the tabernacle of the Lord, and said to him, 'Thus says the king, 'Come out!' | And he said, 'No, but I will die here.' And Benaiah brought back word to the king, saying, "Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me."

³¹ Then the king said to him, 'Do as he has said, and strike him down and bury him, that you may take away from me and from the house of my father the innocent blood which Joab shed. ³² So the Lord will return his blood on his head, because

he struck down two men more righteous and better than he, and killed them with the sword—Abner the son of Ner, the commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, the commander of the army of Judah—though my father David did not know *it*.³³ Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab and upon the head of his descendants forever. But upon David and his descendants, upon his house and his throne, there shall be peace forever from the Lord.’

³⁴ So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up and struck and killed him; and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness.³⁵ The king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his place over the army, and the king put Zadok the priest in the place of Abiathar.” 1 Kings 2:28-35

Joab died without mercy at the horns of the altar for the willful murder of innocent men – *zud zud zud*. Thus, the command of Exodus 21:14 was fulfilled in him with the exception of first removing him from the altar. As the Geneva Bible states –

“The holiness of the place should not defend the murderer.” Geneva

¹⁵ **“And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.**

Some scholars try to define this striking as one that *leads* to the death of the parents. This is incorrect. When death is associated with such an action, it is explicitly stated. This command can mean nothing less than a willful strike against the parents is a capital crime, regardless if they are seriously harmed, or die, or not.

In fact, Keil notes that, “The murder of parents is not mentioned at all, as not likely to occur and hardly conceivable.” Such an act would be regarded as so vile that it is left out of Scripture entirely. The reason for the harshness of this command is that, “The parents are God’s vicegerents for the children” (Lange).

As they have been placed in this position, an attack against them is an implicit attack against God who has placed them there.

¹⁶ **“He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death.**

This law is general in nature and appears to apply to any kidnapping of a man. However, in Deuteronomy 24, it is said to apply explicitly to fellow Israelites –

“If a man is found kidnapping any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and mistreats him or sells him, then that kidnapper shall die; and you shall put away the evil from among you.” Deuteronomy 24:7

In this verse in Deuteronomy, instead of a “man” being kidnapped, it says *nephesh*, or soul. Thus it is inclusive of women. Therefore, the kidnapping of any man is explicitly forbidden in all circumstances while the kidnapping of any male or female Israelite is forbidden.

Paul in 1 Timothy 1, brings this law back to mind without regard to Jew or Gentile. Therefore, it appears that the intent is that kidnapping was not to be condoned in any form. However, in the kidnapping of an Israelite and mistreating them or selling them off, an especially grievous thing would occur.

The Israelites were free people unless they were sold into slavery. To force them into slavery without regard to the law would then deprive them of their freedoms which the law itself gave to them.

¹⁷ “And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.

Cursing one’s parents is placed on the same level as striking a parent because it stems from the same attitude of the heart. God’s appointed authority and His personal majesty are violated when the parents are violated. He ordained the parents of the child and therefore He is cursed implicitly in the curse. Thus it is seen in the Bible that the cursing of parents and blaspheme against God are the two sins of the tongue which are to be punished with death –

“Then you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. ¹⁶ And whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall certainly stone him, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the name *of the Lord*, he shall be put to death.’” Leviticus 24:15, 16

The Lord’s care of the honoring of the parents is so prominent, that in the book of Proverbs, we read these ominous words –

“Whoever curses his father or his mother,
His lamp will be put out in deep darkness.” Proverbs 20:20

*Man is filled with violent tendencies
And when acted upon he must be corrected
Whether through punishment or tender mercies
If he isn't restrained, all of society is affected*

*To kill another is to deprive him of his life
A son will be left fatherless when his dad is killed
A woman who loses her husband is no longer a wife
When someone takes him away; when his blood is spilled*

*And so we are given laws in order to restrain
And punishments to ensure the laws we do obey
With these measures peace in society we maintain
And the people are free to enjoy life from day to day*

II. When Punishment is Due (verses 18-21)

¹⁸ “If men contend with each other, and one strikes the other with a stone or with *his* fist,

People fight as people do. In this verse, there is no sense of premeditation like there was in verse 14. There was simply a quarrel which resulted in a fight. The term “with a stone or with *his* fist” is intended to show this. A person always has a fist available and stones are likewise everywhere.

Having a knife or some other weapon could imply premeditation (*zud zud zud*), but the fist or a stone are not considered things you would use if you had evil intent in advance. And so, unless death resulted, which would then be considered murder under any circumstances, another avenue would be pursued in executing justice.

The word “fist” here is used in a surprisingly sparse manner in the Bible. It is *egroph* and this is the first of but two times it will be seen. The other is in Isaiah 58:4.

¹⁸ (con't) and he does not die but is confined to *his* bed,

There is a reason for this specificity. The law required an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. However, in this case, such a law was neither practical nor feasible. *Practically*, it would serve no useful purpose for the offended person.

Feasibly, it could not be guaranteed that an in-kind punishment would result. To punch the offender or crack him over the head with a stone could kill him. Thus the punishment would not fit the crime. Instead it would be greater than the offense. Or, instead of being confined to his bed, he may only be knocked out for 10 minutes and wake up with a headache. Thus the punishment would be less than the offense.

¹⁹ if he rises again and walks about outside with his staff,

A second damage is recorded. The first is being confined to the bed; this is rising but needing a staff. The word for staff is *mish'elah*. This is its first of 12 uses in the Bible, the most famous certainly being the comforting staff of the 23rd Psalm. It is a literal staff which he must use to support himself, but despite this...

¹⁹ (con't) then he who struck *him* shall be acquitted.

What this means is that he would be acquitted of *blood guilt*. The man may die sometime afterwards, be it soon or in many years, but the bloodshed was not to be imputed to him. He had healed sufficiently to prove that any *later* death was not connected to the incident. In such a case, justice would be served in another way...

¹⁹ (con't) He shall only pay *for* the loss of his time, and shall provide *for him* to be thoroughly healed.

This was such a noble idea that since it was prescribed within the law of Israel, it has spread out to many other societies. A society does not benefit from the death of its people, and so rather than executing a citizen for such a crime, but to ensure that he is restrained in the future and that the offended party is taken care of, this marvelous provision was commanded.

²⁰ "And if a man beats his male or female servant with a rod, so that he dies under his hand, he shall surely be punished.

This verse, on the surface, and to our modern sensibilities, may seem harsh or even inappropriate, but it is actually a protection for the slave which had not been seen before and continued to not be seen in the ancient world.

According to the Dictionary of Roman and Greek Antiquities, for the slaves in Rome, “the master could treat the slave as he pleased, could sell him, punish him, and put him to death.” However, this was not the case in the Hebrew society.

First, the beating is noted for male and female alike. Both sexes were expected to be treated with equal fairness. Secondly, the word for “rod” here is not the same as the previous verse. It is *shevet*. This is literally a stick used for punishing, writing, fighting, ruling, walking, and so on. In this context, it is what is used for discipline. In the proverbs, it is used in exactly this manner –

“He who spares his **rod** hates his son,
But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.” Proverbs 13:24

The striking of a slave with such a rod was used for correction. In fact, a rebellious slave could be corrected no other way. Therefore, if a slave were to die from such punishment, it wasn’t handled as a case of murder. The punishment is not specified, but if death were mandated, it would have said that death was due. It does not.

The intent of a master to kill his slave could not be readily assumed, because there was a monetary value associated with such a slave. It would be contrary to assume that a slave owner intended to kill his slave and thus destroy his own wealth. Therefore, the law sided with the slave owner. Having said this, the law here will be defined further in Leviticus and it will show that Hebrews were to be exempt from such harsh service –

“And if *one of your brethren who dwells by you* becomes poor, and sells himself to you, you shall not compel him to serve as a slave. ⁴⁰ As a hired servant *and* a sojourner he shall be with you, *and* shall serve you until the Year of Jubilee. ⁴¹ And *then* he shall depart from you—he and his children with him—and shall return to his own family. He shall return to the possession of his fathers. ⁴² For they *are* My servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves. ⁴³ You shall not rule over him with rigor, but you shall fear your God. ⁴⁴ And as for your male and female slaves whom you may have—from the nations that are around you, from them you may buy male and female slaves. ⁴⁵ Moreover you may buy the children of the strangers who dwell among you, and their families who are with you, which they beget in your land; and they

shall become your property. ⁴⁶ And you may take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit *them as* a possession; they shall be your permanent slaves. But regarding your brethren, the children of Israel, you shall not rule over one another with rigor.” Leviticus 25:39-46

²¹ Notwithstanding, if he remains alive a day or two, he shall not be punished; for he *is* his property.

The slave is the property of the owner. If his slave needed a beating in order to become submissive, even if that meant lost productivity, then the punishment was to be the loss of the productivity for the owner, and a painful lesson for the slave.

The word for “property” here is *keseph*. It literally means “silver” and thus implicitly “money.” The owner’s wealth is tied up in the slave and therefore, the slave rights are tied up in the rod of the owner; they go no further unless death results.

In all, the laws given here are not only fair and just, they are exceptional for a world which had no such prescriptions before. They protected the rights of both master and slave with fairness while maintaining human dignity and established lines of authority.

*How often have we hurt another without evil intent?
A sudden angry burst which sets our soul on fire
And we lash out with our fists, until our rage is spent
We live our lives walking on such a tightened wire*

*The law is good, for it reminds us to keep our cool
Without it, many would be unrestrained in society
But even the law is rejected by many a fool
And they act towards their fellow man with great impropriety*

*For them, punishment is necessary, this is certain
For some it might be forty lashes or five years in jail
But for others it might be time to draw the in the curtain
And then to put the top on the box and secure it with the final nail*

III. Justice in the Face of Harm (verses 22-27)

²² “If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman’s husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges *determine*.”

This is one of the most important verses in the Bible for understanding the nature of the unborn. In our world today, almost no consideration is given to the rights of the unborn, and those that are given are both convoluted and often manipulated.

Within just the past few weeks, the supreme court of New York determined that an unborn child has no rights at all because the law doesn’t consider them as people. Their law may not, but God’s law does, explicitly.

Of first note is that the woman is said to be with child. The word is *harah* and it means exactly that, she has conceived. The attention is given to the fact that she has a baby in her womb, not to her. She is already alive and protected by the laws of Israel. The focus is on the unborn.

Secondly, it notes that the woman is hurt and gives birth prematurely. Again, the focus is not on the woman, but on the child. What will happen to the child?

The term “yet no harm follows” is speaking of the child in the womb, not the mother who bears the child. This is obvious on the surface because if it was concerning the wife, it would be superfluous to have mentioned the fact that she was pregnant.

The word for prematurely is *yeladeha*. The word *yeled* means “child” here – whether born or unborn. No distinction is made between the two. But the word is plural *yeladeha* or “children.” And thus it is an indication of indefiniteness. Could there be more than one child? If so, then the death of *either or both* carries the same offense. Thus it cannot be speaking of the woman, but of the unborn.

To add to the emphasis here, three words have to be noted. The word “harm” is *ason*. This verse and the next have the last two of five times it will be seen in the Bible. Then there is the word “punished” which is *anash*. In this verse are the first two of nine times it will be used in the Bible.

And finally there is the word for “judges” which is *palil*. This is a rare and poetic term used for the first of just three times. But as others note, this word doesn’t make sense because the fine was imposed by the husband. Unless we are being told that judges must arbitrate the claim.

However, the Greek Old Testament doesn't mention judges. It just says that he shall give by means of what is fit. Therefore, it is more probable that instead of the Hebrew word for judges, the word for untimely birth, which is very similar, is what is being referred to.

As Jewish Rabbinical sentiment unfortunately and incorrectly has been that this harm is only referring to the woman and not the unborn, it makes all the sense in the world that they would find the word judges more satisfactory than the word for "untimely birth."

Regardless of this final word, the context and intent is clear. The child in the womb is considered a human and the focus is on the harm it receives. Thus verse 23 provides the penalty when harm follows...

²³ But if *any* harm follows, then you shall give life for life,

The focus has been on the child – was it born alive and in good shape or did the child die? We must remember that this entire section has been based on the words of verse 12 –

“He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death.”

From that point on, what constitutes a capital offense has been outlined. In the same way, the same words are found in Leviticus 24:17 which are given based on the stoning of a blasphemer who was the son of a Jewish mother and an Egyptian father.

Thus the tenets are given for Jews and Gentiles, men and women, and those out of the womb and those in the womb. The Lord's protections and His judgments follow through to all, including what today we so arbitrarily call a "fetus." When the unborn is harmed and it dies, the offender's life is forfeit. A life is demanded for the loss of the life.

²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,

These words form the earliest known record of the *lex talionis*, or "law of like-for-like," known to man. It was later incorporated into other societies. Though seemingly harsh, they are actually as much a curb on retribution as they are a means of punishing an offender.

No greater punishment was to be meted out than that which had been inflicted. Thus the punisher was not unduly or overly punished. After life itself, these first three are each parts of the body which can either be lost or ruined.

If the baby were born with the loss of a foot, the one who struck the woman would forfeit his own foot – into no shoe could he it put. If a fight between two men resulted in the loss of an eye, then the offender was to lose his eye. However, that would be a difficult pill to swallow for a man with but one eye. Especially if his name were one-eye Guy.

If a tooth was knocked out by another child at school, the offending child was to have his matching tooth knocked out. But that wouldn't be so bad if his name was Keith and he still had his baby teeth.

And if a woman purposely dropped a millstone on another woman's hand, then her hand would be forfeit. One would hope she wasn't also mute, or sign language would be rather difficult. She would be Deaf-Beth with no hand for us to understand.

²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

These three don't deal with specific body parts, but rather what can happen to the body through the abuse of another. The word for "burn" is *keviyyah*. It is only used twice and both are here in this verse. It means a burning or a branding. It would be a painful lesson for the offender to also face what he had done to another.

The word for "wound" is *petsa*. It hasn't been seen since Genesis 4:23 and it will only be used eight times total. It comes from the verb *patsa* which means bruising or even emasculation. If one were to harm another in this way, it was to also be done to him. And the word for stripe is *khabburah*. It was also last seen in Genesis 4:23 and will only be used seven times total in the Bible. It indicates blueness or a bruise or some other similar type of wound.

These punishments were intended as judicial measures for actual wrongs perpetrated against another. They allowed like-punishment to protect the rights of the people and to keep people restrained within the confines of society.

However, by Jesus' time, they were taken as a moral precept and imperative. They missed the spirit and the intent of the law. Because of this, Jesus corrected them on the purpose of the very law that He had given 1500 years earlier –

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'³⁹ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.⁴⁰ If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic,

let him have *your* cloak also. ⁴¹ And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. ⁴² Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.” Matthew 5:38-42

Jesus would rather that the law be upheld, while at the same time mercy would be given when it was right to give it. And even more than mercy would be grace added on top of it.

²⁶ “If a man strikes the eye of his male or female servant, and destroys it, he shall let him go free for the sake of his eye.

Once again, the rights of the slave are highlighted. Though they are in a different category because they are the property of their owners, they were to be given freedoms if the owner abused the rights the same law granted to him.

Even more, the laws applied equally to male and female. No hint of inequality can be found in these words. However, rather than the law of like-for-like for the free members of the society, the slave is an exception. Because the master was a free man, it would be a social injustice to allow for an in-kind retaliation.

And so rather than like-for-like, they were to go out free. It is the same word which was first used in verse 2 when speaking of the freed Hebrew slave in the seventh year of their service. They were granted unconditional release because of the loss of their eye.

²⁷ And if he knocks out the tooth of his male or female servant, he shall let him go free for the sake of his tooth.

Of this verse, the Geneva Bible says –

“So God revenges cruelty in the even the least things.” Geneva

What do they mean by this? The answer is that the previous verse and this verse are set in contrast to one another. The eye is looked at as the most precious of the organs. The loss of the eye is considered especially trying and difficult to deal with.

On the other hand, the loss of a tooth is almost normal and was commonly expected. And if you lost one, there were still thirty some others to use, until they too fell out. And how quickly that occurred in times past before modern dental care came about!

They didn't have Oral B supersonic toothbrushes and Crest fluoride-enhanced, peroxide whitening, sensitivity eliminating, and minty-fresh flavored toothpaste in every store in town. Rather, they suffered with the degradation of their teeth even from youth.

In the Song of Solomon, the king praises his young bride with these words –

“Your teeth are like a flock of newly shorn sheep
coming up from washing,
each one having a twin,
and not one missing.” Song of Solomon 4:2

He praises her for her beautiful teeth, comparing them to a flock of newly shorn sheep that have just been washed, but he also praises her for having *all* of them. It is something that would have been unusual, and so he highlights the fact for us to know. In other words, the contrast between the eye of verse 26, and the tooth of verse 27, is given as an all encompassing thought concerning the slave – from the most precious to the least valued. If they received harm beyond what was considered normal, they were to be set free.

Now that our verses are done for the day, let us remember Jesus' words concerning the law of murder that we looked at earlier –

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’²² But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.” Matthew 5:21, 22

Has anyone here ever been angry with his brother without a cause? It is as if you have committed murder to God. Has anyone ever looked at another in lust? It is as if you've committed adultery in His presence. God looks beyond the externals to the very inner parts of man, to things that we don't even know are there.

And in His holiness, He must judge our sin. Can anyone here say that they are without guilt? I dare say that none of us can. But though a law was given that condemns us, a Son was given to forgive us. The law and all of its associated punishment is there to show us of our need for something else... mercy. Let me tell you about God's mercy in the giving of His own Son...

Closing Verse: *“Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, ²¹ so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

-Romans 5:20, 21

Next Week: Exodus 21:28-36 *What happens if an ox gores your husband or your wife?* (The Price of a Life) (59th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Keeping Violence in Check

He who strikes a man so that he dies, understand
Shall be put to death surely
Yet, if he did not lie in wait, but God delivered him into his hand
Then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee

But if a man acts with premeditation
Against his neighbor, to kill him by treachery
You shall take him from My altar, that he may die
This is how it is to be

And he who strikes his father or his mother, so I say
Shall surely be put to death; it shall be this way

He who kidnaps a man and sells him
Or if he is found in his hand
Shall surely be put to death
This is what My law does demand

And he who curses his father or his mother, as I tell you
Shall surely be put to death; this is what you are to do

If men contend with each other
And one strikes the other with a stone or with his fist

And he does not die but is confined to his bed
Yes, if the pain of death was missed

If he rises again and walks about
Outside with his staff
Then he who struck him shall be acquitted
He is not to receive capital wrath

He shall only pay for the loss of his time; as my word has revealed
And shall provide for him to be thoroughly healed

And if a man beats his male or female servant
With a rod, so that he dies under his hand
He shall surely be punished
As the law does demand

Notwithstanding, if he remains alive a day or two
He shall not be punished; for he is his property
It is his right to so punish as he did do

If men fight, and hurt a woman with child
So that she gives birth prematurely
Yet no harm follows
He shall surely be punished accordingly

As the woman's husband imposes on him
Such terms as he will set
And he shall pay as the judges determine
Whatever sentence is rendered, it shall be met

But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life
Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot
Burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe
This law of the talion is the one upon the offender you shall put

If a man strikes the eye of his male or female servant
And destroys it, he shall let him go free
For the sake of his eye
The poor fellow with that eye can no longer see

And if he knocks out the tooth of his male or female servant
He shall let him go free for the tooth's sake
Because he now talks with a whistle or a lisp
He shall go free, because of the funny sound he does now make

God is not unfair in His commands
They are set for the protection of both the offended and offender
Israel would have done well to comply with these demands
They would have remained in the land, guarded by His splendor

But they, like us, have failed to live in a right manner
And they were punished in exile from their sweet land
Until He whistled for their return to His highly raised banner
And once again they are nourished from His loving hand

Let us learn though from the lesson of Israel
That the law can never save us, instead it can only condemn
This is the message that the Bible does tell
And so for the coming of Jesus, we must surely cry "Amen!"

Yes Lord, You freed us from the bondage and have set us free
And now, we in freedom can praise You for all eternity

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 21:28-36 **(THE PRICE OF A LIFE)**

What does a passage about oxen goring people, animals falling into pits, and oxen causing the death of other oxen have to do with Christ Jesus? Well in one way or another it all points to Him. We have the finer points of the law which show us how burdensome the law really is.

We have things that are expected of us and when we fail at them, we are held accountable for our actions. We have valuations which are set according to animals and people, free men and slaves. There are so many little points to consider.

In the end, and if nothing else, the law continues to show us that even things which we do wrong and which may not even be intentional can still bring guilt upon us. When this happens, we may have to make restitution, or we may even forfeit our lives.

A truth concerning Adam, sin, and death is actually seen in the final few verses of Chapter 21 today. They are verses about an ox which causes the death of another ox, and yet they reveal a truth that Paul wrote about 1500 years later...

Text Verse: *“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—¹³ (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.”*

-Romans 5:12-14

How can it be that an owner's responsibility concerning the death of another person's ox has anything to do with Adam, the law, and Jesus? The answer is that even seemingly obscure passages about normal, physical life still contain spiritual truths. This is the wonder and marvel of the Bible.

It is a story which reveals the very heart of God towards His creatures and it's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Reckoning for the Lifeblood of Man (verses 28-32)

The final portion of Exodus 21 deals with laws in relation to animals which are owned and to which a responsibility is connected. Some of this will deal with the animals owned by an individual which causes harm to another, and some will deal with harm which has come to an animal owned by another.

The animal is a man's property and often his livelihood. And so laws needed to be given in order to ensure that the rights of property, as well as the rights of those who interact with it, are maintained.

²⁸ "If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, then the ox shall surely be stoned,

In this passage, we are given a fuller insight into the sanctity of human life than that first defined in Genesis 9:5. In Genesis 8, after the flood, Noah built an altar and sacrificed to the Lord. The Bible makes no note of wrongdoing on Noah's part and, in fact, the opposite is true. Upon making his offering, we next read this –

"And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart, 'I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.

²² "While the earth remains,
Seedtime and harvest,
Cold and heat,
Winter and summer,
And day and night
Shall not cease.'" Genesis 8:21, 22

The fact that an animal had its life taken from it was acceptable to the Lord. After that note, the focus was on man and on the grace that the Lord would bestow upon him. Immediately after this came the first words of chapter 9 –

"So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. ² And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move *on* the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. ³ Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.'"

-Genesis 9:1-3

Concerning animals, several things of note are seen. First, there will be a marked difference in how the animals responded to man. Fear and dread of man would be on them. The implication is that this was not the case before the flood.

Secondly, the animals of the earth were, at this time, given into the hand of man. The verse is clear in that “every moving thing that lives shall be food for you.” Animals are given into man’s hand for his benefit. The life of the animal is wholly at the discretion and taste of the man. Chinese continue to fulfill this precept absolutely. They have a saying, “If it flies in the sky, if it walks or crawls on the earth, or if it swims in the ocean... we will eat it.”

At this point in time, no distinction was made between what could be eaten and what was forbidden. If the man was hungry and the animal looked nummy, then the animal was ready for the oven. Although this is a side issue, not pertaining to the verses we’re looking at, it needs to be addressed from time to time.

The only dietary restrictions concerning animals are those which belong to the Law of Moses. For this reason, two things are to be inferred from this. First, *only* the Israelite nation, and *only* until the fulfilling of the law in Christ, were these restrictions in force. And secondly, the eating of meat, meaning any kind of meat, is both acceptable and approved of by God. If someone wants to only eat vegetables, that is their prerogative. However, no person should ever be placed under such a dietary restriction by a religious edict.

Such a tenet is contrary to the Bible and it usurps what God has allowed. It isn’t just bad doctrine, but it is heretical to so force such a tenet on others. Reinserting the law, or adding a precept not commanded by God, is to be utterly rejected.

With that issue out of the way, we can return to the principle line of thought here. The animal is in a different *category* than man and is given for the benefit *of* man. If an animal were to cause the death of a person, then its life is forfeit. This is first seen in Genesis 9:5 –

“Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man’s brother I will require the life of man.” Genesis 9:5

The words of this first verse today are given to further define what those words meant. In this, the ox is taken as the prime example for us to consider, probably because it was a common animal and because it would not be unusual for an ox to so gore a person.

The ox then stands for any animal that would bring death to a person, and the horns are to be taken in place of any other way an animal could kill a man – by teeth, by stomping, or whatever else caused a man to die.

The verb for “gores” is *nagakh*. This is its first of 11 uses in the Bible. It means “to butt with the horns,” but figuratively, it is also used to mean “to war against.” It is used in this way in 1 Kings 22 –

“Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made horns of iron for himself; and he said, “Thus says the Lord: ‘With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed.’” 1 Kings 22:11

The act of goring there was a metaphor for defeating the enemy in battle until they were finished off. In the case an ox goring a person to death, then that animal was to die the death of a murderer, the penalty of which was stoning. As it says *saqowl yisaqel ha’shor* – “stoning you shall stone the ox.”

²⁸ (con’t) **and its flesh shall not be eaten;**

There are several suggestions as to why these words have been given. The first is that it is “laden with the guilt of murder” (KD). The second is that the animal would not have been “bled in the usual way, and would be ‘unclean’ food for Hebrews” (Ellicott). A third is that “he has become the symbol of a homicide, and so the victim of a curse (רָחֵם).” (Lange).

The third is certainly the case. Although the animal was “laden with the guilt of murder,” that doesn’t fully explain why it wasn’t to be eaten. And the fact that it hadn’t been bled in the usual way only prohibited those of Israel from partaking in it. These two options are both refuted by verses 34 and 35.

If it were simply a matter of meat, then the dead animal could be sold to a non-Israelite. Rather, the animal has been placed under the ban of *kharem*, or a “thing devoted to God to be destroyed.” This then explains the words of Genesis 9:5 – “Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it.”

²⁸ (con't) **but the owner of the ox shall be acquitted.**

It's the natural instinct of an ox to hook with its horns. Because of this, it would be impossible to foresee every time this would happen. And so, it would be impossible to prevent it from happening.

It would be unjust to hold an owner responsible for his ox's actions if it had no previous record of harming others, or if there were negligence on the part of another who should have known better than to get too close to an ox, irritate it, or whatever.

In such a case, the person was to be released from guilt and considered blameless in the matter. However, if the circumstances were different, then the outcome would also be different...

²⁹ **But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past, and it has been made known to his owner, and he has not kept it confined, so that it has killed a man or a woman,**

The term "in times past" is *mitemol shilshom*, or literally "from yesterday, to the third." It is an idiom which means "in times past," as it is rightly translated. Unfortunately, the rabbis left the obvious use of the term and invented an abusive system of legalities in regards to this command of the Lord. As John Gill explains –

"Concerning this testimony Maimonides (n) thus writes, 'this is a testification, all that testify of it three days; but if he pushes, or bites, or kicks, or strikes even an hundred times on one day, this is no testification (not a sufficient one): three companies of witnesses testify of it in one day, lo, this is a doubt, whether it is a (proper) testimony or not; there is no testification but before the owner, and before the sanhedrin:'"

In other words, the obvious nature of the intent of the verse was discarded and in its place came a convoluted set of rules and exceptions. This is exactly what Jesus argued against concerning their mishandling of the law.

The verse is clear on its surface. The verb for "gores" of the previous verse is here exchanged for an adjective, *naggakh*. It is only used two times in the Bible, here and in verse 36. It reflects a sentiment that the ox was *prone to goring* but it was left unrestrained, despite the owner's knowledge of it.

This would be comparable to someone having a dangerous pit-bull who had been known to attack in the past and yet it was allowed to roam around freely. In such a case, the owner is guilty for whatever harm the pit-bull causes.

In the case of this bull and the resulting death, it would pertain to a free man, not a slave. In the case of the death of a slave, the later verses in this section will provide more direction.

²⁹ (con't) **the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death.**

These words further define both the demand upon the animal and the demand upon the man who owns the animal which was originally given in Genesis 9:5 –

“Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man.” Genesis 9:5

There is a difference in the punishment though. It only says that the ox was to be stoned as the ox is the principle in the murder. However, the means of execution of the man is not specified. It only says that he “shall be put to death.”

This law of the animal is not unique to Israel. Several scholars comment on various practices which are comparable to this law given by Moses. A guy named Pausanias is said to have noted two cases where statues caused the death of people. One was cast into the sea, and the other was ceremonially purified.

Plato would have an animal, or even an inanimate object, which had killed a man tried. If guilt was found, they were to be expelled from the country. In the case of the animal, it would first be slain and then expelled. Whatever good that would do!

In Rome, it is said that hay was twisted around the horns of any dangerous cattle so that the people could see it and be cautious to not approach the animal. And finally, the scholars at Cambridge note that, “In mediaeval Europe animals charged with causing a death were often tried in a court of law, and, if found guilty, killed.” They note that a cow was executed in this manner in France in the year 1740.

It appears that the substance of the words of Genesis 9:5 have continued to be remembered by nations around the world long after they were spoken to Noah. The general concept continues to be held to in the modern world today, but unfortunately, there are those who would prefer saving the life of such an animal even after the loss of a human life.

When we learn to place the value of animal life above that of human life, we upturn the mandates of God and we show both disrespect towards Him directly by acting against His word, and indirectly by disregarding the rights of His image bearers.

³⁰ If there is imposed on him a sum of money, then he shall pay to redeem his life, whatever is imposed on him.

In the case of being the owner of a bull known to be aggressive and which took the life of another, a ransom for his life could be made. This verse records the only time in the Law of Moses where a covering could be made for a capital offense.

This was then both as an allowance of mercy by the family of the person who was killed, and a way for them to being recompensed for their great loss. Rather than demand the offender's death, they could impose on him a sum; a ransom.

The word is *kopher* and it has a wide range of meanings which are all interrelated. It can be translated as bribe, pitch, ransom, satisfaction, sum of money, village, and even as the dye known as henna. All of the words carry the same connotation of "covering." If you live in a village, you live in a *covered* area. If you use pitch as Noah did, you use it to *cover* the leaky spots in a vessel. If you use henna, you *cover* your skin like a tattoo, and if you pay a ransom, you *cover* over an offense in the eyes of the offended with the exchanged money.

This word, *kopher*, comes from the verb *kaphar* means to appease, or atone. And this is exactly what is implied in such a ransom – a covering in order to atone for wrongdoing. Understanding these unusual connections between the various uses of such words opens up a great deal of understanding in *why* such words are used throughout the Bible.

And so we go right from the *kopher*, or sum of money, to the words which the NKJV translates as "to redeem his life." This is translated from the noun *pidyowm*. This is the first of three times it will be used and comes from the verb *padah* meaning "to ransom." As it is a noun, the NKJV gets a demerit in their translation. It should say something like "for a ransom of his life" rather than "to redeem his life." Though the final meaning is understood in both, it is more in line with the original to call it "a ransom for his life" as an exchange is being made between the two – the sum and the life. And that exchange is "whatever is imposed on him."

Many scholars insert here that the sum was up to the judges to decide. For example, Ellicott says the fine was imposed –

“Primarily, by the aggrieved relatives; but in the case of an exorbitant demand there was, no doubt, an appeal to the judges, who would then fix the amount.”

However, this is incorrect. The family of the dead person had the right of the avenger of blood. Thus they also had the right of granting the mercy. The man’s life is already forfeit, and so there is *every reason* to assume that *any* amount, up to *all* of his possessions, could be demanded.

If the man had his own family, he would have to then decide, “Is my life worth my family’s inheritance? Is it worth the poverty of my wife and children?” This is certainly the case. One of only two other times this word *pidyowm* is used in the Bible is found in the 49th Psalm. There, it is again used in connection with the word *nephesh*, or soul –

“Why should I fear in the days of evil,
When the iniquity at my heels surrounds me?
6 Those who trust in their wealth
And boast in the multitude of their riches,
7 None of them can by any means redeem his brother,
Nor give to God a ransom for him—
8 **For the redemption** of their souls is costly,
And it shall cease forever—
9 That he should continue to live eternally,
And not see the Pit.” Psalm 49:5-9

Even Jesus in the New Testament raises the issue in a similar way. Though it is referring to a spiritual matter, the idea of making an exchange for one’s soul, or life force, still applies –

“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? ³⁷ Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” Mark 8:36, 37

The choice for a man of Israel to continue to be redeemed from the grave *before* he dies, or the choice for a man to be redeemed from the grave *after* death both carry the thought of a high cost. And so the question is, “What will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

³¹ Whether it has gored a son or gored a daughter, according to this judgment it shall be done to him.

It is amazing to read varied opinions on why this verse is added. One scholar says this was added in order to show that a lesser value for the redemption is implied because they are youths. That has nothing to do with it.

This verse is given between the verse concerning a man or a woman and that of slaves to show that a free person, even if a son or a daughter, has full rights and is of equal value. Neither age nor sex has any bearing on the amount of the claim.

The same law is to be recognized whether a man, a woman, a son, or a daughter is killed. The life of the irresponsible owner is forfeit unless he is willing to pay whatever ransom is demanded. He cannot claim that it was “only a daughter” and thus it didn’t matter. The child’s life was held in the same esteem as any other.

³² If the ox gores a male or female servant, he shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

As a slave is the property of the owner, no claim could be made by an avenger of blood. Therefore, in lieu of an arbitrary fine, a standard valuation was given for the life of a slave – thirty shekels of silver. In order to justify this amount as being appropriate, scholars show that people devoted to God were given a set value according to their sex and age in Leviticus 27 –

Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ² “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When a man consecrates by a vow certain persons to the Lord, according to your valuation, ³ if your valuation is of a male from twenty years old up to sixty years old, then your valuation shall be fifty shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. ⁴ If it is a female, then your valuation shall be thirty shekels; ⁵ and if from five years old up to twenty years old, then your valuation for a male shall be twenty shekels, and for a female ten shekels; ⁶ and if from a month old up to five years old, then your valuation for a male shall be five shekels of silver, and for a female your valuation shall be three shekels of silver; ⁷ and if from sixty years old and above, if *it is* a male, then your valuation shall be fifteen shekels, and for a female ten shekels. (vs 1-7)

The idea is that the highest value considered was that of a male from twenty to sixty years – fifty shekels. Therefore, valuing a slave at thirty shekels was not undervaluing the life of the slave in comparison to a free person.

But this isn't entirely correct. If this standard of Leviticus 27 applied as they are inferring, then there would have been a set value on the life of the people who were gored in verses 29-31, but there was not. Therefore, it cannot be said that Leviticus 27 is an apple-to-apple comparison.

It is a different context with a different purpose. There, it is a set valuation on a person devoted to the Lord as an offering. It is not the valuation of the life of a person who is a servant. The reason this is important isn't really realized until we get to the account of Jesus' betrayal. In the book of Matthew, we read these passages concerning the price that was paid for the life of the Messiah –

“Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵ and said, ‘What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?’ And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶ So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.” Matthew 26:14-16

“Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, ⁴ saying, ‘I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.’

And they said, ‘What *is that* to us? You see *to it!*’

⁵ Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.

⁶ But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, ‘It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood.’ ⁷ And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. ⁸ Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.

⁹ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, ‘And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, ¹⁰ and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me.’” Matthew 27:3-10

The valuation for the life of a mere slave in Israel was the value which the Lord, who gave them this same law, was valued at by His betrayer. Judas probably didn't see the irony in the exchange that the chief priests did as they weighed out the silver for that

Servant of infinite value. That sale led directly to His death, a death as if gored by bulls and torn by lions. The 22nd Psalm describes the scene –

Many bulls have surrounded Me;
Strong *bulls* of Bashan have encircled Me.

¹³ They gape at Me *with* their mouths,
Like a raging and roaring lion.

¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
And all My bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax;
It has melted within Me.

¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
And My tongue clings to My jaws;
You have brought Me to the dust of death.

¹⁶ For dogs have surrounded Me;
The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.
They pierced My hands and My feet;

¹⁷ I can count all My bones.
They look *and* stare at Me.

¹⁸ They divide My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots. Psalm 22:12-18

It was His people who sold him to His death and it was men, portrayed as animals, which tore at Him as He died for them. And then, concerning this same group of people who so willingly sold away their Lord for such a pittance, Adam Clarke notes this –

“And in return, the justice of God has ordered it so, that they have been sold for slaves into every country of the universe. And yet, strange to tell, they see not the hand of God in so visible a retribution!” Adam Clarke

Adam Clarke rightly noted that as they sold Christ for the price of a slave, so they were sold to be slaves among the nations, exactly as the Bible prophesied. What he wasn't alive to see is that just as they were sold, they are now being bought back. The irony of it is that that they are being redeemed by the very One whom they sold off. Isaiah gives us a beginning clue with these words –

“You have sold yourselves for nothing,
And you shall be redeemed without money.” Isaiah 52:3

The suffering Servant who was sold for servant's wages gave His life to redeem those who sold Him. The Servant has become their Master and those who were His masters have become His servants.

*For thirty pieces of silver was sold my Lord
For the price of a slave was His life taken away
But the suffering Servant did this to fulfill the word
And to usher in for us a glorious new day*

*For thirty pieces of silver was He betrayed
And then He was beaten and hung on a tree
But in His death, God's wrath towards me was stayed
Yes, for thirty pieces of silver, Christ died for me*

*Oh that such a thing as this is true!
That God allowed the hands of the wicked to purchase Jesus
For thirty pieces of silver, He redeemed me and you
Yes, for the price of a slave God did this for us*

II. Making Good on One's Responsibilities (verses 33-35)

³³ "And if a man opens a pit, or if a man digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls in it,

These final verses pass from the value of human life to the value of non-human property. Here in this verse, two different concepts are given. The first is if a man opens a pit that already existed. Such a pit would have been kept covered for the reason we will see.

The second concept is that of a man digging a new pit and leaving it uncovered for some reason. Maybe he was still in the process of digging it, or maybe he had taken his animals to it and made them aware of where it was so that they wouldn't later fall into it.

In either case, however, he is considered negligent in his actions towards the animals of another person, and he becomes liable for any damages that occur such as the loss of his ox or donkey. These two are surely selected because of their high value, but the

precept would remain true even if a less valuable animal fell in, such as a sheep or a goat.

Pits were, and still are, used for numerous things. They may be cisterns where water comes out. This is seen in the account of Jacob arriving in Padan Aram in Genesis 29:1-3-

“So Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the East. ² And he looked, and saw a well in the field; and behold, there *were* three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks. A large stone *was* on the well’s mouth. ³ Now all the flocks would be gathered there; and they would roll the stone from the well’s mouth, water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the well’s mouth.”

A pit could also be used for trapping animals, or for storage such as grain. If such a pit existed and it was uncovered by someone, they were under obligation to cover it back up as a safety measure. If they failed to do so, it became their liability to make any damages right. To emphasize the value of the matter, Jesus even gave this example in Matthew –

“Then He said to them, ‘What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift *it* out?’” Matthew 12:11

The care of an animal and the cost of it to the owner, made it justifiable to even do what would otherwise be considered work on a Sabbath day. It is for this reason that...

³⁴ the owner of the pit shall make *it* good;

The word for “owner” here is *baal*. It means “master” or “lord” and so by implication, the translators say “owner.” This may not be the best translation because a pit may have common use, such as the example earlier of Jacob at the well in Padan Aram. In this case, it may be better to think of it as the person responsible for the pit, whether he is the owner or not. It may be that one joint-owner of a pit isn’t the one that uncovered it. If that were the case, then it would be wrong to penalize him as responsible for someone else’s negligence.

Rather, it is the man who uncovers or digs the pit who is to make good on the loss. It was his responsibility when he uncovered it and then failed to cover it back up. And this

extended to any location. Several scholars say that this only applied on public property. Here's how Matthew Poole states it –

“...to wit, in a public way, as the reason of the law shows; for if it were done in a man's own house or ground, there was no danger of such an accident, except the beast transgressed his bounds, and then the man was not culpable.” Matthew Poole

This is wholly incorrect. The liability extended to the loss of the animal regardless of where it fell into a pit. A good verse to substantiate that private property still had to protect the well-being of others is found in Deuteronomy –

“When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it.”
-Deuteronomy 22:8

You might ask, “What was someone doing on someone else's roof?” That is of less matter than the protection of someone on the roof. Even if houses were joined together and walking on the roof between them was a commonly accepted practice, it still occurred on one's private property, just as would be the case with an animal falling into a private pit.

³⁴(con't) **he shall give money to their owner, but the dead *animal* shall be his.**

In such a case, the one who uncovered the pit and failed to cover it again was to pay for the loss of the animal, but the dead animal would be his as a fair exchange. This verse and the next one show that the animal that gored a human in verse 28 was under a ban from being eaten.

It wasn't because it wasn't properly bled that it couldn't be eaten, but because it was devoted to God for destruction. However, in the case of an animal that fell into a pit and died, it still had value to the owner as it could be sold to a foreigner to help recoup the loss he faced through his own stupid negligence. This is seen here –

“You shall not eat anything that dies *of itself*; you may give it to the alien who *is* within your gates, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner; for you *are* a holy people to the Lord your God.” Deuteronomy 14:21

The meat could be sold for non-Israelite food, and the skin could be sold to a tanner for leather, a donkey blanket, or whatever else such a hide could be used for. As you can

see, even though he had to bear the penalty for his negligence, he was still given a sort of grace in the process.

³⁵ “If one man’s ox hurts another’s, so that it dies, then they shall sell the live ox and divide the money from it;

This is an especially fine aspect within the law. One ox has hurt another and death has resulted. This is the natural order of things and there is nothing offensive or repulsive about the animal. It could even be that the two animals were sparring over a lovely female as oxen will do.

In this case though, the animal is to be sold, not kept. What this implies is that there is now a stain on the ox and it is to be replaced with another which has no fault in it. And isn’t that a beautiful picture of Christ replacing Adam. There was guilt in Adam and so he had to be replaced with another which bore no guilt.

The money was to be divided between the two owners and then they were to do with it as they wished. If they wanted a new ox, they could use the silver from the defective one towards another. Likewise, they were to take action concerning the dead ox...

^{35 (con’t)} and the dead ox they shall also divide.

When we started today, I mentioned the value of animals in regards to humans. This is another verse which shows us this precept. When an ox gores a human and the human dies, it was to be stoned and not eaten. Nothing was mentioned about selling it, or dividing it, or anything else.

It was simply to be stoned and that was that – it received a murderer’s penalty. It bore the bloodguilt of man. This makes a spiritual picture which is explained in 1 John 3 –

“For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, ¹² not as Cain *who* was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous.

¹³ Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love *his* brother abides in death. ¹⁵ Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” 1 John 3:11-15

However, when an ox were to cause the death of another ox, then the live ox was to be sold and the money for it was to be divided between the two. Along with that, the dead ox was to be divided. Again, the dead animal still had value, even if an Israelite couldn't eat it. The proceeds from the dead would help to make up the difference towards buying a new ox.

If you think about it, it is a great picture of what is going on in the world. There is the devil who became the owner of this world. All men were under His power. There is death *in* Adam, but life also comes *through* Adam in the sense that Christ came *from* Adam.

The division of the dead ox shows us this. The dead ox is Adam and his offspring, but because Jesus is a Son of Adam, life came from death pictured by the purchase of a new, unstained ox. The proceeds came from both the live, stained ox and from the dead ox.

It is the dual nature of man – physically alive and yet stained, and spiritually dead. Christ, the replacement, is both *alive* and *unstained* and so through Him we can move under His ownership. Like the oxen, there are at this time two owners of men. This is the division in the world. One side is working death for death and one side is working death for life. The stream of Adam is divided leading to one purpose or the other. Either man stays under the original owner and remains dead, or he moves to the new Owner and is replaced with unstained life.

Even in a simple passage about one oxen causing the death of another, there are spiritual truths to be found. This is further defined in our final verse of the chapter and of the sermon...

³⁶ Or if it was known that the ox tended to thrust in time past, and its owner has not kept it confined, he shall surely pay ox for ox, and the dead animal shall be his own.

The chapter ends with this final thought concerning culpability. If the owner knew of the harm that the ox was capable of because of past events, then he became liable for the entire cost of a live ox and only the dead ox would be his. In this, it says *shalem ye'shalem* – “paying he shall surely pay.”

The entire burden for the matter rests on him, and yet he is allowed at least to keep the dead ox. Again, it is a point of grace in an otherwise sad state of affairs. But again, it points to a spiritual matter. It is a picture of remaining dead in one's transgressions.

A person who willfully acts against what he knows will bring life remains spiritually dead. Only through active obedience of what is *right* can one receive what is *life*. This person has walked away from that and only receives death.

However, as a matter of grace, he has been given this physical life, even if it is a life of spiritual death. The proceeds from it are only death, but they are the proceeds which he is granted by the law.

As was seen at the giving of the law, and as will be seen throughout the law, the law can save no man because no man can fulfill it. And yet, at the same time, the law is the *only thing* which can bring about salvation. And so, Christ came under the law and fulfilled it for us.

This is what we see in these verses again today. The proceeds of the law for one who has failed to keep the law are *death*. But the proceeds of the law for one who has met the standards of the law are life. As we are already guilty before the law, then in order to have that life we must yield ourselves to the One who has fulfilled it in our place. Thank God for Jesus Christ.

If you have never asked Him to simply forgive you of your sins and to take away the guilt you bear, do it today...

Closing Verse: *“Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. ²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” Romans 3:19, 20*

Next Week: Exodus 22:1-15 *Something important to relay to you* (The Responsible Thing to Do) (60th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Price of a Life

If an ox gores a man or a woman to death
Then the ox shall surely be stoned, as is fit
And its flesh shall not be eaten
But the owner of the ox you shall acquit

But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past
And to his owner with this knowledge he has been filled
And he has not kept it confined
So that it has a man or a woman killed

The ox shall be stoned as directed by Me
And put to death shall its owner also be

If there is imposed on him a sum of money
Then he shall pay, his life to redeem
Whatever is imposed on him
Whatever is fitting as it would seem

Whether it has gored a son or gored a daughter, either one
According to this judgment to him it shall be done

If the ox gores a male or female servant
He shall give thirty shekels of silver to their master
And the ox shall be stoned
For having caused this disaster

And if a man opens a pit
Or if a man digs a pit and does not cover it
And an ox or a donkey falls in it
The owner of the pit shall make it good, as is just, proper, and fit

He shall give money to their owner
But the dead animal shall be his, not just a loner

If one man's ox hurts another's
So that it dies, this I to you decide
Then they shall sell the live ox
And the money from it divide

And the dead ox they shall divide also
Such is how the affair shall go

Or if it was known that the ox
Tended to thrust in time past
And its owner has not kept it confined
Then you shall do this at last

He shall surely pay ox for ox
And the dead animal shall be his own
It was he who got himself into this box

Simple laws but which teach of other things
Pictures of Christ and of His work for us
And in them, O how my heart sings
Of the marvelous wonders of our Lord Jesus

Thank You, O God, for this hope You have given to us
Though in Adam we are dead in our sin
Through Your Son we are made alive, yes, through Jesus
A new and eternal life we have been granted to live in

Thank You! Thank You O God, hear our praise
That our hearts will sing to You for eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 22:1-15

(THE RESPONSIBLE THING TO DO)

I bet every one of us can look back on our past life and think of a jillion times when we have either been wronged by another or we have wronged another in regards to personal property. Maybe you lent somebody something and they broke it or lost it.

Maybe you borrowed a car and got it scratched or dented while it was in your care. It could be that you went on a vacation and took one of your pets to a shelter or to a friend for it to be taken care of while you were gone... When you got back, poor Fifi the cat was missing or poor Rover the dog was dead.

When something like that happens in life, there are times when no resolution between the two parties seems possible without either checking with what the law says, or even being compelled to take the matter to a civil court for a decision.

The law of Israel did not foresee every situation that could arise in advance, but it gave great general guidelines for many such situations. Some of these guidelines are still in effect in societies of the world today. They are common sense and they are precise as to what should be done.

And then there are those times when the law didn't provide specifics. At those times, the law was still specific in its own way – bring the matter before the Lord and to those who judge for a decision.

Text Verse: *“Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the Lord your God and carefully observe all the words of this law,¹³ and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess.” Deuteronomy 31:12, 13*

Israel was instructed to bring the people together every seven years to hear the words of the law. It was to be a reminder to them of their responsibilities towards the Lord and towards their fellow man. Some of the responsible things they were to do in regards to their property and the property of their fellow man are detailed in today's verses.

In keeping them, or ensuring that they were properly judged when they weren't kept, was important in order for the society to function properly. These and so many other fine details of the law are to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that

precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Laws for Theft (verses 1-4)

The following laws for theft are very brief and detail only three circumstances. The first is stealing property and converting it for another use; second is housebreaking, or burglary; and third is stealing without having converted the stolen goods for another use.

The ox and the sheep were principle types of valuable property within Israel and so they are used as representative of stealing in general. The punishments, in principle, can then be considered representative of what is proper for other thefts as well.

¹“If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep.

In just the first verse of this chapter, there is a lot to consider. First, the idea of this and the following verses is theft. And certainly more than just that is the intent of the heart. This is because different penalties are given for the act of theft based on what happens to what is stolen.

If the main crime is simply theft of any kind, then there would be a unified punishment regardless of what happened to what was stolen, but there isn't. As we progress, this will be seen and looked into. In the case of verse 1, if someone steals an animal as described and slaughters it or sells it, the penalty is stated.

Second, the word for “slaughter” is *tabach*. This is only the second of eleven times it is used in the OT. Rather than a sacrificial type of slaughtering, this gives more the idea of butchering an animal for food. The thief willfully steals and then willfully sells, or kills the animal to eat or sell as food. He thus profits off of the animal through his actions. Third, with the exception of Young's Literal Translation of the Bible, no translation gives the proper sense of the verse. Two different Hebrew words are translated as “ox” and two different words are translated as “sheep” in all other versions except Young's.

The verse says, “If a man steals an ox (*shor*) or a sheep (*seh*), and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen (*bakar*) for an ox (*shor*) and four sheep (*tson*) for a sheep (*seh*). It's obvious that a distinction is being made between what is stolen and what is to be returned. Otherwise, it would have just used the same words.

Instead of repeating the same word in English, the word “herd” is certainly more appropriate. An animal of the herd would be used to replace the specific ox or sheep. Therefore, it could be five bulls or five heifers for the ox (or any combination), and it could be four sheep or four goats (or any combination) for the sheep.

No matter what, he is to repay fourfold for having first stolen the animal and then having sold it or eaten it. His benefiting off the stolen animal is what is being considered in conjunction with the theft.

Fourth, there is a difference in the required payment for an ox as opposed to a sheep – fivefold instead of fourfold. Scholars have varying ideas as to why. Some argue that it is more brazen or audacious to steal an ox than it is to steal a goat. Others see that the penalty is higher for an ox because it is an animal from which profit can be derived, such as in plowing fields.

I would think it is a mixture of the two. If it is true that one can benefit more from an ox than a sheep, then the one stealing the ox intends to benefit more from it as well. If he slaughters it and sells its meat, or if he simply sells it outright, the profit to him will be greater than for doing the same thing with a sheep.

There is a strong purpose behind his evil intent to take the larger and more valuable animal. It is the heart which is being looked on as well as the act itself. This principle was adhered to and acted upon elsewhere in the Bible. When Nathan the prophet came to King David with the story of a person who wrongfully took a man’s only precious lamb, David’s response to Nathan’s words was one of great anger –

“So David’s anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, ‘As the Lord lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! ⁶ And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity.’” 2 Samuel 12:5, 6

Unfortunately for David, Nathan was using the lamb as a metaphor for Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah whom David took as his own. It was he who was in the wrong.

In the New Testament, Zacchaeus, the wee little man in the sycamore fig tree, was so elated that Jesus desired to eat in his home, that he rushed down the tree and entertained the Lord. In his great joy, we read this –

“Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.’” Luke 19:8

² If the thief is found breaking in, and he is struck so that he dies, *there shall be no guilt for his bloodshed.*

The second law of theft is concerning burglary. The word for “breaking in” is *makhtereth*. This is its first of only two uses in the Bible. It means “burglary” or “secret search” and it comes from the word *khatar* which means to “dig.”

The idea is that one has to, as it were, dig in order to forcibly break into a house or to conduct a secret search. This would involve the use of an implement to either dig through the earthen wall or to dig through the bolted door of the house.

In the case of a person who so breaks in, if he is struck and is killed, the person who killed him is to be absolved of any wrongdoing and bloodguilt. What this means is that the avenger of blood may not come after him to claim his right of vengeance.

There are several reasons for this. The first is that by digging into a house, any implement he had could have been used as a weapon. This would immediately come to mind in anyone who was quietly sleeping and then suddenly awakened by a thief. The thought of murderous intent would be at the forefront of his thoughts.

The second reason is that at such a dark hour, the thief couldn’t be identified. His features, his size, the intent of his eyes, and so on couldn’t be determined. The one in the house would have no idea who they were up against or even if they could safely flee.

And third, anyone who did commit such burglary and who got away couldn’t be identified later. Therefore, there would be no justice for his offenses. By breaking in at night, and under the law which was given to the people of the land, he would subject himself to the possible penalty of that law by forfeiting his life.

³ If the sun has risen on him, *there shall be guilt for his bloodshed.*

The word for “has risen” here is *zarakh*. It means the dawning of the sun when it shoots forth beams. At such a time, the sky would be illuminated enough to send light into a

house and make a thief recognizable. A burglar in such an instance was not to be killed or the guilt of blood would be on the head of the one who killed him.

The idea is surely that the person could recognize the intruder and flee for his own safety and then later he could identify the burglar who would then be convicted for his crime. He would be required to pay for his theft according to the other precepts within the law.

³ (con't) **He should make full restitution; if he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.**

This portion of verse 3 is said by some scholars to be out of place because the first half of it notes that there would be guilt for his bloodshed. They say that it thus presupposes that there was bloodshed. This is incorrect. Rather, it presupposes that the one in the house *won't* shed his blood, just as the law requires.

Instead, of killing the burglar, it says *shelem y'shalem*, restoring he shall restore. In place of vengeance on the offender, there will be justice for the offended. The guilty will keep his life and he will hopefully learn his lesson through restoring damages and losses incurred by the owner.

However, if he is unable to restore according to the law, then according to the law he is to be sold for his theft. The word "theft" is *genebah*. In the OT it is only used here and in the next verse. It is the noun form of the act of stealing. It is the thing stolen.

The thief becomes liable *to become* property for having put his hand into another man's property. In this, the words "shall be sold" would be better translated as "should be sold." The entire verse then is one of justice. To paraphrase it, one could say, "If the sun has risen, instead of killing the person and incurring blood guilt, the thief should fully restore what he has stolen or he should be sold to replace the thing stolen."

⁴ If the theft is certainly found alive in his hand, whether it is an ox or donkey or sheep, he shall restore double.

An emphasis is given in this verse which is translated as "certainly." In Hebrew it says *im himmatse timmatse b'yaddow ha'gennebah*, "If finding is found in his hand the theft." It is what we would say, "being caught red-handed."

If a thief is so caught and the animal which was stolen is still alive, then only double restoration is required. This then is a justice of retaliation. The thief loses the very amount that he anticipated gaining. In contrast to verse 1 where the animal was butchered or stolen, the matter is looking at the intent of the heart.

Until the animal or thing was disposed of, there was always the chance that the thief would own up to his theft and restore it. It would mean he would incur a double cost of restoration, but he would be spared an even higher cost. And it could be that he could seek mercy and not even have to pay back a double amount.

But once the animal was dead, such a chance of restoration was impossible. It had become an aggravated crime from a hardened heart. As long as the animal was alive and in his possession, the possibility for repentance and full restoration was available.

This is similar to what happened to the sons of Jacob when they went down to Egypt to buy grain during the great famine in the land. When they came back, the money they had taken to buy grain was found in their sacks. In order to ensure that the mistake was covered, Jacob instructed them with these words –

“Take double money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight.”

-Genesis 43:12

On a spiritual level, double repayment for wrongdoing is also a biblical consideration. The people of Israel had sinned against the Lord and the people were punished for it, double in fact. These verses concerning the protection of the physical assets of the people are also given to show what is just and due concerning the people’s relationship with the Lord –

“Comfort, yes, comfort My people!”

Says your God.

² “Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her,

That her warfare is ended,

That her iniquity is pardoned;

For she has received from the Lord’s hand

Double for all her sins.” Isaiah 40:1, 2

The idea of double punishment for the sins of the people is not unique to Isaiah, but it is also found in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. In the end, the double

punishment of the people was literally carried out in a double exile – first to Babylon and then by the Romans in AD70.

However, after the times of double punishment, the Lord promises not just restoration, but double restoration –

“As for you also,
Because of the blood of your covenant,
I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

¹² Return to the stronghold,

You prisoners of hope.

Even today I declare

That I will restore double to you.

¹³ For I have bent Judah, My *bow*,

Fitted the bow with Ephraim,

And raised up your sons, O Zion,

Against your sons, O Greece,

And made you like the sword of a mighty man.” Zechariah 9:11-13

*Comfort, yes, comfort My people, says your God
Speak comfort to Jerusalem and cry out to her
That her warfare is ended, peaceful streets she shall trod
Her iniquity is pardoned, and she is made pure*

*For she has received from the Lord’s hand
Double for all her sins, the payment has been made
And now her future lies ahead ever so grand
For her dirty rags, garments of white she will trade*

*The double punishment was due and it was just
But now double blessing will come upon Israel
For her will come joy and health, so robust
To My jewel Israel, this promise I now tell*

II. Laws for Negligence or Fraud (verses 5-15)

⁵“If a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed, and lets loose his animal, and it feeds in another man’s field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard.

Like many of the verses so far, this one implies a permanent dwelling in the land of Canaan and it also implies private property. The law was given in anticipation of both and it implies both – possession of the land of Israel by Israel, and possession of parcels of the land by individuals.

The last time a vineyard was mentioned was all the way back in Genesis 9:6 when Noah planted a vineyard and got drunk off wine from it. Israel is being given directives for something that they will inherit and which they will have a right to. When that comes about, protections will be in place for their land and their labors.

Translators vary in how they translate this verse in one of two main ways. One is willful negligence, as if the animal was purposely let loose and allowed to go into another man’s field. The other is careless negligence where an animal is let out to eat and it wanders over to another man’s field.

Whichever is the case, the owner is negligent and he is to be held accountable for his actions. The restitution, though, is not a double forfeiture, but rather simple restitution. However, it is to be from the *best* of his vineyard.

The word “best,” or *metav*, is rare, being used only six times in the Bible. It always refers to either the best of the land or the best of animals. On a spiritual level, this verse can be equated with taking the best of something from someone for their having taken that to which they had no right to when they took it. This is explained in Jesus’ parable to the people in Luke 14 –

“”So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: ⁸“When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; ⁹and he who invited you and him come and say to you, ‘Give place to this man,’ and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. ¹⁰But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, go up higher.’ Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. ¹¹For

whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”” Luke 14:7-11

In other words, we are to carefully ensure that we only take that to which we are entitled. We are to be responsible to not tread into areas which we are not entitled because when we step out of those bounds, then we are liable for having our own best taken from us.

⁶“If fire breaks out and catches in thorns, so that stacked grain, standing grain, or the field is consumed, he who kindled the fire shall surely make restitution.

This verse is filled with fun words. “Thorns,” or *qots*, hasn’t been seen in the Bible since the Lord cursed the ground in Genesis 3 –

“Cursed *is* the ground for your sake;
In toil you shall eat *of* it
All the days of your life.

¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,
And you shall eat the herb of the field.

¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread
Till you return to the ground,
For out of it you were taken;
For dust you *are*,
And to dust you shall return.” Genesis 3:17-19

It implies to the people that they will still be living in a fallen world when they enter Canaan. The thorns will be so abundant that fields will be set on fire to burn them out in order to prepare fields for use. Jamieson-Faucett-Brown notes that –

“This refers to the common practice in the East of setting fire to the dry grass before the fall of the autumnal rains, which prevents the ravages of vermin, and is considered a good preparation of the ground for the next crop. The very parched state of the herbage and the long droughts of summer, make the kindling of a fire an operation often dangerous, and always requiring caution from its liability to spread rapidly.” JFB

The word *qots* comes from *quwts* which means “summer.” Thus the thorns are those things which spring up rapidly in the heat of the summer when other things struggle in the heat and lack of rain.

The word for “stacked grain” is *gadyish*. It’s the first of four times it will be used in the Bible. It means a heap of something or a tomb, because a tomb is raised up like a heap. The word for “standing grain” is *ha’qamah* or “the standing.” This comes from *qum*, which means to arise, or stand up.

And finally, the word for “the fire” is an unusual noun form of a word used only this once in the Bible *ha’beerah*. It means “the burning.” Taken together, the words supply us with a picture of what is going on.

Much has to be inferred, but the inferences clear up the difficulty of the verse to us. A person is preparing a field at the end of the summer for the next crop to be planted. In order to do so, he sets the field on fire to clear out the thorns.

When he does, the fire gets out of control and moves into the next field where the farmer is still working on this year’s crops. He either has stalks piled up in heaps or still-standing grain waiting to be harvested, or even both. When the fire gets to his field, it destroys his grain and all of the work he has done.

Hence the use of the word *ha’beerah* for “the burning” instead of the usual word for “fire” which is *esh*. As John Lange says about the consequences of his actions – “The carelessness is imputed to him as a virtual incendiary, because he did not guard the fire” John Lange

His own profits are to be consumed because of his negligence in not keeping “the burning” restrained. Although not nearly a literal translation, the New Living Translation gives probably the best sense of this verse for us to comprehend –

“If you are burning thornbushes and the fire gets out of control and spreads into another person’s field, destroying the sheaves or the uncut grain or the whole crop, the one who started the fire must pay for the lost crop.” NLT

Although looking over a bunch of obscure words in an obscure verse of the law seems like an unimportant thing to do, by doing so, we can almost mentally insert ourselves into the field work of ancient Israel and understand the trials and difficulties of those tedious labors.

And so if you enjoy understanding the nuances of farm life in Israel and seeing them in your mind’s eye, the word studies are far from pointless!

⁷“If a man delivers to his neighbor money or articles to keep, and it is stolen out of the man’s house, if the thief is found, he shall pay double.

Delivering money or articles to a neighbor to keep was a common thing for people to do in the past. Before there were banks, if someone went on a journey or was going to be gone from their house for whatever reason, they would entrust their valuables to a neighbor for safekeeping.

There was also the practice of depositing goods by a debtor to a creditor. As a fellow Israelite, he would be considered a neighbor even if a creditor. When the debt was paid off, the personal goods were to be returned.

In such a circumstance, if that property was stolen and the thief was found, the thief was required to pay double, just as would the thief pay in verse 4. After that, the matter would be considered settled. However...

⁸If the thief is not found, then the master of the house shall be brought to the judges to see whether he has put his hand into his neighbor’s goods.

Should no thief be apprehended in the matter, then the suspicion would naturally fall on *ba’al ha’beyit* or the “master of the house.” If this were the case, the owner of the property had a right to bring them forward to have the matter settled. However, from this point on a dispute arises as to whom the matter is brought to.

The Hebrew reads *el ha’elohim*, or literally “to the God” or “to the gods.” For this reason, translations vary. If it means, “the gods” then it is speaking of human judges who are referred to as *elohim*, or “gods.” However, because Hebrew also has the commonly used word *shophetim* which mean “judges,” this is not likely.

Rather, the verse is more appropriately translated as the English Standard Version renders it –

“If the thief is not found, the owner of the house shall come near to God to show whether or not he has put his hand to his neighbor’s property.” ESV

In Israel, there was a way of inquiring of God using stones known as the Urim and Thummim. These would be used in a case such as this to determine whether the master of the house was guilty or not. Knowing that this type of inquiring of God was available would be a deterrent in and of itself.

However, if guilt was found, punishment was to be brought to the one who was guilty...

⁹“For any kind of trespass, *whether it concerns an ox, a donkey, a sheep, or clothing, or for any kind of lost thing which another claims to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whomever the judges condemn shall pay double to his neighbor.*

Whatever was entrusted to the individual and which was then lost or unrightfully claimed as the possession of another, the parties were given the opportunity to make their case. The word for “lost thing” is *abedah* – it is the noun form of the word *abad*, which means to lose. It is used for the first of only four times and it is found only in the books of Moses.

What is implied with this is that it is the property of one person which is claimed as belonging to another, hence a “lost thing.” In such an instance of fraud, the two parties were to come before *ha’elohim*, or literally, “the God” for a decision.

When so presented, it says that whomever *elohim* or “God” condemns will be required to pay double to the neighbor. In this verse, like the previous verse, the translation is far better using “God” than judges. It should literally read –

“...the case of both parties shall come before the God. The one whom God condemns shall pay double to his neighbor.” (Charlie’s translation based on a correction of the ESV)

It is God who looks upon the heart and it is God who decides who is to be condemned. This word, condemn, or *rasha* is introduced into the Bible here. It means “to find wicked” or “to condemn.” The one who has acted wickedly and is found out is then required to pay double for the theft.

¹⁰ If a man delivers to his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep, and it dies, is hurt, or driven away, no one seeing it,

This verse is parallel to verse 7. It could be that the owner of the animal went on a vacation or on some other business, or it could be that he entrusted his animal to a herdsman whose business it was to take care of flocks and herds.

In whatever case, the one who received the animal became responsible for the care of the animal, whatever type it was. Should it die in his care, or should it be hurt in his care, or should it be taken captive by marauding raiders, or for any such reason as this, then the rights of both parties needed to be protected.

¹¹ *then an oath of the Lord shall be between them both, that he has not put his hand into his neighbor's goods;*

In such a case, then a *shevuat Yehovah* or an “oath of the Lord” shall be made by the one who had custody of the animal that he did not transgress the law in the case of it. The mentioning of the oath of the Lord is a rare thing in Scripture. As Matthew Poole says concerning the oath of the Lord –

“...because it is taken by his authority and appointment, and for his honour, and in his name alone, God being made both witness, and judge, and avenger thereby.” Matthew Poole

Such an oath was considered so weighty and so terrible to be violated that in such a case, the matter is to be considered settled...

¹¹ (con't) *and the owner of it shall accept that, and he shall not make it good.*

Because of the weighty and terrifying nature of such an oath, and the consequences for lying in connection with it, the owner was to accept what was spoken before the Lord and the one who had custody of the animal was freed from any further liability.

As a short diversion, let's take a quick look at the penalty for violating the *shevuat Yehovah*, or the “oath of the Lord” from 1 Kings 2 –

“Then the king sent and called for Shimei, and said to him, ‘Build yourself a house in Jerusalem and dwell there, and do not go out from there anywhere. ³⁷ For it shall be, on the day you go out and cross the Brook Kidron, know for certain you shall surely die; your blood shall be on your own head.’

³⁸ And Shimei said to the king, ‘The saying *is* good. As my lord the king has said, so your servant will do.’ So Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days.

³⁹ Now it happened at the end of three years, that two slaves of Shimei ran away to Achish the son of Maachah, king of Gath. And they told Shimei, saying, ‘Look, your slaves *are* in Gath!’ ⁴⁰ So Shimei arose, saddled his donkey, and went to Achish at Gath to seek his slaves. And Shimei went and brought his slaves from

Gath. ⁴¹ And Solomon was told that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and had come back. ⁴² Then the king sent and called for Shimei, and said to him, “Did I not make you swear by the Lord, and warn you, saying, ‘Know for certain that on the day you go out and travel anywhere, you shall surely die’? And you said to me, ‘The word I have heard *is* good.’ ⁴³ Why then have you not kept the oath of the Lord and the commandment that I gave you?” ⁴⁴ The king said moreover to Shimei, “You know, as your heart acknowledges, all the wickedness that you did to my father David; therefore the Lord will return your wickedness on your own head. ⁴⁵ But King Solomon *shall be* blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the Lord forever.”

⁴⁶ So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he went out and struck him down, and he died. Thus the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.” 1 Kings 2:36-46

¹² But if, in fact, it is stolen from him, he shall make restitution to the owner of it.

v'im ganov yigganev me'immow – “But if stealing it was stolen from with him...” The statement is emphatic, especially the words “from with him.” It implies that there was either negligence or an underhanded aspect to what occurred.

The property was either stolen from among the caretaker’s own things and yet his own things weren’t stolen, which would then suppose there was fraud involved, or it might imply that with simple diligence the loss would have been prevented. In other words, he was grossly negligent.

In either case, the one who had custody would be required to make full restitution for the loss. This thought harkens back to their forefather Jacob who bore the loss of his uncle’s flocks even when he was diligent and was not in the wrong –

“These twenty years I *have been* with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young, and I have not eaten the rams of your flock. ³⁹ That which was torn *by beasts* I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it. You required it from my hand, *whether* stolen by day or stolen by night.” Genesis 31:38, 39

¹³ If it is torn to pieces *by a beast*, then he shall bring it as evidence, *and* he shall not make good what was torn.

im taroph y'tareph – Another statement of stress – “If tearing it was torn.” It implies that a beast got hold of the animal and tore at it until it died. In such a case, the one with custody over the animal was not to be held liable. Though the account of Jacob precedes the law, these words demonstrated the unfair treatment Jacob received at the hands of his uncle as he tended to his flocks.

In bringing the remains of the animal, then it was considered sufficient evidence that he had acted properly. Though a beast had attacked an animal under his care, he had been vigilant enough to go after it and courageous enough to take what remained from the beast. This is something that David claimed he had done to prove that he had the courage to face Goliath. In 1 Samuel 17, we read –

“Your servant used to keep his father’s sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, ³⁵ I went out after it and struck it, and delivered *the lamb* from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught *it* by its beard, and struck and killed it. ³⁶ Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.” ³⁷ Moreover David said, “The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” (vs 34-37)

¹⁴ “And if a man borrows *anything* from his neighbor, and it becomes injured or dies, the owner of it not *being* with it, he shall surely make *it* good.

This verse, deals with lending which is intended for the benefit of the one to whom a loan is made, not for the one lending. To borrow implies that one expects to gain advantage from what is borrowed. Because of this, the *borrower* was under the full obligation of protecting and returning whatever he borrowed.

Therefore, regardless of how it was hurt or how it died, it was the responsibility of the borrower to make good on the loan. As an exception, the words “the owner of it not being with it” implies that if during the time of the loan the owner happened to have it under his care when it was injured or it died, then he wouldn’t have to make good on the loan. This becomes explicit in the next verse...

¹⁵ If its owner *was* with it, he shall not make *it* good;

This is a very fine point within the law which is given for the protection of a borrower. If, in fact, he had borrowed something and yet it happened to be in the possession of the owner when it was hurt, then there would be no need for restitution.

As an example, a man borrows an ox for two weeks to plow his field. If the owner came by to use his ox for 20 minutes to remove a large bolder from his own field and the ox was hurt at that time, then the owner could not say to the borrower, "You have to pay for the ox because it has been lent to you for two weeks and you still have a week of use left."

This statement preempts any such claim and would help keep the courts clear of any such niggling over minutiae in this type of arrangement.

^{15 (fin)} **if it *was* hired, it came for its hire.**

As one final point these words are given. Hiring out an animal is different than both borrowing an animal and having an animal entrusted into another's care. In the case of hiring it out, the risk of the hire was to be considered as part of the calculation the owner should make upon fixing his price for the hire.

If he had an ox and the neighbor wanted to hire it out for 50 shekels of silver, then he had to consider if that was sufficient for renting it out in case it got hurt or died. If so, then should that happen, he had received his payment in advance and the one who hired was absolved from any further responsibility for the animal.

In these past 15 verses, there is the intent that the people would be protected in matters of private property. It is taken as an axiom throughout the Bible that man has a right to his own property and that when someone unlawfully takes it or is negligent in caring for it, that they were responsible under the law for their actions.

It might seem trivial that God would set down such minute precepts when He is God and all things ultimately belong to Him, but if we consider that God has made us free moral entities and that He cares for us in that regard, then it follows naturally that He would want His people to be cared for and free from loss or worry.

In other words, it shows an immensely loving attitude by the Lord to set down these laws for His people. From that point, we can then logically see that if He cares about our welfare and our protection in this worldly life, how much more do you think He cares about our welfare and our salvation unto eternal life!

And then considering that He allows us the choice to either obey His laws or reject them, and to either return our love to Him or shun Him, it shows how truly loving He is. God doesn't force Himself upon us, but rather makes Himself known to us so that we will want to fellowship with Him.

And the greatest such demonstration of all is when He entered into the stream of humanity and walked among us. In doing so, He showed us His very heart. He said, "I know that this law is big, it's filled with mandates, and it is impossible for you to live it out perfectly. But I have come to do that for you. If you will just trust Me, I will live out the law on your behalf.

This is what Christ did for us. He came as a Man, born under the law, to redeem us from the law. As you read these commands and precepts, don't be overwhelmed by what God has mandated. Rather, be overwhelmed that Christ was born under it and lived it out for us in order to set us free from it.

Trust... this is what God would ask you to do. Trust that He can save You from the law by fulfilling it for you. Trust in Jesus and be saved. Call on Jesus and everything in this law that you have violated will be washed clean by His shed blood. Do it today!

Closing Verse: *"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. ²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."* Romans 3:19, 20

Next Week: Exodus 22:16-31 *Living properly both day and night* (That Which is Morally Right) (61st Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Responsible Thing to Do

If a man steals an ox or a sheep
And slaughters it or sells it; it he does not keep
He shall restore five oxen for an ox
And four sheep for a sheep

If the thief is found breaking in
And he is struck so that he dies
There shall be no guilt for his bloodshed
His penalty is the spot where he lies

If the sun has risen on him
There shall be guilt for his bloodshed
He should make full restitution
If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft instead

If the theft is certainly found alive in his hand
Whether it is an ox or donkey or sheep
He shall restore double
Even if this penalty sounds kind of steep

If a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed
And his animal he lets loose
And it feeds in another man's field
Which was not for his personal use

He shall make restitution from the best
Of his own personal field
And the best of his own vineyard
This to the one wronged he shall yield

If fire breaks out and catches in thorns
So that stacked grain, standing grain, or the field is consumed
He who kindled the fire shall surely make restitution
For the losses which the owner assumed

If a man delivers to his neighbor
Money or articles to keep, and along comes trouble
And it is stolen out of the man's house
If the thief is found, he shall pay double

If the thief is not found
Then the master of the house, you shall understand
Shall be brought to the judges
To see whether he has into his neighbor's goods put his hand

For any kind of trespass
Whether it concerns an ox, a donkey, a sheep, or clothes
Or for any kind of lost thing
Which another claims to be his, but for sure no one knows

The cause of both parties
Shall come before the judges
And whomever the judges condemn
Shall pay double to his neighbor, despite his grumps and grudges

If a man delivers to his neighbor a donkey
An ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep
And it dies, is hurt, or driven away
No one seeing it and no one makes a peep

Then an oath of the Lord shall be between them both
That he has not put his hand into his neighbor's stuff
And the owner of it shall accept that
And he shall not make it good; the oath is enough

But if, in fact, it is stolen from him, to you I submit
He shall make restitution to the owner of it

If it is torn to pieces by a beast
Then he shall bring it as evidence
And he shall not make good what was torn
It falls under the hand of Providence

And if a man borrows anything from his neighbor
And it becomes injured or dies
The owner of it not being with it
He shall surely make it good; this I do apprise

If its owner was with it, he shall not make it good
If it was hired, it came for its hire – this is understood

Thank You O God for watching over us
And for caring about even the small things we face
Thank you above all for sending Jesus
And for His overwhelmingly abundant grace

For this law which we have time and time again failed
To His cross our failings have forever been nailed

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 22:16-31 (THAT WHICH IS MORALLY RIGHT)

In analyzing passages of the Bible, it's often hard to see the context in how things are put together. The verses we'll look at today appear to be general and without any seeming order at all. In fact, this is so much the case that the great Bible scholar of the past, Charles Ellicott notes this about them –

“The remainder of the chapter contains laws which it is impossible to bring under any general head or heads, and which can, therefore, only be regarded as miscellaneous. Moses may have recorded them in the order in which they were delivered to him; or have committed them to writing as they afterwards occurred to his memory.” Charles Ellicott

Though it is true that they seem random and miscellaneous, they are not. There is nothing arbitrary about them and they weren't haphazardly written down as they came back to Moses' memory. Proof of this came to me on the 30th of January 2013 as I was reading the passage. From verse 22:28 through to 23:13, a chiasm is formed, thus showing intent and purpose.

I will include and explain the chiasm now and then hopefully remember to do so again next week as we look at those verses of chapter 23 which complete the chiasm. If these verses are so structured, then all of the verses we look at likewise have purposeful order. There may be another chiasm which spans the rest of the verses as well which I just never found.

Exodus 22:28-23:13 – Help your enemy if his donkey/ox is in trouble
“Love your neighbor as yourself” (01/30/13)

- a. 22:28 shall not revile God
- b. 22:30 oxen and your sheep shall be with its mother seven days
- c. 22:31 “you shall not eat meat torn by beasts in the field”
- d. 23:1 “You shall not circulate a false report.”
- e. 23:3 not to show partiality to a poor man in his dispute.
 - x. 23:4 enemy's ox or donkey going astray, help him
 - x. 23:5 donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, help him
- e. 23:6 not to pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute.
- d. 23:7 “Keep yourself far from a false matter;”

- c. 23:11 “and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat.”
- b. 23:12 rest on seventh day, so ox and donkey may rest
- a. 23:13 no mention of the name of other gods

Text Verse: *“Oh, how I love Your law!*

It is my meditation all the day.” Psalm 119:97

Today’s passage contains a ton of details. So many so, that if you try to remember them all, you’ll leave here mentally exhausted. Instead of trying to take everything in, simply sit back and enjoy the sermon. Each thing you hear, whether you remember it or not, will help you to piece together some other part of the Bible as you read it.

Just like the chiasm which jumped out of the pages at me one morning three years ago, things will be enlightened to you, a little bit at a time because you have a sound base of knowledge to build on. And so let’s get into these verses today and enjoy all that comes at us from this superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Offenses Against God (verses 16-20)

Verses 16-20 may seem disconnected, but each actually defines an offense against God. The first is indirectly so because when a man defiles another man’s daughter who is not betrothed, he is acting against the established authority within her house. As the representative of the Lord to his family, it is an indirect attack against the Lord.

The next concerns a sorceress, someone who is attempting to usurp God’s authority in several distinct ways. After that is the perverse act of bestiality. As man is created in God’s image, it is a defilement of that and thus an offense against God. And finally is the act of sacrificing to any god except the Lord. It is an offense against the One true God, Yehovah.

¹⁶ **“If a man entices a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her,**

The following two verses are called by Adam Clarke “an exceedingly wise and humane law.” He is correct because a defiled woman would often have been looked at in a much less favorable light in consideration for marriage.

Such would have been the case in earlier American history, but as time has gone by, for the most part morality has continued downwards and the thought of marrying an undefiled woman is seen as an anachronism. In fact, marriage itself is no longer considered of any importance to the majority of people out there.

But in Israel's early history it was considered right that a woman would remain a virgin until she was married. Her virginity, however, was not only a valuable moral commodity, but a valuable civil one as well. This is because of the custom of the bride-price.

Because of this practice, a man enticing a virgin to sleep with him was to be taken as a direct attack upon a precious family possession. Such an unmarried daughter would be counted as the father's property. The loss of her virginity would mean her value to him would be reduced.

The word for "entice" here is *pathah*, it means to lure or entice someone to do something. This is its second use in the Bible, but the first time it is used in this way. The only other time it has been seen was in Genesis 9:27 where it is translated as "enlarge." This enticement might be by subtle persuasions – being a Don Juan and alluring her to do what she shouldn't do, for promises of marriage, or for some type of reward or payment, but not specifically as a prostitute.

The word for "virgin" means exactly that. It is *bethulah* and it is the second time it is seen in Scripture. The first time was when referring to Rebekah in Genesis 24:16. The verse qualifies her state though. Not only is she a *bethulah*, but she is also "not betrothed."

The reason why this qualifier is used here is because if she were, then a different outcome would be the result of what happens. This word for "betrothed" is *aras*, and is properly translated. It means to "espouse." It is the first of 11 times it will be used in the OT.

As an interesting spiritual picture, both the word for "entice" and the word for "betroth" are used in Hosea Chapter 2 concerning the Lord's relationship with Israel. However, Hosea is quoted by both Paul concerning the church, and Peter concerning Israel, in the New Testament, and so the spiritual application is rather complex and requires careful study to fully understand.

However, in the case of such a virgin of Israel, should this type of thing come about, there was to be a penalty for what occurred...

¹⁶ (con't) **he shall surely pay the bride-price for her to be his wife.**

The words for “surely pay the bride price” are *mahor yimharenah* – “endowing, he shall surely endow the bride price.” It is the same verb, *mahar*, repeated twice, and these are the only two times the word is used in the Bible.

Mahar is derived from the noun *mohar*, which is itself a rare word in Scripture. Once it was used to refer to the bride price for Dinah, the daughter of Jacob; once it will be used in this account in verse 17; and the final time is when David is asked to pay a bride price of 200 foreskins of Israel’s enemies to King Saul for the price of his daughter Michal in 1 Samuel 18:25.

It is important to know that quite a few translations here use the word “dowry” instead of “bride-price.” This is incorrect. It is not a dowry. A dowry is a transfer of the parent’s property upon the marriage of their daughter. A bride-price, on the other hand, is payment made by the groom, or the groom’s family, to the parents of the bride.

In essence, the dowry is some type of wealth passed from the family of the bride to the groom or the groom’s family, ostensibly for the care of the bride. This bride-price though is an amount settled on for the marriage of the bride by the parents of the bride.

This is one reason why the virginity of the daughter was so important. The father had raised her and it was his work and effort which paid for her as she grew. Therefore, she is considered his investment. For a guy to do this, it could then deprive him of this repayment of his efforts by reducing or eliminating her value.

Consequently, he had a right to claim compensation and the enticer was required to pay a sufficient amount to make the matter right. The bride-price was set by the father. He could set it low if she weren’t a treat to the eyes, or he could set it high if he knew that all the guys in town were after her. The interesting account of Saul and David shows us this –

“”And Saul commanded his servants, “Communicate with David secretly, and say, ‘Look, the king has delight in you, and all his servants love you. Now therefore, become the king’s son-in-law.’”

²³ So Saul’s servants spoke those words in the hearing of David. And David said, “Does it seem to you *a light thing* to be a king’s son-in-law, seeing I *am* a poor and lightly esteemed man?” ²⁴ And the servants of Saul told him, saying, “In this manner David spoke.”

²⁵ Then Saul said, “Thus you shall say to David: ‘The king does not desire any dowry but one hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to take vengeance on the king’s enemies.’” But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. ²⁶ So when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to become the king’s son-in-law. Now the days had not expired; ²⁷ therefore David arose and went, he and his men, and killed two hundred men of the Philistines. And David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full count to the king, that he might become the king’s son-in-law. Then Saul gave him Michal his daughter as a wife.”” 1 Samuel 18:22-27

As can be seen from this, the father set the bride price. In the case of Saul, he had hoped that the challenge of killing 200 Philistines would be too much and David would die in the process, but David prevailed and also got the girl.

In the case here however, the father is given two different options. If he is ok with what has happened and is the forgiving sort, he can demand the bride price from the enticer and allow him to marry her. This is seen in Deuteronomy 22 –

“If a man finds a young woman *who is* a virgin, who is not betrothed, and he seizes her and lies with her, and they are found out, ²⁹ then the man who lay with her shall give to the young woman’s father fifty *shekels* of silver, and she shall be his wife because he has humbled her; he shall not be permitted to divorce her all his days.” Deuteronomy 22:28, 29

This amount, fifty shekels, was the highest amount required for the consecration vow of a person in Leviticus 27. Fifty shekels were set for a man in the prime of his life, between 20 and 60 years of age. In other words, this act of the enticer was noted as an exceptionally grievous offense. The working years of the father were, in essence, stolen from him.

In addition to paying this exceptional amount, the enticer was obligated to remain married to the woman for his entire life. The protections for the woman were especially strong in the Israelite society. However, there was another possibility...

¹⁷ If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money according to the bride-price of virgins.

im maen y'maen – “If in refusing, he refuses.” It could be that the father simply did not want this guy, this loser who had defiled his daughter, to be his daughter’s husband. In this case, he could still demand the fifty shekels and the enticer would get nothing. The word for “pay” is *shaqal*. This is its second use in Scripture and it indicates “to weigh.” In this case, he was to “weigh out” the entire bride-price of fifty shekels. If she were a beauty, the father may be able to secure another bride price off of her and she would be set with a husband.

If she weren’t so lovely and she were also not a virgin, it could be that she would never get married and so the money would be sufficient to take care of her as an unmarried woman in her father’s house. Or, as a third option, some or all of the money could be used by the father to entice someone to marry her. Maybe she was his only child and he longed for a grandchild.

No matter which, the payment of the bride-price legally reinstated her status as a virgin in the house and from then as a legally divorced woman, not bearing any reproach. Also, I mentioned earlier that the term “virgin” is qualified by the term “not betrothed.” The importance of this is that if she were betrothed to another man, then a different outcome would result –

“If a young woman *who is* a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, ²⁴ then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbor’s wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you.”

-Deuteronomy 22:23, 24

Although this may sound harsh against the woman, it is not. If this occurred in the city and she didn’t cry out, then it is obvious that she was a participant in the action which was a crime against her fiancé and her family. As a protection for a woman who was raped, Deuteronomy 22 goes on –

“But if a man finds a betrothed young woman in the countryside, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die. ²⁶ But you shall do nothing to the young woman; *there is* in the young woman no sin *deserving* of death, for just as when a man rises against his neighbor and kills him, even so *is* this matter. ²⁷ For he found her in the countryside, *and* the

betrothed young woman cried out, but *there was* no one to save her.”

-Deuteronomy 22:24-27

As we can see by this account and its more detailed explanation found in Deuteronomy, the actions of Joseph, the betrothed of Mary, were exceptionally pious –

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.”

-Matthew 1:18, 19

Even before learning the truth of what happened with Mary, he was willing to put her away secretly rather than having her stoned for what he thought was an act of adultery. Finally, concerning the loss of morality in the world over the years, Charles Ellicott looks to verses 16 and 17 and says –

“It might be well if modern societies would imitate the Mosaic code on this point by some similar proviso.” Ellicott

He is right. If such a proviso and system existed and was adhered to, it would surely improve the morality within the society. Unfortunately, we have gone too far into the world of depravity to probably ever recover from the pit we are in.

¹⁸ **“You shall not permit a sorceress to live.**

The word for sorceress is *kashaph*. It means “to practice sorcery,” but it is in the feminine singular and so it refers to a female who practices sorcery; a witch. Different opinions as to why women are singled out have been given.

Two reasons that seem sound are that culturally witchcraft was something more often practiced by women, thus the feminine is given to represent the class. Secondly, it was to show that no pity was to be given to such an offender, even if they were of the weaker sex.

In considering this verse, it doesn’t make any distinction as to whether the witchcraft was real or a sham. Anyone who claimed such abilities was not to be allowed to live.

This was because such practices seduced people away from their allegiance to God and His judgments.

It also involved matters of the future, which is something belonging to God alone. By claiming knowledge of the future, it was claiming to be, as it were, equal to God. In Leviticus 20, this is expanded on to include men –

“A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood *shall be* upon them.”
-Leviticus 20:27

In 1 Samuel 28, almost the entire chapter is written about King Saul’s going to the witch of En Dor to call up the spirit of Samuel the Prophet. It is an exciting account and the text clearly shows that she did raise Samuel’s spirit which then conversed with Saul. If you remember the TV show Bewitched, the mother’s name was Endora, having come from that very account in the Bible.

¹⁹ “Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death.

This is further explained in Leviticus 18 –

“Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It *is* perversion.²⁴ ‘Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you.’ Leviticus 18:23, 24

Bestiality is contrary to nature and is perverse. However, Israel had left Egypt where it was believed to have been practiced and they were heading to Canaan where it was a custom of the people. And so to ensure that they knew this was unacceptable to God, they are told this now. The penalty for a person practicing this perversion was *mowt yumat* – dying, he shall die.

²⁰ “He who sacrifices to *any* god, except to the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed.

This verse is only an initial verse which will be built upon in the law. Sacrifice, in this case, is noted, but it will eventually encompass any type of worship, including false prophecies and so on. In these words is the first use of the verb *kharam* in the Bible. It, and the associated noun *kherem*, is an especially important tenet of doctrine. It means “accursed” or “anathematized.” It signifies a complete withdrawal from the Lord

and perverting to the exact opposite. Keil says he shall be “put to death, and by death devoted to the Lord, to whom he would not devote himself in life.” John Lange gives even more insight by saying that –

“It may be that a sort of irony lies in the notion of the hherem; as being consecration reversed, it secures to God the glory belonging to Him alone; but it does this also as being consecration to the judging God in His judgment.” John Lange

Such a person was to be wholly devoted as a ban offering to God and there could be no possibility of redemption for him. For a classic example of this type of penalty, you can read the account of Achan which is found in Joshua 7. Paul uses the same concept to explain the severity of polluting the Gospel message of Christ in Galatians 1 –

“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” Galatians 1:6-9

To pervert the gospel requires the most severe curse because it is the only message which can bring man back to the very God who requires our wholehearted obedience and affection.

*O God, we have offended You in so many ways
We have defiled ourselves in Your sight
And we have continued on for countless days
Who can purify us and make us right?*

*We have knocked on wood and read the horoscope
We have had our palms read and used the Ouija board
We have proved unworthy, each and every one a dope
Surely we are deserving of Your swift and sharpened sword*

*We have done that which is perverse and called it good
And have become ourselves an unclean thing*

*We deserve Your wrath, this is understood
But instead You sent us Jesus, us to Yourself to bring
For this marvelous mercy let our voices ring
And for this wondrous grace, to You praises we shall ever sing*

II. Offences Against Humanity (verses 21-27)

²¹ “You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

This verse follows logically after the last one. Although it was an accursed offense to follow after foreign gods, it was an admonition of the Lord to not mistreat nor oppress a stranger, meaning a foreigner. Obviously if they were foreigners, then they would not know the Lord.

By mistreating them, they would never come to know the Lord. Further, they were to remember this because of their own past, having come out of Egypt, which is subtly explained in the words chosen. The Hebrew word for “mistreat” is *yanah*. This is its first use in Scripture. But the word for “oppress” is *lakhats*. This was first used in Exodus 3:9–

“Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.”

Israel was oppressed and the Lord delivered them. There was no reason for them to assume that they wouldn’t receive His judgment for acting in the same manner towards foreigners among them.

²² “You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child.

Other than Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Judah who bore his child, widows have not been mentioned in Scripture. And this verse introduces *yathom*, or orphans into the pages of the Bible as well. Both the widow and the orphan have a special place in the Lord’s heart.

They, along with the foreigner, were not to be abused or taken advantage of. Instead, in several passages, they are later commanded to actively bless them and care for them. And rather than giving the penalty for such mistreatment to the people, who could all

become numbed to their plight in times of moral decay or famine in the land, the Lord reserved the judgment for such infractions for Himself...

²³ If you afflict them in any way, *and* they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry;

There is an emphasis in the Hebrew which isn't evident in our translations. There is a three-fold set of repetitions of words. *im anneh t'anneh otow ki im tsaq ytsaq elay shamo' eshma saaqatow* – "if afflicting you afflict them in any way and crying they cry unto Me, hearing I will hear their cry."

The emphasis is certainly given to show the severity of the offense and the surety of His hearing their cries. Should this become standard in the land, there would be strict judgment for the abuse...

²⁴ and My wrath will become hot, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

The penalty from the Lord for such treatment is that they would in turn be killed so that their own wives and children would then be susceptible to the same treatment that they had wrongfully meted out themselves.

The mistreatment of these three classes obviously became commonplace in Israel's history. By the time of Jeremiah, he actively called out on several occasions for the ending of such treatment. One example is found in Jeremiah 7 –

"For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, ⁶ if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt, ⁷ then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever." Jeremiah 7:5-7

Jeremiah repeats the admonition later, and Ezekiel uses similar words against them, explaining the sins of Jerusalem and thus the reason for their punishment. Even to the last book of the Old Testament, the Lord was still warning the people concerning this –

""And I will come near you for judgment;
I will be a swift witness
Against sorcerers,
Against adulterers,

Against perjurers,
Against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans,
And against those who turn away an alien—
Because they do not fear Me,”
Says the Lord of hosts.

⁶“For I *am* the Lord, I do not change;
Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.

⁷Yet from the days of your fathers
You have gone away from My ordinances
And have not kept *them*.

Return to Me, and I will return to you,”
Says the Lord of hosts.

“But you said,
‘In what way shall we return?’” Malachi 3:5-7

²⁵ “If you lend money to *any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; you shall not charge him interest.*

The poor, or *ani*, are introduced into the Bible at this time, but the fact that there is a word to describe them indicates that the poor already existed. Later in the law and by the mouth of Jesus, we will learn that the poor will always be among us. In the case of Israel dealing with poor Israelites, they were not to act as moneylenders by becoming their creditors.

This also is a new concept to the Bible – the *nashah* or creditor. For any Israelite who was poor, money could be lent to them, but without *neshek* or interest, another term new to Scripture. All of these had to have existed, but the Lord is forbidding the practice among their own people. This noun *neshek* or interest comes from the verb *nashak* which means “to bite.”

If one were to charge interest from a poor person, it would be as if allowing a serpent to bite him. Matters for the poor man would only get worse, not better. And so the Lord forbids it.

²⁶ If you ever take your neighbor’s garment as a pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down.

The concept of taking a pledge, comparable to what modern pawn brokers do, was not unknown to Israelite society, but there were restrictions such as this one. The word for “pledge” is *khabal* which is a verb meaning “to bind.” A pledge then is seen as something which binds someone.

If the pledge were their garment, it then implied that this was all they had worth pawning. Because of this, it was to be returned out of compassion for the poor person who had nothing else. And the reason is next explicitly given...

²⁷ For that *is* his only covering, it *is* his garment for his skin. What will he sleep in?

If someone had to pawn their cloak, then they were truly destitute. When the day was ending and the sun was going down, it would get cold. In the case of a poor person, their garment would be used at night as their covering.

Without having the pledge returned, the obvious question then is, “What will he sleep in?” It would be unjust in the extreme to allow him to suffer at night because of a pledge which would otherwise sit unused, serving no purpose at all. Each day the cloak would be returned to the creditor as a sign of the pledge, but if it was withheld at night, it would be a wonton act of cruelty.

²⁷ (con’t) And it will be that when he cries to Me, I will hear, for I *am* gracious.

Should someone so mistreat their own neighbor in such a vile way, it is certain that the person would lay in unease throughout the night and cry out to the Lord in their misfortune. In his cries, the Lord promises that He will hear. What is implied but unstated is that when the Lord hears, he will also judge and act.

And the reason is *ki khannun ani* – “for gracious I am.” This is the first time that the adjective *khannun* or gracious is used in the Bible, and all 13 times it is used, it is ascribed to either God or the Lord. It is one of His personal attributes. Therefore, to be ungracious to one’s neighbor was to shun one of the very attributes of the Lord and to set oneself up in opposition to Him.

The Lord expected mercy. If it was withheld, judgment was due. Two important verses on this concept are found in Matthew and James –

“Blessed *are* the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.” Matthew 5:7

“For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.” James 2:13

*Lord, give us hearts that will have compassion
Help us to be right with our fellow man
Let it not be just a temporary, short-lived fashion
But instill in us the desire to do the best we can*

*When a neighbor needs our helping hand
Grant us the sense to reach out and offer it freely
Keep us from tying in some personal demand
When you look on our hearts, we pray you see only purity*

*Let our tender mercies to others be acceptable in your sight
And may we forever strive to be pleasing to You
Help us to be charitable to our neighbor, always living right
Let these, O Lord, be the things that we are inclined to do*

III. Honoring the Lord (verses 28-31)

²⁸ **“You shall not revile God,**

elohim lo t’qallel – These words are translated in several ways. “You shall not revile God.” “You shall not revile the gods.” Or, “You shall not revile the judges.” The word *elohim* can mean any, but “the gods” makes no sense. There is one God and all other gods are false and *are* to be reviled.

If it is “judges” then the next clause might not seem needed, and so that is probably incorrect. Rather, this is speaking of God who is, “the fountain of justice and power” (Clarke). This then leads naturally to the second half of the verse...

^{28 (con’t)} **nor curse a ruler of your people.**

The rulers of the people of Israel derived their authority from God and therefore to curse him was to lay a curse upon the Lord who established the ruler of the people. This part of verse 28 is actually cited by Paul in Acts 23:5 during a trial with the ruling council where he notes the high priest as a ruler of the people.

The entire verse in substance is repeated several times in Scripture and in both testaments where honoring the Lord and honoring a ruler of the people are tied hand in hand. In all, verses 20-28 are summed up by the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 2:17 –

“Honor all *people*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.”

²⁹ **“You shall not delay to offer the first of your ripe produce and your juices.**

This verse is an idiomatic phrase in Hebrew which wouldn’t be understood if literally translated. It actually and quite beautifully says, “Your fullness and your trickling you shall not delay.” The imagery is alive and active in the Hebrew.

The “fullness” is the word *meleah* which means the first of ripe fruit. This is the first of only eight times it will be used in the Bible. It is the first of any grain or produce which the land puts forth and is harvested.

The “trickling” is *dema* and this is its only use in the Bible. It means “vintage” and come from the word *dama* which means “a tear” or “weep.” It then “is a poetical epithet for the produce of the press, both wine and oil” (Keil). As fruits are pressed, they then weep out their vintage.

The first of all of these were to be gathered and made ready. Without delay, they were then to present them as the law will later detail. To delay in offering them would, as these things go, turn into total neglect of presenting them. As Clarke says about this precept –

“This offering was a public acknowledgment of the bounty and goodness of God, who had given them their proper seed time, the first and the latter rain, and the appointed weeks of harvest.” Adam Clarke

Because of the beauty of the passage, please take the time today to read the accompanying ritual that goes along with this command we are looking at. It is found in Deuteronomy 26:1-11.

²⁹ (con’t) **The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me.**

The firstborn of the sons of Israel were likewise to be given to God. Their consecration was mandated in Exodus 13 and it is repeated here with the words that they are not to delay in this consecration. The consecration for Jesus is recorded in Luke 2 –

Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present *Him* to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”), ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.” Luke 2:22-24

³⁰ Likewise you shall do with your oxen *and* your sheep. It shall be with its mother seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me.

Unlike a person that was to be redeemed, a firstborn animal remained the property of the Lord and was to be sacrificed to Him. The term “oxen” is incorrect. It should be “cattle.” All oxen and cows fall under the term “cattle,” but not all cattle are oxen and cows.

Oxen are working animals, whereas cows are females kept for milk, meat, or breeding. Both however are being referred to here. The firstborn male of such an animal was to be with its mother seven days. The reason for the seven days is debated, but two good reasons are noted.

The first is for the comfort of the mother which needed relief by suckling its offspring. The second is impurity involved in the birthing process. For these, or for whatever other reason, the animal was to be with its mother until the seventh day and then it was to be given to the Lord.

³¹ “And you shall be holy men to Me:

This thought sums up the entire passage in one succinct thought. It was first given to Israel in Exodus 19 –

“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine. ⁶ And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

-Exodus 19:5, 6

With their own voices, they had accepted the covenant with the Lord and had obligated themselves to the law which he is now giving. This holiness necessitated outward rituals, but these outward things could not make a person either pleasing to God or inwardly holy.

However, in order to keep the need for inward purity always before their minds, they were given these outward rituals. By having them, the intent was to lead them to live in an inwardly holy manner as well. Going on, a thought which is tied into this holiness, that of Israel's dietary restrictions, is given...

^{31 (con't)} **you shall not eat meat torn *by beasts* in the field;**

The eating of meat which was torn by beasts was forbidden for two reasons. The first is that it had not been properly bled, making it unclean. Secondly, the beast which tore the animal would have been an unclean animal and thus passed on ceremonial defilement. Hence, there was defilement in both ways.

Eating such meat, however, was not some sort of unpardonable sin. In Leviticus 17, instructions were given which supplement this early prohibition in Exodus –

“And every person who eats what died *naturally* or what was torn *by beasts, whether he is* a native of your own country or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. Then he shall be clean. ¹⁶ But if he does not wash *them* or bathe his body, then he shall bear his guilt.” Leviticus 17:15, 16

Therefore, it cannot be that eating the meat in and of itself makes one unclean. It was already inside their body! Rather, the external washing signified the internal knowledge that they had transgressed the Lord's commandment. It is, as always, the intent of the heart which is being evaluated.

^{31 (fin)} **you shall throw it to the dogs.**

Again, like the previous words, this is further explained in Deuteronomy 14 –

“You shall not eat anything that dies *of itself*; you may give it to the alien who *is* within your gates, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner; for you *are* a holy people to the Lord your God.” Deuteronomy 14:21

The idea of throwing the carcass to the dogs was to show that the flesh was to be abhorred by the people. Again, it was an outward demonstration of inward purity. If there was a foreigner around, it could be passed on to them – the term dog is not unknown as a metaphor for aliens. Or, it could also be given to literal dogs.

As we conclude, we should look back at the three major sections of today's verses, Offenses Against God, Offenses Against Humanity, and Honoring the Lord. All of these require more than just external acts in order to be complete. They also require inward purity.

But we, by our very nature lack this. It takes real effort to keep our hearts on doing what is right and our minds free from defilement. It is so easy to dismiss reading a horoscope as being just a fun thing to do. It is so easy to buy a new car or a house and then to forget about thanking the Lord for it and asking Him to bless it.

And how many times have we given our attention to false gods at one time or another in our lives – money, sex, addictions. But there is an answer for each of these failings. It is Jesus. He came and perfectly fulfilled all of these precepts in the law, and now we are admonished to fix our eyes on Him.

In so doing, we will always have the perfect example of how to conduct our lives towards God and towards our fellow man. Let each of us rededicate ourselves to Him today and for those who have never taken the first step of receiving Him, today would be a great day to do so...

Closing Verse: *“Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith...” 1 Timothy 1:5*

Next Week: Exodus 23:1-9 *Important instructions for me and you (Justice, Justice You Shall Do) (62nd Exodus Sermon)*

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Acting in a Moral Manner

If a man entices a virgin who is not betrothed
And lies with her
He shall surely pay the bride-price
For her to be his wife, yes – he shall do it for sure

If her father utterly refuses to give her to him
Being sure that for his daughter he is not so nice
He shall pay money
According to the virgin's bride-price

You shall not permit a sorceress to live
No mercy to that one shall you give

Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death
Whether his name is Sam or her name is Beth

He who sacrifices to any god
Except to the Lord only
He shall be utterly destroyed
This command comes directly from Me

You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor him oppress
For you were strangers in the land of Egypt, your land of duress

You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child
If you afflict them in any way
And they cry at all to Me with cries so wild
I will surely hear their cry, this to you I say

And My wrath will become hot
And I will kill you with the sword;
Your wives shall be widows, such will be their lot
And your children fatherless; such is My word

If you lend money to any of My people
Who are poor among you
You shall not be like a moneylender to him
You shall not charge him interest; such you shall not do

If you ever take as a pledge your neighbor's garment or gown
You shall return it to him before the sun goes down

For that is his only covering
It is his garment for his skin

If you take that
Then what will he sleep in?

And it will be that when he cries to Me
I will hear, for I am gracious, you see

You shall not revile God, nor a ruler of your people curse
Towards your leaders you shall not be terse

You shall not delay to offer
The first of your ripe produce and your juices too
The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me
These things you shall do

Likewise you shall do with your oxen and your sheep
It shall be with its mother seven days
On the eighth day you shall give it to Me; it you shall not keep
You are to be obedient in these ways

And you shall be holy men to Me
You shall not eat meat torn by beasts in the field
You shall throw it to the dogs
To any temptation to eating them, you shall not yield

These precepts from the Old Testament are a mirror
They show us how far away from Your glory we truly are
But Hallelujah! You have taken away the terror
Through Christ, You have removed every stain and mar

O God, help us to live by Your law, that which honors You
The covenant sealed in the blood of Jesus
Help us to remain steadfast and true
Yes grant this favor to each one of us

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 23:1-9

(JUSTICE, JUSTICE YOU SHALL DO)

In the Gentile-led New Testament church, the words of Paul are our marching orders. They are where we are to get our doctrine and they are what we need to know in order to live rightly in this dispensation of time; the dispensation of grace.

The utter confusion of people concerning simple precepts like salvation by grace through faith without adding in works, eternal salvation, and the law being set aside in Christ are almost foreign to the multitudes who sit in churches around the world.

By understanding that Paul is where our doctrine comes from, we can then rightly know how to conduct ourselves at the point we are at now in redemptive history. Having said that, this doesn't mean that we can't learn anything from the law. Rather, the law shows us many wonderful precepts that we probably should follow.

Being in Christ means that we won't be judged for not doing these things. Yes, the law is set aside in Christ. But they are still things which hold value for society and for our interactions with others. Today's verses are literally filled with common sense items which, if adhered to, would alleviate many of the problems of our society.

Unfortunately, these precepts are all but ignored, especially by the people who need them most. The land is full of folks who either practice those things that they shouldn't, or who fail to practice those things that they should.

These are matters of social and societal justice that we should do simply because they are the right thing to do. It is as if we have a debt to pay when confronted with them. So let's pay what we owe for the sake of love...

Text Verse: *"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law." Romans 13:8*

As we go through these nine verses today, just ask yourself, "Is doing this thing that the people are being asked to do, or not to do, loving?" If it is, then do it – not for the sake of meriting God's favor through deeds of the law, but for the sake of simply being the loving person Christ has called you to be.

This is the kind of common sense approach to the Bible that we need to hold fast to. If we say, “The law says” and then insist that everyone either does this “or else,” we’re being legalistic about a matter which has already been settled in Christ.

But if we say to ourselves, “This really is the right thing to do” and then we don’t do it, who are we hurting? The answer is pretty much everyone who is involved in the matter, including ourselves and our relationship with the Lord.

Let us act responsibly in our dealing with others. From time to time repeat the words “Justice, Justice you shall do.” I’ve been doing it for years and I’ve found that when I come to a situation that is tempting to me to do wrong in, those words pop right into my head and it prevents me from going any further.

God is the God of justice; being just is His very nature. And so let’s always attempt to imitate our glorious Creator by acting like Him. To define what it means to be just, we need to read His word where His justice is on prominent display. Yes, it’s all to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Refrain from Evil (verses 1-3)

As I showed last week, and as I’ll remind you now, a chiasm spans the verses from 22:28-23:13. In chapter 22, Charles Ellicott stated –

“The remainder of the chapter contains laws which it is impossible to bring under any general head or heads, and which can, therefore, only be regarded as miscellaneous. Moses may have recorded them in the order in which they were delivered to him; or have committed them to writing as they afterwards occurred to his memory.” Charles Ellicott

At the beginning of his notes for Chapter 23, he continues with this same type of thinking –

“From Exodus 23:1 to Exodus 23:9 no kind of sequence in the laws can be traced; from Exodus 23:10 to the first clause of Exodus 23:19 there is, on the contrary, a certain connection, since the laws enunciated are concerned with ceremonial observance.” Charles Ellicott

This isn’t meant as a personal slam on Ellicott, but it does show that as God’s word is studied and built upon by scholars throughout the ages, we continuously get a better

and clearer picture of the perfection of God's word. Rather than being miscellaneous and with no sequence which can be traced, the chiasm shows beauty and harmony within these verses. They also show definite intent.

Exodus 22:28-23:13 – Help your enemy if his donkey/ox is in trouble
“Love your neighbor as yourself” (01/30/13)

- a. 22:28 shall not revile God
- b. 22:30 oxen and your sheep shall be with its mother seven days
- c. 22:31 “you shall not eat meat torn by beasts in the field”
- d. 23:1 “You shall not circulate a false report.”
- e. 23:3 not to show partiality to a poor man in his dispute.
 - x. 23:4 enemy's ox or donkey going astray, help him
 - x. 23:5 donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, help him
 - e. 23:6 not to pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute.
- d. 23:7 “Keep yourself far from a false matter;”
- c. 23:11 “and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat.”
- b. 23:12 rest on seventh day, so ox and donkey may rest
- a. 23:13 no mention of the name of other gods

And so understanding that these words are purposeful and even marvelously arranged, we begin Chapter 23 at verse 1 –

¹“You shall not circulate a false report.

In these words is found an expansion of the ninth commandment –

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” Exodus 20:16

The words here are *lo tissa shema shav* – no spread a report false. The word *tissa* means “to lift up.” And so this would literally be translated as “not take up.” In essence, we get the mental picture of picking up a false report and putting it in our mouth.

The Greek translation of this passage says “You shall not *receive* a false report.” Thus it indicates the incoming action rather than an outgoing one. In all, this one word seems to be a favorite of translators to take the opportunity for inventing a new way of explaining it. Of the translations I referred to, the following words were selected – “spread,” “pass along,” “raise,” “bear,” “give,” “utter,” “admit,” “publish,” “take up,” “receive,” “accept,” and “lift up.”

This shows the difficulty of deciding if the intent is to receive a false report or to put one out. However, Adam Clarke notes that –

“...the inventor and receiver of false and slanderous reports are almost equally criminal. The word seems to refer to either, and our translators have very properly retained both senses, putting raise in the text, and receive in the margin.” Adam Clarke

In other words, translators understand this word to indicate both receiving and putting out and so, the NKJV ingeniously uses the word “circulate” to show that it can be something coming in as well as going out. If one thinks of a mail processing machine, it receives in and it sends out. This seems to be the full intent of what is prohibited concerning the false report.

The word for “false,” or *shav*, here is used for just the third time in the Bible. The first two were in the giving of the third commandment. There it said –

“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in **vain**, for the Lord will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in **vain**.” Exodus 20:7

We are not to hold the name of the Lord our God in vain, and we are not to vainly or falsely receive and disseminate a false report. This word, *shav*, comes from another word which carries the sense of desolating. And this is exactly what results from allowing false reports to continue.

Doing so can result in the most miserable of circumstances for the one who is falsely reported. When King Ahab wanted Naboth’s vineyard, his wife Jezebel had two scoundrels falsely charge him with blasphemy. In doing so, he was taken out and stoned to death.

Adam Clarke gives a good summary of what it would be like if people didn’t carry on with such false reports –

“Were there no publishers of slander and calumny, there would be no receivers; and were there none to receive them, there would be none to raise them; and were there no raisers, receivers, nor propagators of calumny, lies, etc., society would be in peace.” Adam Clarke

But in the world we live in, this is one of the most common of offenses. This is especially so today in the world with internet. People find every reason to pass on lies, knowing

they are lies, for the simple purpose of destroying others. Internet trolls spend all of their time destroying others for no good reason at all.

But the Bible forbids this. Not only are we not to make up falsities, but we are to refrain from allowing them to pass through us. This idea of truthfulness in this manner is expanded on in Leviticus –

“You shall not go about *as* a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I *am* the Lord.” Leviticus 19:16

Penalties for such behavior are found in Scripture. One of particular note is given to protect the rights and the name of a woman who has been so maligned –

“If any man takes a wife, and goes in to her, and detests her, ¹⁴ and charges her with shameful conduct, and brings a bad name on her, and says, ‘I took this woman, and when I came to her I found she *was* not a virgin,’ ¹⁵ then the father and mother of the young woman shall take and bring out *the evidence of* the young woman’s virginity to the elders of the city at the gate. ¹⁶ And the young woman’s father shall say to the elders, ‘I gave my daughter to this man as wife, and he detests her. ¹⁷ Now he has charged her with shameful conduct, saying, “I found your daughter *was* not a virgin,” and yet these *are the evidences of* my daughter’s virginity.’ And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. ¹⁸ Then the elders of that city shall take that man and punish him; ¹⁹ and they shall fine him one hundred *shekels* of silver and give *them* to the father of the young woman, because he has brought a bad name on a virgin of Israel. And she shall be his wife; he cannot divorce her all his days.” Deuteronomy 22:13-19

In agreement with this first clause in verse 1 are the continued words found in its second clause –

¹ (con’t) **Do not put your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.**

Both clauses complement each other in intent. To put one’s hand with means “to join hands with.” In other words, it’s like making a pact where a person puts out his hand and the others put theirs together with him in agreement, like in a football huddle.

Some translations say “cooperate” or “join forces with.” Israel was told to not make such alliances with the wicked who would be untruthful in their testimony. Obviously

what occurred in poor Naboth's case shows the severity of this. He lost his life simply because two people falsely accused him.

The proverbs deal with this issue as well. There it shows that by making such an alliance, punishment is what will be expected –

*“Though they join forces, the wicked will not go unpunished;
But the posterity of the righteous will be delivered.”* Proverbs 11:21

As the Lord is the ultimate judge of all such things, even if a false witness isn't caught in this life, he will receive his just punishment in the next. For the Christian who acts in this way, there will certainly be a loss of rewards at the bema seat of Christ.

In both clauses of this first verse of the chapter, the ninth commandment goes from the key point of the law to practical applications of it. Thus the Lord is further defining the intent of those majestic words *lo taaneh bere-akha ed shaqer* – You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

²You shall not follow a crowd to do evil;

This clause of verse 2 can be taken in one of two ways. Both are sound and both apply as much today in principle as they did when they were penned. To “follow a crowd to do evil” means to join in with a crowd who is bent on evil because their popular voice.

The Latin phrase *vox populi vox Dei*, or the voice of the people is the voice of God, is often held to as being a reasonable way of handling disputed matters. However, it is a wholly inappropriate way of evaluating moral issues.

This concept translates into the modern thinking of “where morals come from.” Apart from the truth, which is that morals are derived from God, some believe that they are based on government standards. This is where we are today with the progressive democrat movement. To them, government sets morality.

Some say they should stem from personal mores. This would reflect the views of humanists who have decided that personal feelings dictate morals. Some say that morals come from social convention, and thus each society develops its morals as they grow and develop.

Others hold steadfastly to morals being derived from herd instinct. This would be those in the Baltimore and Ferguson riots and in the Occupy movement. They believe that the herd is the proper moral initiator and the one to continue refining their morals.

This is the idea of this verse. According to this law, where the crowd goes, if it is bent on evil, it is not to be followed. There are examples of the faithful in Scripture who refused to follow the herd. Job said –

“Have I feared the crowd or the contempt of the masses, so that I kept quiet and stayed indoors?” Job 31:34 (NLT)

Jesus taught specifically on this precept when He said these words for us to consider –

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴ Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

-Matthew 7:13, 14

Joseph Benson most eloquently states his view on this –

“We must inquire what we *ought* to do, not what the *most* do; because we must be judged by our Master, not our fellow-servants; and it is too great a compliment to be willing to go to hell for company.” Joseph Benson

What we are looking at in this verse is perfectly seen in the modern church and the homosexual movement. The crowd has gone down this unholy and immoral path and the multitudes of sheeple have followed along it as well. They have failed to realize that what is *legal* is not necessarily *moral*. They have followed the crowd and are headed to destruction.

As I said though, there is another view of these words which is equally proper. Instead of saying, “You shall not follow a crowd to do evil,” some scholars translate the word *rabbim* as “great men” instead of “crowd.” It can mean either, and this is a most common thing for people to do.

We see political leaders, rich people, or famous folks who are bent on pursuing evil. Our current president is the epitome of this, and yet people put in their hand with him to do evil possibly beyond anything that even Hitler or Stalin could have even imagined.

We are asked to not follow Arnold Schwarzenegger into the global warming debate just because he is wealthy and popular. We are to refrain from acting in agreement with the devil and his followers simply because they are supposedly great because of their position, possessions, or prominence. Job understood this –

“Great men are not *always* wise,
Nor do the aged *always* understand justice.” Job 32:9

² (con’t) **nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert *justice*.**

Again, the word *rabbim* is used in these words and so it can mean either turning aside after many, or it can mean turning aside after great men. Either way, the idea is that justice is to be given by each of us in a dispute. Justice, justice you shall do.

We are not to turn from the truth whether it is the popular thing to do, or whether it will benefit us because a great man has already falsely testified and we could curry his favor or be saved from the power of his wrath.

The Pulpit Commentary even aligns these words with a panel of judges by saying, “...if thou art one of the judges, though shalt not simply go with the majority if it is bent on injustice, but form thine own opinion and adhere to it.”

Unfortunately, the judgment of judges has increasingly been found lacking in this precept. The reason for it is, of course the declining morals of our leaders. The left has done everything possible to destroy the moral underpinnings of our society even unto the point where the words of Job 9 ring true –

When a land falls into the hands of the wicked,
he blindfolds its judges. Job 9:24 (NIV)

The lessons of justice found within the law are given for the good of society and for the benefit of all within it. This goes from the greatest to the poorest of the land, and all in between...

³ **You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute.**

This verse might be a bit of a shock to us considering the deference the Bible shows to the poor and needy as well as to the widow and orphan. However, what is right is right

and justice is to be blind to the status of the individual. A poor man is never to be given a favorable, but unrighteous decision simply because he is poor.

As a brain squiggle for you, the word “poor” here is the adjective *dal*. It is the first time it is seen in Scripture. It comes from the verb *dalal* which means to dangle. By implication then a poor person dangles – he is lean, needy, and weak. Hebrew is vibrant and active in how it portrays such things.

Secondly, the word for “partiality” is *hadar*. This is the first of only seven times it will be used in the Bible. It essentially means “honor.” It is mostly used in man’s relation with man, as it is in this verse. In a comparable passage, we read this using the same word –

“You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor **honor** the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.” Leviticus 19:15

Unfortunately, our nation has diverted from this sound precept. We began to defer in this exact manner when laws started to be passed simply because of the color of one’s skin, their sex, or their economic status. Each of these carries the same idea as the simple precept of showing partiality to a poor man.

Justice is to be blind in its decisions and no judgment is to be considered for any other reason than the matter at hand. Some European countries provide greater benefits for illegal immigrants than they do for their own citizens. Such unjust laws can only further degrade the morals of a society. They can in no way make things better.

The Bible lays a framework for man to consider and to learn from. However, we as a species would rather cast the proper way off from our shoulder and carry around the heavy burden of disobedience through injustice and all the ills that result from it.

In each of these first three precepts, we have been asked to refrain from evil. God wants justice served and His people to be free from the harms that come from engaging in that which is unjust. Justice, justice you shall do.

Treat others as you would have them treat you

This is the rule to you that I speak

Give to them when they are needy, this you shall do

And strengthen them when you see that they are weak

*If one is lacking bread, would you hold back from them food?
If they are cold, give them a coat; show them compassion
Don't withhold being polite and to them act so rude
Don't hand out your help as if it is by ration*

*If you do these things, you will be living right
I will see what you have done and reward you
Nothing you do is hidden from My sight
And so justice, justice, yes justice shall you do*

II. The Law of the Donkey (verses 4 & 5)

⁴“If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again.

This verse and its application meet with a wide range of interpretations. However, if taken at face value it is rather clear. The word *oyev* or “enemy” isn’t further specified. This word is used to simply mean any enemy. The Pulpit Commentary unnecessarily finds a distinction here in who the “enemy” being referred to is. They say –

“A private enemy is here spoken of, not a public one, as in Deuteronomy 23:6.” Pulpit Commentary

The passage in Deuteronomy 23 says this –

“An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none of his *descendants* shall enter the assembly of the Lord forever, ⁴ because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. ⁵ Nevertheless the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam, but the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loves you. ⁶ You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever.” Deuteronomy 23:3-6

It could be that the Pulpit commentators were making their decision concerning public and private enemies based on the comparable passage to this verse from Deuteronomy 22 –

“You shall not see your brother’s ox or his sheep going astray, and hide yourself from them; you shall certainly bring them back to your brother. ² And if your brother *is* not near you, or if you do not know him, then you shall bring it to your own house, and it shall remain with you until your brother seeks it; then you shall restore it to him. ³ You shall do the same with his donkey, and so shall you do with his garment; with any lost thing of your brother’s, which he has lost and you have found, you shall do likewise; you must not hide yourself.” Deuteronomy 22:1-3

In these verses, it speaks of the “brother’s ox.” Thus even if the “brother,” meaning a fellow Israelite, is an enemy, you are to make sure that he gets his animal back. However, if it belongs to a Moabite or an Ammonite, they weren’t under any obligation to return it. Other scholars have come to this exact conclusion.

However, it should be noted that no distinction between a public and a private enemy is given here, and eventually both Ammonites and Moabites entered into the people of Israel. Jesus descends from both people groups.

All that is noted concerning the wayward beast is that if a person sees it going astray, and even if it belongs to an enemy – *ha’shev tshivenu* – “returning, you shall surely return it” to that person. This verse then is a germ of wisdom for us to understand Jesus’ words of Matthew 5 –

““You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so? ⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” Matthew 5:43-48

If you notice, Jesus’ words say, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’” The law never says this. It only says, “You shall love your neighbor.” Nowhere in the law does it say to hate one’s enemy.

Rabbinic tradition concluded that if one was instructed to *love* their neighbors, then obviously they were then to *hate* their enemies. However, this conclusion is *not* “obvious.” Rather, it is contradictory to the words of the verse we’re looking at. The person may, in fact, be your enemy, but you weren’t to hate him enough to deprive him of his ox or donkey. Instead, you were to return it to him. Active kindness to one’s enemy may have been repugnant to the interpreter’s of the law, but it is the only possible explanation for this verse as context demands.

The spirit and intent of the law was so far removed from urging personal revenge or harm to one’s enemies that it wouldn’t even allow neglecting a wayward beast which would then cause that person to suffer personal loss. The Geneva Bible succinctly states–

“If we are bound to do good to our enemies beast, how much more to our enemy himself.” Geneva

⁵ If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it.

The sense of this verse is plain and clear, regardless of the difficult nature of the Hebrew words and how they are ultimately translated. The reason I say this is that the word translated as “help” here is *azav* and it is used three times in this verse. It means “leave” or “forsake.”

Because of this, it takes thought to understand what is being said. But fortunately, there is also a comparable passage in Deuteronomy which helps explain what is being ordered–

“You shall not see your brother’s donkey or his ox fall down along the road, and hide yourself from them; you shall surely help him lift *them* up again.”

-Deuteronomy 22:4

Again, like before, the verse in Deuteronomy is referring to “your brother’s donkey” instead of the donkey of an enemy, but the principle remains the same. However, because an enemy is being referred to Keil explains the odd usage of the Hebrew –

“The peculiar turn given to the expression, “thou shalt cease from leaving,” is chosen because the ordinary course, which the natural man adopts, is to leave an enemy to take care of his own affairs, without troubling about either him or his difficulties. Such

conduct as this the Israelite was to give up, if he ever found his enemy in need of help.”
Keil and Delitzsch

For this reason, the word *azav* is first translated as “leave” in the sense of not leaving it in a helpless condition. Immediately after that, it then says *azov ta’azov* – “leaving you shall leave it,” but in the sense of removing it from its burden.

It is a sort of pun on the word to get the reader to understand that even though the conduct may seem contrary to normal reason, the Lord sees nothing contrary in the principle. The reason why this is important is because it is *not* the animal that is being focused on, but the relationship. Paul says this in the New Testament –

“For it is written in the law of Moses, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.’ Is it oxen God is concerned about? ¹⁰ Or does He say *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. ¹¹ If we have sown spiritual things for you, *is it* a great thing if we reap your material things? ¹² If others are partakers of *this* right over you, *are* we not even more?”

-1 Corinthians 9:9-12

Paul says that the law’s concrete example of muzzling an ox is given as a spiritual picture of physical care for the pastor who does the hard work, laboring in his spiritual duties. Therefore, the precept of helping with an enemy’s donkey which is under a burden must carry a similar New Testament connotation of helping the enemy himself. Jesus uses a simple parable to show this truth –

“A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. ³³ But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ So he went to *him* and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave *them* to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’” Luke 10:30-35

The Law said to help an enemy whose animal lay under a burden. Jesus explained that not only should we directly help our enemies, but he included the words, “he set him on his own animal.” It is not just that we are to relieve the burdens of our enemy’s animal, but we are to accept the burden of our wounded enemy upon our own animal, and then go beyond that as well with whatever help is needed. Justice, justice you shall do.

Again, the Geneva Bible gives a short clear comment –

“If God commands us to help our enemy’s donkey under his burden, will he suffer us to cast down our brethren with heavy burdens?” Geneva

*Be kind to someone that I don’t like?
Why would I do such a thing?
Last year that guy stole my bike
And gave my own girlfriend a wedding ring!*

*Should I be nice to the person who always berates me?
Should I be the one to always turn the other cheek?
Look at my bruises, count all you can see!
People beat me up for being gentle and meek*

*Oh but if I can win some to the Lord
Through a calm and gentle attitude
It is better than them dying by His sword
And being cast into the fiery infinitude*

*Help me in this Lord; it’s contrary to all I know
But I can do it with Your Spirit; surely this is so*

III. I Will Not Justify the Wicked (verses 6-9)

⁶“You shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute.

Again, this is a clear and concise statement. However, for a fuller understanding of what is being said, it is important to note that a different word is used here for “poor” than in verse 3. There it was the word *dal*; here it is the word *evyon*. This is the first time it is used in the Bible. It means “needy.”

Verse 3 focused on not showing favoritism to the poor. Being poor can be a relative thing. We have poor in America that have cars, cell phones, cable TV, and the like. We also have the needy in America. They are lacking those things, and they are lacking the basics too.

To pervert the judgment of the needy seems like a minor thing, but it is truly kicking one when they are down. It is both cruel and inhumane. The law forbade this. Unfortunately, Israel failed to conduct themselves in the manner prescribed here. One example is found in Jeremiah 5 –

“They have grown fat, they are sleek;
Yes, they surpass the deeds of the wicked;
They do not plead the cause,
The cause of the fatherless;
Yet they prosper,
And the right of the needy they do not defend.” Jeremiah 5:28

⁷ Keep yourself far from a false matter;

This verse appears similar to verse 1, but that was dealing with receiving and passing on false testimony as a witness. This verse is dealing with receiving false testimony for judgment. The judge is to never pervert justice by receiving a false matter. If he does, it could mean life or death...

^{7 (con't)} do not kill the innocent and righteous.

When false testimony is received and knowingly acted upon, it may result in the death of the innocent and righteous. If this were to happen, it would be a case of judicial murder. As the judge is the law of the land, then their judgment will be handled elsewhere...

^{7 (con't)} For I will not justify the wicked.

These words are interpreted in two ways. The first is that the Lord promises that He will not justify the judge himself who has been commanded to not act in this contrary manner, and yet has done so by rendering a false sentence against the innocent.

As terrible as this crime is to be considered, it is not one which has been ignored in history. Far too often judges are willing to overlook the value of human life for whatever

gain they believe they will obtain. But the Lord has promised to not overlook their offenses.

The second way this is viewed is that it means, “To be cautious of inflicting capital punishment on one whose guilt was not clearly proved. A doubtful case was rather to be left to God Himself, who would ‘not justify the wicked....’” (Barnes)

Although this is a minority view, it is possible because the judge had the option of going to the priests to determine guilt. Such a case is found in 1 Samuel 14 in a dispute about who was guilty of violating an oath. King Saul was determined to have the offender killed and consulted the lots to determine who it was.

⁸ And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the discerning and perverts the words of the righteous.

The *shokhad*, or “bribe” is mentioned for the first two times here in the Bible in this verse. It can mean a gift or a reward, but it implies a bribe or a means of obtaining a favor. The Old Testament is rife with examples of bribes being used to pervert justice, and it is one of the singular reasons for the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the people –

“Now hear this,
You heads of the house of Jacob
And rulers of the house of Israel,
Who abhor justice
And pervert all equity,
¹⁰ Who build up Zion with bloodshed
And Jerusalem with iniquity:
¹¹ Her heads judge for a bribe,
Her priests teach for pay,
And her prophets divine for money.
Yet they lean on the Lord, and say,
“Is not the Lord among us?
No harm can come upon us.”
¹² Therefore because of you
Zion shall be plowed *like* a field,
Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins,

And the mountain of the temple
Like the bare hills of the forest.” Micah 3:9-12

Sadly, if the Lord is to look upon our nation and judge us in equal measure, there will be little left when He is done. Our political leaders have gotten fat off of bribes, either directly or through campaign money, and have completely perverted the justice of the people.

Uncontrolled power, wonton avarice, and ever more ill-gotten money are the very foundation of our political system. With the introduction the false global-warming agenda, it has now moved into a united effort by the leaders of the world to corrupt justice for the masses. It will only continue to get worse as the world moves closer and closer to the tribulation period.

⁹“Also you shall not oppress a stranger,

This verse is very similar to Exodus 22:21 –

“You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” Exodus 22:21

The word for oppress is *lakhats*, which means to distress. It comes from a word which signifies pressure. Because this section is speaking of justice and judicial righteousness, it is referring less to physical abuse than to societal abuses on foreigners, especially in legal matters. This seems evident from our final words of the day...

^{9 (fin)} for you know the heart of a stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

“For you know the heart of a stranger.” The people of Israel were physically mistreated, but that was only a part of their oppression. They were also stripped of their justice; something that would have struck them not on their backs, but in their hearts.

Their time in Egypt was to be used as a point of reference for their conduct towards the strangers among them. Denying the stranger, meaning the foreigner among them, was so much on the mind of the Lord that He had it included in the verbal pronouncements of the curses against the people in Deuteronomy 27.

To deny the stranger justice was, and therefore still is, something that is on the Lord's mind. To take advantage of a foreigner *because* they are a foreigner is to incur the wrath of God. This does not mean that foreigners are to be exempt from the laws which have been set up in a land. Rather, this is speaking of their treatment and their rights within those laws.

And in a comparable spiritual manner, we can look at Paul's words in the book of Ephesians to see that we have a dual duty in this regard. Yes, we are to treat the non-citizen strangers among us rightly, but how much more should we treat the spiritual strangers properly as well.

Paul says that before coming to Christ, we Gentiles were also strangers, but now we are citizens –

“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—¹² that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” Ephesians 2:11-13

It is now incumbent on us to render the same level of justice to those who are still strangers from the covenant of promise. The law, in its entirety, is given to show us deeper spiritual truths. As we walk among those who are not in Christ, let us remember to be ready to accept them into these great covenant promises that we now enjoy. Justice, justice you shall do.

Let us not deprive them of the justice that God has handed out to the nations through the giving of His Son. Let me give you some verses to think on and remember so that when you come across a foreigner to the faith, you will know how to tell them about their ticket to heavenly citizenship...

Closing Verse: *“My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.² For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes,³ and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, “You sit here in a good place,” and say to the poor man, “You stand there,” or, “Sit here at my*

footstool,"⁴ have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?" James 2:1-4

Next Week: Exodus 23:10-19 *Wonderful pictures of Christ these verses tell* (Set Times and Feasts for Israel) (63rd Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Justice, Justice You Shall Do

You shall not circulate a false report
Do not put in with the wicked your hand
To be an unrighteous witness either in or out of court
This is what to you I do command

You shall not follow a crowd to do evil
Nor shall you testify in a dispute
So as to turn aside after many to pervert justice
No, to another justice you shall not dilute

You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute
As if his name were considered of less repute

If you meet your enemy's ox
Or his donkey going astray
You shall surely bring it back to him again
I am showing you the good and honest way

If you see the donkey of one who you he does disdain
Lying under its burden, this to you I submit
And if you would from helping it refrain
You shall surely help him with it

You shall not pervert the judgment, such as in a lawsuit
|Of your poor in his dispute

Keep yourself far from a false matter
Do not kill the righteous and innocent

For I will not justify the wicked
Never in such a contrary incident

And you shall take no bribe
For a bribe blinds the discerning
And perverts the words of the righteous
For justice you shall always be yearning

Also you shall not oppress a stranger
For you know the heart of a stranger, this is so
Because you were strangers in the land of Egypt
Their oppression from you I will not accept, you now know

Justice, justice we shall do
For this is how God would have us so act
To be like Him, merciful and true
To never state what is false, but only speak what is fact

In this we will be pleasing in His sight
And follow the path of our Lord Jesus
Who never strayed from what is right
And who though His death has justified us

For this we praise You, our King of glory
For You have written our names in Your gospel story

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 23:10-19

(SET TIMES AND FEASTS FOR ISRAEL)

Since Exodus 20 and the Ten Commandments, we have gone through nine sermons, including this one. There is a pattern which runs through those chapters which is quite remarkable. Yes, there are parallelisms and at least one chiasm, probably more. But there are also sets of tens within the major subjects we have looked at.

Bible scholar Ernest Bertheau discovered the patterns. These sets of tens continue right through to the end of Exodus 23. I haven't followed these patterns for the sermons because there are other aspects of the passages that I've been focused on, but I'd like to read you the main subject categories as he has laid them out.

Understand that each of these divides beautifully into ten individual points. It is really rather remarkable to see.

1. Right of Personal Freedom – Exodus 21:1-11
2. On Murder and Bodily Injuries. Sins against the Life of one's Neighbor – Exodus 21:12-27
3. Injuries resulting from Relations of Property. Through Property and of Property. Acts of Carelessness and Theft – Exodus 21:28-22:6
4. Things Entrusted and Things Lost – Exodus 22:7-17
5. Unnatural Crimes. Religious and Inhumane Abominations – Exodus 22:18-22:31
6. Judicial Proceedings – Exodus 23:1-9
7. Rules for Holidays and Festivals – Exodus 23:10-19
8. The Promises – Exodus 23:20-33

Today we will look at Exodus 23:10-19 and I will use his breakdown of it into ten separate ordinances so that you can see the pattern revealed. Some people love patterns, some couldn't care, but they should at least be important to us for a significant reason.

If there are all of these patterns – parallelisms, chiasms, decades, and on and on in here, then either Moses was the most intelligent writer in human history, or these truly are the very words of God. It is beyond comprehension to think that one man could develop themes like this and also pack in all of the information that is both pictorial and prophetic that we keep discovering week after week.

What a priceless gem we have here! Let us ever appreciate it for what it truly is – God’s precious word.

Text Verse: *So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. Colossians 2:16, 17*

Today we will look at the ordinances for holidays and festivals. Each of these was given to Israel to show us pictures of Jesus. The nation lived out these pictures without even realizing it. And we are the blessed ones who can now see what was hidden from them.

These holidays and festivals are fulfilled in Christ and thus they are set aside. Paul tells us this. But we can still learn much from them. And so let’s do just that! It’s all to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Times of Sabbath Rest (verses 10-13)

The placement and structure of these verses is beautiful. The last set of verses, 1-9, dealt with justice towards others, and they had a strong focus on the poor. These verses deal with holidays, religious festivals, and set times of life, but even though they do, the first ones are named specifically in regards to the poor. Thus they make a transition between the two sets of tens laid out.

All of the verses are laid down intricately and with purpose. We have seen a chiasm which flows through them and we have seen how chapters 20-23 are developed based on patterns of tens as well. In addition, the patterns of tens overlap with a gradual melting together of each set of tens.

The Ten Commandments were laid out in Chapter 20 and then 8 sets of tens are laid out between Chapters 21-23. There is immense wisdom in the structure of these laws which have been given.

¹⁰ **“Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce,**

The first ordinance. Verses 10 and 11 comprise the first ordinance. It is divided into two sections, just as the week is. There is the prescription that work is to be done for the first six years – “You shall sow your land and gather in its produce.”

This is a positive mandate to actively work the land, sowing and reaping, as it produces its harvest. This includes anything which the land produces, whether it is grains, fruits, or vegetables. The people were to work towards their rest.

It is, like the week leading to the Sabbath, a picture of man working six thousand years towards his rest during the millennium. It was to be a time of productivity and diligence while waiting for a time of change in what is to be done. The land was given to them and it was to be used as they pleased and with the intent of producing wealth and prosperity.

¹¹ but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow,

The Hebrew verb for “let it rest” is *shamat*. This is the first of just 9 times that it will be used. It means “to let go” or “to drop down.” The idea is that as one opens their hand and lets something fall out of it, so the people were to let the labors of the field drop out of their hands.

This word is associated with the noun *shemittah* which means “remission.” That is used only 5 times, and only in Deuteronomy. As a noun, it signifies the year of release. The verb in this verse is the action of letting it be released.

During the seventh year, the cycle of sowing and reaping, or even just plucking what comes up without care, such as fruits on the tree, was to be completely disregarded. All was to remain lying fallow. And the reason for it is given...

^{11 (con't)} that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat.

The poor here in Hebrew is *evyon*. It means “needy,” and this is the second time it is seen. The first was in verse 6 last week. This admonition follows directly and naturally after the verses of justice from last week, many of which dealt with the poor. Those who had no land or were destitute were given all the rights to whatever popped up from the fields during this seventh year.

Further, the beasts of the field could come in and eat anything which grew. The land was given over entirely to these two categories and no profit was to be made off of it for the owners of the land. Again, it is a marvelous picture of what we see in the six thousand years of man working towards the millennium.

Each of the redeemed has his own responsibility of sharing Christ. The care of the person and the field they minister in will reap according to their efforts. But, in the millennium – meaning the last thousand-year period where Christ reigns, there will be no need to minister as in times past. Isaiah describes what it will be like –

“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days
That the mountain of the Lord’s house
Shall be established on the top of the mountains,
And shall be exalted above the hills;
And all nations shall flow to it.
³ Many people shall come and say,
‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
He will teach us His ways,
And we shall walk in His paths.’
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
⁴ He shall judge between the nations,
And rebuke many people;
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war anymore.” Isaiah 2:2-4

11 (con’t) In like manner you shall do with your vineyard *and* your olive grove.

This is the second use of *zayit* or olive in the Bible. It hasn’t been mentioned since Genesis 8:11 when the dove that Noah released returned with an olive branch in its mouth. Now it is reintroduced here. The offering of peace with man from the Lord is now expected to be an offering of peace to one’s poor and needy fellow man. Thus it was honoring of the Lord who is the Prince of peace.

The vineyards and the olive groves would continue to put forth their fruits at a normal rate and so this would be an enormous blessing for the poor. In fact, with what they could harvest in this seventh year, if they were industrious, they could work their way entirely out of poverty.

Again, it is emblematic of the millennium where all will be able to receive the full benefits of what God offers as Christ rules from Jerusalem. This law of the year of rest is further defined in Leviticus 25:3-7 –

“Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; ⁴ but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the Lord. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. ⁵ What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, *for* it is a year of rest for the land. ⁶ And the sabbath *produce* of the land shall be food for you: for you, your male and female servants, your hired man, and the stranger who dwells with you, ⁷ for your livestock and the beasts that *are* in your land—all its produce shall be for food.”

This seventh year where everything was to lie fallow was unique in all the world. It may have seemed contrary to what seems profitable, and in fact it may seem that it would be harmful to the society to follow this mandate, but the Lord promised them that such would not be the case. Leviticus 25:20-22 shows this –

“And if you say, ‘What shall we eat in the seventh year, since we shall not sow nor gather in our produce?’ ²¹ Then I will command My blessing on you in the sixth year, and it will bring forth produce enough for three years. ²² And you shall sow in the eighth year, and eat old produce until the ninth year; until its produce comes in, you shall eat *of the old harvest*.”

Instead of focusing on the earthly, this year was to be different. They were given a command for a different focus, a spiritual one, for the seventh year. This is detailed in Deuteronomy –

“And Moses commanded them, saying: ‘At the end of *every* seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, ¹¹ when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. ¹² Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who *is* within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the Lord your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, ¹³ and *that* their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess.’” Deuteronomy 31:10-13

This law of the sabbatical year was given to show that the Lord was the Landowner and the people of Israel were His tenants. They were thus expected to conform to His laws and believe in His promises. During this seventh year, it is not said that they cannot work, only that they were not to work in harvesting.

If they wished, they could keep as productive as they wanted and earn as they saw fit, but they were not to violate the edict of letting the land lie fallow and not harvesting what came up on its own. The Lord was so adamant about this that in Leviticus 26, it is included among the curses of the people for disobedience –

“I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste.

³⁴ Then the land shall enjoy its sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you *are* in your enemies’ land; then the land shall rest and enjoy its sabbaths.

³⁵ As long as *it* lies desolate it shall rest—for the time it did not rest on your sabbaths when you dwelt in it.” Leviticus 26:33-35

And because the people failed to obey, the Lord kept his promise for their disobedience. This is recorded in 2 Chronicles –

“And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, ²¹ to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.” 2 Chronicles 36:20, 21

If seventy years of exile equates to seventy violations of the observance of the sabbatical years, then they violated this law more than they kept it prior to their exile – for at least 490 of those years. It is a sad commentary on Israel that they failed to trust His promises and they failed to obey His precepts.

It is noted by later historians that after the exile observing this year became regular within Israel. Tacitus records the observance and Josephus notes that Julius Caesar permitted the custom and excused the Jews from paying tribute in the sabbatical year.

However, with their rejection of Christ, following the law could never save them. They first disobeyed the law and were exiled, and then they rejected the grace of the Lord

and were again exiled. They are well suited to be the poor of the land who so desperately need what the millennial reign of Christ will freely offer to them.

¹² Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed.

The second ordinance. The Sabbath which was mandated in the Ten Commandments is readdressed here to show that there is a system with purpose and intent. There is the weekly Sabbath, there is the sabbatical year, there will be a year of Jubilee which is an ending of seven periods of sabbatical years, and then there is the millennial time-frame of six thousand years leading to the last thousand years.

Within these occurrences are countless other dates which revolve around these set times. There is immense order and harmony in how God has laid out the redemptive workings of Scripture in the stream of time in which we live.

The word for “work” here is not the same as the word for “work” when the fourth command was given. Both are general terms, but this one is probably different in order to demonstrate that there was no exemption from the Sabbath week during a Sabbath year.

Also, there are two words translated as “rest” in this verse. The first is *shabbath* and the second is *nuakh*. The second gives the positive idea of resting and so to get the mental idea of what is being said, I will paraphrase this, “...and on the seventh day you shall observe the **Sabbath** so that your ox and your donkey may **rest** and be rested.”

And after that a third word is used for “refreshed.” It is *naphash*. This is a verb used for the first of only four times in the Bible. It is from a primitive root meaning to breathe; or passively, to be breathed upon. In this we could say, “...and the son of your female servant and the stranger may *catch their breath*.” This unusual word again points us to the millennium of Christ. Peter says this to the people of Israel in Acts 3 –

“But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of **refreshing** may come from the presence of the Lord, ²⁰ and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all

things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” Acts 3:18-21

The Greek words Peter used, *kairoi anapsyxeōs*, means exactly the same thing as Moses’ words here; “times of recovering of breath, a refreshing.” Each line continuously points us towards Christ and His work. The times of refreshing Peter speaks of is the kingdom age; the millennial reign of Jesus. Concerning this mandate in comparison to the Fourth Command, Charles Ellicott notes –

“Nothing is added to the requirements of the fourth commandment; but the merciful intention of the Sabbath day is more fully brought out—it is to be kept *in order that* the cattle may rest, and the slave and stranger may be refreshed.” Charles Ellicott

His words are correct, and again, they perfectly match what is expected during the millennial reign. It is a time of mercy on the world. What is stated here for the Sabbath is reflective of the millennium as Isaiah describes it –

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
The leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
The calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little child shall lead them.

⁷The cow and the bear shall graze;
Their young ones shall lie down together;
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

⁸The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole,
And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den.

⁹They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord
As the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰“And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse,
Who shall stand as a banner to the people;
For the Gentiles shall seek Him,
And His resting place shall be glorious.” Isaiah 11:6-10

¹³“And in all that I have said to you, be circumspect and make no mention of the name of other gods, nor let it be heard from your mouth.

This precept seems out of place considering what is supposed to be a ten-fold list of holidays and festivals, but it is not. It is to the Lord that these holidays and festivals were to be observed.

By prohibiting the speaking of the names of other gods, they were signifying that there is but one God who is to be acknowledged – Yehovah. However, there is the modern Jewish practice of killing the Lord’s name by silence. They do not speak His name, but rather refer to Him as Adonai, or “my Lord.”

But the active speaking of His name and the refusal to speak the name of any other god is perfectly fulfilled in the millennial picture we have been developing. Throughout the world there are supposedly “many gods.” But the words of Zechariah show us the fulfillment of this verse in Exodus 23 –

“And the **Lord** shall be King over all the earth.
In that day it shall be—
‘The **Lord** is one,’
And His name one.” Zechariah 14:9

Each verse has pointed to this marvelous time on earth which is surely coming soon to a millennial reign near you.

*A time of rest, it is what we hope for
A time when our labors will cease
And in Jesus, we have passed through the door
In Him is found our rest and our eternal peace*

*For those at the end of the ages
When the tribulation ends and wars finally cease
The realization of the rest promised in the Bible’s pages
Will come upon them; they will behold the Prince of peace*

*He shall rule from Zion among Israel
And from Him the law will go out; disputing will cease
In that day, it shall all be well
As the world is granted its blessed time of peace*

II. The Pilgrim Feasts (verses 14-19)

¹⁴ **“Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year:**

The third ordinance. It is the mandating of three feasts to the Lord each year. Although the Passover and Unleavened Bread have already been mandated, this is the first mention of the three annual feasts in the Bible. The word “times” here is *regalim*, the plural of *regel*, or foot. Thus it means “foot beats.”

Just as foot beats fall in regular succession, so these feasts were to be just as regular for the people. The word for “feast” is *khagag* which indicates a pilgrim feast. They were to travel to a set location for the feast. In this there is a vivid mental picture of “the foot beats of the pilgrim feast.” Men would regularly travel to meet with the Lord.

¹⁵ **You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt;**

The fourth ordinance – *ha’matsowt*, or “the Feast of Unleavened Bread.” It is the first of the three mandated pilgrim feasts. The feast follows immediately after the Passover and lasted for seven days. The first day and the last day of the feast were holy convocations, and for all seven days unleavened bread was to be eaten.

As noted when we looked at that feast when it was first mandated, it is a picture of our time in Christ. He died for us as our Passover Lamb. When we accept what He did, we enter into Christ and are thus deemed sinless before God.

We are, as Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 5, “truly unleavened.” We were brought out of bondage to sin and the devil, pictured by Egypt, and now are the redeemed of the Lord, considered as sinless, pictured by the unleavened bread – meaning without yeast. The Lord is showing a picture of the redemption of His people through the mandated observance of this feast.

^{15 (con’t)} **none shall appear before Me empty);**

The word “empty” is *reqam* – empty-handed or vain. The last time the word was used was in Exodus 3:21 when the Lord promised that Israel would not come out of Egypt empty-handed –

“So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go. ²¹ And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be, when you go, that you shall not go **empty-handed**.” Exodus 3:20, 21

It seems that the use is intentional here. “Just as I brought you out of Egypt with hands that were not empty, so you shall come before me with hands that are not empty. To do so would be a vain thing.” This seems certain because later in Deuteronomy, this mandate will apply to all three pilgrim feasts, but it is only noted as such with this feast now –

“Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed. ¹⁷ Every man *shall give* as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you.” Deuteronomy 16:16, 17

For now, He is teaching them that what He has done for them is to involve like-return to Him when they appear before Him. This feast was to be held immediately after the Passover, from the evening of the 14th day of the month of Abib until the evening of the 21st day of the same month as is noted in Exodus 12:18.

¹⁶ and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field;

The fifth ordinance – *ha’qatsiy*, or “the harvest.” This is the second of the three pilgrim feasts. It will also be called Shavuot, or the Feast of Weeks because it was celebrated seven weeks after another feast which will be mandated in Leviticus. It is held on the fiftieth day after that feast which corresponds to the fiftieth day after the first Passover when the law was received at Sinai.

In Greek, it is called Pentecost and thus it pictures the sealing of believers with the Holy Spirit upon belief in the work of Christ. There is the giving of the law at Sinai which is replaced by the giving of the New Covenant Holy Spirit. It is the indwelling of God in man.

The word for “firstfruits” is *bikkurim*. This is the first of 18 times it will be used in the Old Testament. It comes from a verb, *bakar*, which means “to bear new fruit, to constitute

as first-born.” This is referring to the wheat harvest which comes after the barley harvest.

The wheat was considered the more valuable grain and it is the grain which is used to refer to the redeemed of the Lord. Thus, this feast is a picture of those in Christ during the church age and who will be taken at the rapture. Paul speaks of this in Romans –

“For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. ²³ Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.” Romans 8:22, 23

Interestingly, what they were to bring when they appeared before the Lord is later mandated in Leviticus 23. There it says –

“You shall bring from your dwellings two wave *loaves* of two-tenths of an *ephah*. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. *They are* the firstfruits to the Lord.” Leviticus 23:17

In one of only two times in all of the law, yeast, or leaven, was to be presented to the Lord. In this case, two loaves of bread baked with leaven. The loaves are a picture of all of the redeemed of the Lord, two loaves representing Jew and Gentile. This feast initiates the wheat harvest which continues on until the next feast.

The Lord was to receive them, even with leaven, just as the Lord has received us, both Jew and Gentile, even with sin in our lives. We are consecrated as holy and counted as sinless because of the work of Christ. The author of Hebrews also reveals the status of those in Christ as the consecrated firstborn –

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴ to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than *that of Abel*.” Hebrews 12:22-24

What Israel was asked to do at these feasts only pictures the greater work of Christ in redemptive history. Their regular lives as directed by the Lord, what they did, when they

did it, and how they conducted themselves, was all given to show us so very much more concerning ourselves and our own life in Christ.

¹⁶ (con't) **and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in *the fruit of your labors from the field.***

The sixth ordinance – *ha'asiph*, or “the ingathering.” This word, *asiph*, is used only here and in Exodus 34:22. When the feast is mentioned elsewhere, it is called Sukkoth, or Tabernacles. It is referring to the ending of the harvest season when the labors of the people are gathered in from the field.

The dating for this feast will later be fixed as the 15th day of the seventh month and it will last for seven days. This corresponds to around October on our calendar. There are various crops that grow in Israel throughout the summer months and by this time, they are almost all harvested.

Generally, the last crops to be gathered in are the grapes, figs, pomegranates, almonds, and olives. At the time when these harvests are accomplished, the people were to celebrate this feast as their labors for the year had come to an end. At the end of the instructions for the Feasts of the Lord in Leviticus 23, this addendum is noted

“Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the Lord *for* seven days; on the first day *there shall be* a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest. ⁴⁰ And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. ⁴¹ You shall keep it as a feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. *It shall be* a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. ⁴² You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, ⁴³ that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I *am* the Lord your God.”

-Leviticus 23:39-43

The Feast of Tabernacles is fulfilled in Christ, He having put on a tent of flesh and dwelt among us. This pilgrim feast then is the fulfillment of the prophetic plan for man. After all of the harvests, all the redeemed who have been brought out of spiritual Egypt, the bondage of sin, will be gathered together to dwell with the Lord in the millennium.

There is an order to these three feasts. The Passover initiates the process – Christ’s death for His people. The first feast is our position in Christ because of His work; we are counted as sinless. The second is the granting of the Holy Spirit because of that declaration of being counted sinless. And the third is the harvesting of the redeemed; the ingathering of the people of the Lord.

As this feast says, it is “at the end of the year.” It is when the cycle is complete and the redemption of God’s people is to be finally realized in its fullness. Although two of these feasts will be given different names later, they are given as a wide brushstroke here of what the Lord is doing throughout redemptive history.

¹⁷ “Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord God.

The seventh ordinance. Although this is similar to verse 14, it does have differences. The word for “times” is different. In verse 14, it was *regalim*, or “foot beats.” Here it is *paam*, or “strokes.” The word is elsewhere translated as “anvil.” We get the idea of a regular stroke. Three times, or strokes, a year this was to occur as the times were set. The mental image we can make is that the foot beats of the people are to occur at the times when the anvil strikes.

Unlike verse 14, it identifies that it is the males who are to appear. This doesn’t mean that women and children couldn’t go, and the Bible records that they did, but it was obligatory for the males. In Deuteronomy 16, it presupposes that the entire family would go. It also identifies there what the term, “the end of the year” means for the feast of Ingathering –

“You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress. ¹⁴ And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who *are* within your gates. ¹⁵ Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the Lord your God in the place which the Lord chooses, because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice.” Deuteronomy 16:13-15

The end of the year means the end of the harvest cycle. Also, unlike verse 14 which said “a feast to Me,” here it says they shall appear “before the Lord God.” They were to

recognize that it was to Yehovah, who is the God of Israel, to whom they were to appear. They were thus times of intimate meetings with Him.

One might think this wouldn't be a prudent thing to do. By all of the males observing these feasts, the land would be left defenseless. However, that involved faith in the word of the Lord, just as observing the sabbatical year did. In the explanation of these feasts in Exodus 34, this promise is included –

“Three times in the year all your men shall appear before the Lord, the Lord God of Israel. ²⁴ For I will cast out the nations before you and enlarge your borders; neither will any man covet your land when you go up to appear before the Lord your God three times in the year.” Exodus 34:23, 24

From here, the following three verses seem out of place and hardly in line with the holiday and festival requirements, but they are, in fact, logical and orderly. They reflect a portion of these feasts.

¹⁸ “You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor shall the fat of My sacrifice remain until morning.

The eighth ordinance. There is dispute as to what this verse means. Does it mean any sacrifice, or only the Passover. It is repeated in Exodus 34 with only a few differences. There it says –

“You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leaven, nor shall the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover be left until morning.” Exodus 34:25

In these two verses, the blood is the object of what is offered instead of the sacrifice – “You shall not offer the blood.” As the Bible says that the life is in the blood, and because grain offerings were considered separate offerings than sacrifices, it is referring only to the Passover, which is a type of Christ's cross. Thus it is called, “My sacrifice.”

Leaven was to be completely purged from the home prior to the slaughtering of the Passover. Thus it is a picture of the sinless Christ who shed His blood for us. There was no sin to be found in Him, just as there was no leaven to be found in the homes of those who partook of the Passover.

The second half of this verse is incorrectly translated. The word translated here as “sacrifice” is *khag*. It is a completely different word than in the first half, *zebakh*. This

word, *khag* means “feast,” not “sacrifice.” Thus the KJV and the NKJV get a demerit in their translations.

The lamb is “My sacrifice,” and the Passover is “My feast.” It is a feast to the Lord, and there was to be nothing left of the lamb by morning time. That was explained in Exodus 12 –

“You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire.” Exodus 12:10

This verse then corresponds to the first of the three pilgrim feasts. The Passover is tied directly into the Feast of Unleavened bread. Again, each verse has been used to direct us to Christ. He is the object and fulfillment of every precept we have looked at today.

¹⁹ The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God.

The ninth ordinance. The word “first” is translated a few ways – the first, the best, the beginning, etc. The word is *reshith*. It means the first, either in place, time, order, or rank. What it is referring to is the first to mature. Before any grain was harvested for self, the first harvested was to be offered to the Lord without delay.

The offering is that which was specified for the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost mentioned above. It was the first of the harvest which was to be brought to the Lord in the form of two loaves made with yeast. Interestingly, in the New Testament, there are two mentions by Paul of the firstfruits of those from Achaia. The first is mentioned in Romans 16:5 –

“Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.”

The second is in 1 Corinthians 16:15 –

“I urge you, brethren—you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia...”

Epaenetus is believed to be a Jew. The name is the same as the Hebrew “Judah” or “praise.” And so it is believed he used his Hebrew name among the Hebrews and his Greek name among the Greeks as often happened in those days. Stephanas was a Gentile.

More interestingly, the name Achaia where they were both from has the same general meaning as the Hebrew name of Egypt. Egypt or *mitsrayim* is a plural word which means “double distress.” Achaia means “grief.” These are called the Firstfruits of Grief. They are a picture of the first redeemed out of the world of grief, just as Israel was redeemed out of Egypt, or double distress.

These then show the fulfillment of the two loaves of bread with yeast being presented to the Lord at this feast, Jew and Gentile. Returning the firstfruits to the Lord is a picture of the firstfruits of the redeemed being noted as such in the New Testament. This verse then corresponds to the second of the three pilgrim feasts. The offering of the firstfruits is tied directly into the Feast of Harvest.

^{19 (fin)} **You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.**

The tenth ordinance. As the previous two precepts were tied into the first two pilgrim feasts, then it is logical that this is tied into the final pilgrim feast, that of ingathering. This verse is one of cleanliness and what is acceptable for holiness to God.

We know this because all of verse 19 is repeated verbatim in Exodus 34:26, but the second half of it, meaning this portion about boiling a young goat in its mother’s milk is also repeated verbatim in Deuteronomy 14:21. That section of Deuteronomy is dealing specifically with clean and unclean meat.

It is true that this verse is one of mercy and respect rather than contempt of God’s creatures, but there is much more to it than that. It is accepted that this command refers to an ancient superstitious practice which came at the close of the harvest season.

The people would boil a kid in its mother’s milk. After that, along with magic rights, the milk was used to sprinkle plantations, fields, and gardens in hopes of them being more productive the next year. This then reflects those at the end of the age who refuse to give up magic practices. This is seen in these words from Revelation 9 –

“The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. ²¹ Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.” Revelation 9:20, 21 (NIV)

As the Feast of Ingathering deals with the final gathering in of all people after the tribulation period, then it is an admonition for those who are to be considered cleansed and acceptable for entering into the millennium. We know this is after the tribulation, because this feast comes after the grape harvest, the harvest of wrath. But this is what it says after that terrible time on earth –

“Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” Revelation 20:6

Those who missed the rapture and enter the tribulation need to reject the mark of the beast in order to be saved. Instead of following the unholy practices which this rite pictures, they will become holy because of their faithful witness, even to death.

As you can see, the entire passage today pictures redemptive history from the time of Christ’s cross at the Passover, right up until the time of the millennial reign of Christ. What Israel observed in picture, Christ fulfilled in Person. And we are the benefactors of all of the good which is promised.

By a mere act of faith in the finished work of Christ, our names are written on heaven’s scroll. We will be saved out of the terrible time to come upon the earth and we will reign with Christ forever. Now is the time of God’s favor, today is the day of salvation. If you have never made a commitment to this wonderful Lord who has done everything necessary to secure you a place in heaven, let me tell you how you can, even right now...

Closing Verse: *“Blessed is the man whose strength is in You,
Whose heart is set on pilgrimage.*

⁶As they pass through the Valley of Baca,

They make it a spring;

The rain also covers it with pools.

⁷They go from strength to strength;

Each one appears before God in Zion.” Psalm 84:5-7

Next Week: Exodus 23:20-33 *How to maintain with the Lord sound relations...* (Covenant Promises and Expectations) (64th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it

on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Pictures of Redemptive History

Six years you shall sow your land
And gather in its produce as is normal to do
But the seventh year, please now understand
You shall let it rest and lie fallow as I so instruct you

That the poor of your people may eat, as to you I now tell
And what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat as well

In like manner you shall do
With your vineyard and your olive grove too

Six days you shall do your work in which you are blessed
And on the seventh day you shall rest
That may rest your ox and your donkey
And the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed

And in all that I have said to you
Be circumspect and make no mention
Of the name of other gods, this you shall not do
Nor let it be heard from your mouth, be sure to pay attention

Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year
To Me you shall come; to Me drawing near

You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread
You shall eat unleavened bread seven days
As I commanded you; yes as I have said
At the time appointed in the month of Abib, following in My ways

For in it you came out of Egypt, you see
None shall appear before Me empty

And the Feast of Harvest, of your crop's yield
The firstfruits of your labors
Which you have sown in the field

And the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year
At the time when the ground does yield
When you have gathered in what does appear
The fruit of your labors from the field

Three times in the year all your males shall appear
Before the Lord God, to me they shall draw near

You shall not offer the blood
Of My sacrifice with leavened bread
Nor shall the fat of My sacrifice remain until morning
You shall do this according to all that I have said

The first of the firstfruits of your land
You shall bring into the house of the Lord your God
You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk
Do follow my instructions as if with them you had been shod

Wonderful pictures of Christ and His work for us
Are revealed in these set times and feasts of Israel
Every word shows us more hints of Jesus
And of His marvelous works each does tell

Thank You, O God, for such a wonderful word
Thank You for the mysteries which are hidden there
Each that we pull out speaks of Jesus our Lord
Thank you that in His goodness we too can share

For all eternity we shall sing to You our praise
Yes, from this time forth and for eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 23:20-33 (COVENANT PROMISES AND EXPECTATIONS)

From simple logic of what God must be like, we learn that in Him there is no change. We don't need the Bible to discern this, but the Bible bears it out. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. However, we cannot use that as a principle which then means that the law which He gave to Israel is eternally binding on us.

Some people follow that line of reasoning, but it is flawed. Rather, God has progressively revealed His intentions to the people of the world. When the law was fulfilled in Christ, He annulled it through the New Covenant in His blood. And yet, there are many precepts which are constant.

One of them is that when we are obedient to Him in the manner He has revealed to us, things will go well. When we aren't, things won't. Some of the precepts in today's verses reflect that. Though the law is set aside in Christ, following some of its precepts will inevitably lead to a good end.

This doesn't mean we're obligated to them, but if we follow through with them, things will naturally go better than if we don't. Further, there is the truth that whatever God has thus far revealed is to be adhered to. At this time, we are living in the Dispensation of Grace. We are expected to receive Jesus Christ by faith and trust in His works alone for our salvation.

When we fail to do this and instead trust in our own works, we will not be right with Him. And even though we are under grace, we are not given license to sin. Should we ignore the precepts of the New Testament, we will suffer. At all times, God is calling us to continually return to Him and to cling to Him.

Text Verse: *"For I am the Lord, I do not change;
Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.
Yet from the days of your fathers
You have gone away from My ordinances
And have not kept them.
Return to Me, and I will return to you,"
Says the Lord of hosts.
"But you said,
'In what way shall we return?'" Malachi 3:6-7*

The way we are to return to the Lord is by following the precepts that He lays down for us at any given time in redemptive history. Christ is our Savior and though we may receive Him, we may walk away from Him. In so doing, we will only injure ourselves.

However, if we remain obedient, our expectation is that of many rewards when we stand before Him. God does not force Himself upon us. Instead He grants us the free will to choose. Adam didn't choose so wisely. Israel didn't choose so wisely. The church has continuously divided because many fail to choose wisely.

In our sermon verses today is another chiasm for us to ponder. I needed something to do on my trip to Chicago last week and so I went through these verses with the intent of seeing if one was there. Sure enough, one is. The lesson for you... use your time wisely. If you have a few hours, pull out your Bible and study!

Exodus 23:24-33 - Covenant Promises and Expectations
Upon Entering the Land of Canaan (2/9/2016)

- a. v.24 You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works
- b. v.24 You shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars
- c. v.25 So you shall serve the Lord your God
- d. v.25&26 (Blessings of prosperity within the land)
- e. v.27 I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you
- f. v.28 And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you
- f. v.29 I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you
- e. v.30 Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land
- d. v.31 (Blessing of boundaries of the land)
- c. v.32 You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods
- b. v.33 They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me
- a. v.33 For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you

Following God's laws has never been hard, but our human nature says, "I can do it better my own way." God tells us time and time again that this is not true. He made us and He knows what is best for us. For Israel at the giving of the law, He told them what was best in order for things to go well. These truths are to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. My Angel will go Before You (verses 20-26)

The words of today's verses close out the initial giving of the law to the people. These words are "the Book of the Covenant." After this, Moses will go down the mountain and present them to Israel. They have already vowed to accept the words of the Lord and to be obedient to them on two separate occasions.

The first was in Chapter 19. After arriving at Sinai, Moses went up and was given an initial set of words to repeat to Israel. After receiving the word, he came back down and this was recorded –

"So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him. ⁸ Then all the people answered together and said, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do.'" Exodus 19:7, 8

After that, the Ten Commandments were thundered out in the hearing of the people. In their horror and dread, they told Moses –

"You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."
-Exodus 20:19

After that, Moses ascended the mountain once again and was given the words of Exodus 20:22 – 23:33. Each of these was carefully laid out in sets of tens and which harmoniously developed a theme of God's expected standards for His people. These words now close out those decades of verses with the expected promises for adherence to them. The first promise is a great one indeed...

²⁰ **"Behold, I send an Angel before you**

hinneh anoki sholeakh malakh l'phanekha – "Behold, I send Angel before your face." It is a wonderful promise to Moses. It is one of comfort and assurance that he will not be alone in leading the people of Israel to where they are to go.

It is highly debated who this Angel is. Scholars, both Jewish and Christian alike, have debated this and proposed numerous possibilities. Is it Moses? Is it Joshua? Is it an angel? Is it the Lord? It certainly isn't Moses because the pronoun is in the singular. The address is to him alone.

Many translations capitalize the word to signify their trust that it is in fact the Lord. This is correct. One must let Scripture interpret Scripture. The pillar of cloud which was first seen in Exodus 13:21, and which was explicitly mentioned last in Exodus 14:24, has continued to be with Israel. It will continue to be noted later in Exodus 33, in Numbers 14, and as late as Deuteronomy 31:15.

In Exodus 33:3, there will be a time when the Lord tests Moses with these words –

“Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you *are* a stiff-necked people.”

Also, Paul explicitly ties incidents of the wilderness wanderings to the Presence of Christ among them in 1 Corinthians 10. In verse 10:9, he says that in their conduct, they tempted Christ. Therefore, the Angel who is promised to go before them is, in fact, the Lord.

The pillar of cloud obscures His glory. Within that veil is Christ, “the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person” (Hebrews 1:3). This promise of the presence of the Angel will not be without cost to the people. We will see this in the verses, chapters, and books which lie ahead.

20 (con't) **...to keep you in the way**

lishmarekha ba'derek – These words certainly have a triple signification. The first is that Israel will be guided in the proper course to take as they travel towards Canaan. The Lord is directing them according to a set plan, and each stop is where He wants them physically to ensure that they arrive when He wants and where He wants. In this route, they will be safely conducted by Him.

The second reason is as an instruction for the people. To “keep you in the way” isn't speaking of just a physical way, but it is also speaking on the lines of morality and obedience. The last time the word “way” or *derek* was used, it was in exactly this manner –

“And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the **way** in which they must walk and the work they must do.” Exodus 18:20

And finally, each stop is recorded as a pictorial lesson for us today. It is to show us Christ. We have seen that numerous times already, and that will continue to be the case with each stop and each thing that occurs at each stop. Christ is being revealed to us!

²⁰ (con’t) **and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.**

The place He is speaking of is obviously Canaan. The promise was made to the patriarchs that the land would be theirs. Abraham was told this and it was passed down to each generation since then –

“Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.” Genesis 15:13-16

In those words, we see the reason why the Lord delayed the promise. It was because “the iniquity of the Amorites” was not yet complete. The Lord was patient with the inhabitants of the land. Until their iniquity had reached its full measure, He granted them the right to continue in the land.

However, the time was drawing near for that to end. Their wickedness was so great that, like those before the flood, the only remedy was their destruction. Instead of a flood of water, they would be destroyed by the flood of the Lord’s army, Israel.

Despite this being the case, these words are given as a picture of the future granting of a place for the redeemed of the Lord, that of heaven. It is what the land of Canaan only anticipated –

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. ⁴ And where I go you know, and the way you know.’

⁵ Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can

we know the way?'

⁶ Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'" John 14:1-6

Just as the Lord had prepared Canaan for Israel, the same Lord who came to live among us has given us an even greater promise. We have a home reserved for us, eternal in the heavens.

²¹ Beware of Him and obey His voice;

When taken together with the rest of Scripture, in this verse we have a picture of the Trinity. First, Moses is told to "beware of Him and obey His voice." This is speaking of the Angel who is being sent before them. The author of Hebrews ascribes the words to obey His voice at this time to the Holy Spirit –

"Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:

'Today, if you will hear His voice,

⁸ Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
In the day of trial in the wilderness,

⁹ Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me,

And saw My works forty years.'" Hebrews 3:7-9

In Exodus 20:1 the Ten Commandments began with the words, "Then God spoke..." Immediately after that in verse 2, came the words, "I *am* the Lord your God." In Hebrews, the admonition to obey is said to have been spoken by the Holy Spirit. Thus, so far, both the Father and the Holy Spirit are specifically noted. At the end of this verse, the Son's role will be noted as well.

²¹ (con't) do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions;

It is the Son to whom judgment has been granted. It is He who pardons and it is He who finds guilt. All authority is granted to Him on earth and in heaven. This is seen even in the Old Testament with the following words...

²¹ (con't) for My name *is* in Him.

We are being shown a picture of the Trinity here. As the Lord God, or *Yehovah Elohim*, says that His name is in Him, then as Adam Clarke notes, "...the Jehovah dwells in Him."

He is spoken of as a separate Person, and yet in Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Charles Ellicott notes that –

“God and His Name are in Scripture almost convertible terms. He is never said to set His Name in a man.” Charles Ellicott

The word translated as “in Him” is *b’qirbow*. It means, “In His inward parts.” In other words, it is united to Him. If the essence of Yehovah dwells in Him, then this is speaking of the third member of the Trinity – the divine Logos – the word of God; Jesus the Christ. Therefore, these words return us, once again, to John 14 –

“Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.” John 14:11

²² But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.

This is a fascinating verse to consider. In the first clause, there is a change from the third person to the first person. It says, “...if you obey His voice.” It then says, “...and do all that I speak.” This is known as a *perikhoresis*. It’s a Greek term which is derived from two separate words, *peri*, which means “around,” and *khorein*, which in this context means “to go forward.”

It is a tenet which is seen throughout Scripture, but which is often highlighted and magnified by the words of Jesus, particularly in the Gospel of John. It gives the idea of “indwelling” which then conveys and realizes fellowship between the members of the Godhead. This is seen, for example, in John 15:26 –

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.”

Even in the Old Testament, multiple clues as to the nature of the Godhead are given. This is a beautiful example of one of them.

Next, this is a conditional verse. It is based on obedience. In it there are four individual thoughts containing three repetitions. The first thought, which is also a repetition is an emphasis in the command – *ki im shamoa tishma b’qolow* – “but if listening you shall listen to His voice.”

The second thought is based on their listening. It is the application of it – *v'asita kol asher a'dabber* – “and do all that I speak.” One can't do unless one first hears and heeds. If one hears, it doesn't mean they will heed. But if they do, then they will apply what they heard and turn it into action. This then is the obedience of the law.

If these two conditions are met, then there will be rewards, both of which are repetitions based on contrast. The first is *v'ayavti eth oyevekha* – “then I will be an enemy to your enemies.” The second is *v'sarti eth sorerekha* – “and an adversary to your adversaries.”

In this, two very similar verbs are used. The first is *tsuwr* which is used for the first time in Scripture. It comes from a primitive root meaning to cramp. From it, one gets the sense of binding up an enemy or afflicting them by besieging them.

The second word is *tsarar*. It carries the same meaning as *tsuwr* and it was first used in Exodus 12:34 when it said that the Israelites had their kneading bowls bound up in their clothes on their shoulders. Now it is being used for the first time in the sense of one's enemies.

Third, the words can't be only limited to the time before entering Canaan. We have already seen that heeding the voice of the Lord is used by the author of Hebrews to speak of our relationship with Christ. But he was quoting the 95th Psalm there in Hebrews. The psalmist spoke of “Today” just as the author of Hebrews did.

Therefore, this is speaking of how God deals with His covenant people. “Today if you hear His voice...” The promise began at Sinai and it continues to be recalled to God's people since then. And finally, what is implied, but as yet unstated, is that if they don't obey, there will be consequences. The opposite of what He promises here is explicitly noted in Leviticus 26 –

“And I will bring a sword against you that will execute the vengeance of the covenant; when you are gathered together within your cities I will send pestilence among you; and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.”

-Leviticus 26:25

Before we go on, I should ask, after considering the words of this verse, do you think the Lord works any differently today? It is to our benefit to follow the advice here –

“Listening you shall listen to His voice and do all that He speaks.” We are under the New Covenant and in the Dispensation of Grace, but we still have many commands and admonitions which have been given to us to heed.

²³ For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off.

In verse 20 it said “I will send *an* Angel.” Now it says *malaki* or “My Angel.” There is nothing here to preclude it being Christ. Rather, Malachi 3:1 uses the same word, *malak*, to describe first John the Baptist and then Christ Jesus –

“Behold, I send **My messenger**,
And he will prepare the way before Me.
And the Lord, whom you seek,
Will suddenly come to His temple,
Even the **Messenger** of the covenant,
In whom you delight.
Behold, He is coming,
Says the Lord of hosts.” Malachi 3:1

It is Christ who will go before Israel, taking them into the Land of Promise. And the Lord promises to “cut them off.” In this, it means as collective people groups. Not all were cut off. Some were eventually assimilated into Israel. One of David’s leading military men was Uriah the Hittite who was the husband of Bathsheba.

David was also noted as having bought the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite who dwelt among them. Even in Jesus’ time, a person is identified as being a woman of Canaan in Matthew.

²⁴ You shall not bow down to their gods,

lo tishtakhaveh l’elohehem – As most of us already know, bowing down to a god is considered a way of honoring them and paying reverence to them. In so doing, it is an implicit act of trust that they can meet one’s needs. It can also imply that one expects return benefits from them. This was utterly forbidden for them to do.

This is something that is not only common in the RCC today, it is the standard daily ritual, particularly statues of Mary and the saints, as well as supposed relics of dead folk.

²⁴ (con't) **nor serve them,**

v'lo ta'abedem – To serve an idol is more than bowing down to them. It can be placing food before them, burning incense to them, singing to them, praying to them, or praising them. Again, this is SOP in the RCC. All of these are done daily at the Vatican and in most subordinate locations.

Within the RCC, they attempt to make a distinction between what is offered to idols: dulia, hyperdulia, and latria. Dulia is supposedly honor and recognition accorded to idols. Hyper-dulia is “lots and lots of dulia.” This is accorded to Mary. Then there is latria which is worship of God.

These distinctions are seen in word, not in practice, and they are exactly what comprise the closing words of John’s first epistle –

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.” 1 John 5:21

²⁴ (con't) **nor do according to their works;**

v'lo taaseh kemaasehem – This is speaking of the cultic practices of those who followed these false gods. Some were sexual in nature, some included human sacrifice, self flagellation, etc. These were utterly forbidden. They were to keep from the idols and they were to keep from practicing the rites involved with the idols. In 1 Kings 11, Solomon is noted for having completely blown it in these three ways –

“For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as *was* the heart of his father David. ⁵ For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. ⁶ Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord, as *did* his father David. ⁷ Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that *is* east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. ⁸ And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.” 1 Kings 11:4-8

²⁴ (con't) **but you shall utterly overthrow them**

ki hares taharesem – “in overthrowing, you shall overthrow them.” This is speaking of the false gods. They were to be proven exactly that; false. Their altars were to be destroyed and their temples were to be torn down. There was to be nothing left of them. Even their foundations were to be destroyed.

²⁴ (con’t) **and completely break down their *sacred* pillars.**

v’shaber t’shaber matsevotehm – “...in breaking, you shall break their pillars.” The false gods are identified with the images which represent them. They were to be utterly broken down. They were to be crushed, burned, and left as nothing more than refuse. It was the practice of conquering forces to take the idols of the vanquished nations and keep them as trophies of victory. However, this was not to be condoned in Israel. They were false, they couldn’t save their own people, and they could only entice Israel to eventually look to them for what they could never provide. Unfortunately, King Amaziah failed in all respects concerning this 24th verse of Exodus 23 –

“Now it was so, after Amaziah came from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the people of Seir, set them up *to be* his gods, and bowed down before them and burned incense to them.” 2 Chronicles 25:14

How hopeless we are as a species! We reject what is good and right and honorable and give our allegiance to the passing wind.

²⁵ **“So you shall serve the Lord your God,**

In contrast to serving the false gods of Canaan, they are instructed to serve Yehovah Elohekem, or “Yehovah your God.” He alone is Israel’s God and He alone was to be served by them. In return for this, they could expect His divine favor...

²⁵ (con’t) **and He will bless your bread and your water.**

This doesn’t just mean that their food will be healthy, but that it will be abundant. They will not lack food or water when they are in a right relationship with the Lord. What is implicit here is that if they fail to serve Him, bread and water would be lacking in both quantity and quality.

²⁵ (con’t) **And I will take sickness away from the midst of you.**

Ellicott notes that, “Half the sicknesses from which men suffer are directly caused by sin, and would disappear if men led godly, righteous, and sober lives. Others, as plague and pestilence, are scourges sent by God to punish those who have offended Him.”

If they served the Lord, they would be blessed with health and vitality. This verse follows directly on the last use of the word translated as sickness, *makhaleh*, which was in Exodus 15:26 –

“If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none **of the diseases** on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I *am* the Lord who heals you.”

Again, what is implied is that the opposite will certainly be true for a failure to adhere to the Book of the Covenant.

²⁶ No one shall suffer miscarriage or be barren in your land;

This is probably speaking of both people and animals. When people are well fed and live in clean conditions, which the law will later give instructions for, then those in the land would naturally not face these types of problems.

This probably is not intended as anything more than a general pronouncement. Godly women such as Hannah and Elizabeth were both barren for extended periods. However, the Lord eventually favored them both.

²⁶ (con’t) I will fulfill the number of your days.

Again, when one follows the guidelines given in the law, they can expect to live long, normal lives. The Bible gives us guidelines for right and healthy living because it is written by the One who fashioned us. He knows what is right and best for us. By following His words and seeking after Him, we will naturally be better off.

When we depart from His way, of course we can expect early death through disease because of things like sexual sins, or through trauma because of things like a bullet in our noggin. Look at the world today. The words of the Bible are normally borne out in how we conduct our lives. For the wicked, the psalms give a good general picture of life-

“But You, O God, shall bring them down to the pit of destruction;
Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days;
But I will trust in You.” Psalm 55:3

*I will send My Messenger before you, He will lead the way
He is the Head of the army of the Lord
He is the King of My People, and to you I say
He will go before you always, He – My spoken Word*

*Have no fear of your enemies, they are already defeated
I have sent My fear before you, to break open a way
Even the enemy of death has been unseated
Over him My Son prevailed at the dawning of the day*

*My Name is in Him and so have no fear
It is your enemies to whom my fear has gone out
So in the exalted name of Jesus, send out a hearty cheer
Yes, in His name shall you give a resounding shout*

I. I Will Send My Fear Before You (verses 27-33)

²⁷ “I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come,

These promises are conditional. The first two were literally fulfilled, using the same word. The “fear” or *emah* certainly came to the people of Canaan prior to Israel’s arrival. Rahab the harlot, using the same word *emah*, told this to the spies who visited her-

“I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the **terror** of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who *were* on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed.” Joshua 2:9, 10

The confusion or *hamam* was first seen in the Bible in Exodus 14 when the Lord *confused* the Egyptians as they pursued Israel through the Red Sea. In Joshua 10:10, the same word is used again to describe the Lord confusing Joshua's enemies in battle.

²⁷ (cont) **and will make all your enemies turn *their* backs to you.**

The opposite of the final promise is actually what is seen in Scripture. In Joshua 7, it is Israel, not their enemies who turned their *oreph*, or necks in battle. One of the congregation violated the law concerning the destruction of Jericho. Because of this, in their next battle, *they* were routed, turned their necks, and ran.

The conditional nature of these promises is highlighted through the use of the selected words as they are later used in the book of Joshua. The Lord is asking us to look at them and see how it is we who are either obedient to the Lord and flourish, or who turn from Him and falter. If so, we turn out to be our own worst enemies.

²⁸ **And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you.**

This verse introduces the *tsirah*, or hornet, into the Bible. It is the first of just three times that they are mentioned. The word comes from *tsara* which means to be leprous. Also, there is an article in front of "hornet." It is "the hornet." The language here is to be taken metaphorically.

First, similar terminology is used concerning bees in Deuteronomy 1:44 and Psalm 118:12. There, they are equated with one's enemies. Secondly, Joshua says that this was fulfilled in the case of the Amorites in Joshua 24:12 –

"I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, *also* the two kings of the Amorites, *but* not with your sword or with your bow."

There it said it was the hornet that drove out the two kings of the Amorites. And yet, Moses, speaking of the same battle, shows that it was, in fact, Israel who defeated them—

“And at that time we took the land from the hand of the two kings of the Amorites who *were* on this side of the Jordan, from the River Arnon to Mount Hermon...” Deuteronomy 3:8

This is repeated in Deuteronomy 4:47 and it is referring to the kings Sihon and Og. What I speculate this is referring to is that there is a connection between the hornet and its associated word meaning leprosy.

The Lord promised health and long life to Israel if they held to His laws. As they were going in to a land defiled by those things which are opposed to a healthy lifestyle, the enemy had been afflicted with disease to the point where they were incapable of standing up to Israel’s armies.

Thus, “the hornet” is a metaphor for God’s judgment of sickness upon them, preparing them for destruction by Israel. This is only speculation, but the Bible records that Israel actually faced these foes in battle. Thus it is a reasonable explanation for the term “the hornet” which is said to have gone before them.

²⁹ I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you.

There is a bit tied up in this verse. First, it is a certainty that the inhabitants are to be driven out. However, there is an incremental process which is to take place. We look at the Lord’s plans as if He is slacking, but this is not the case. It is only from our short life spans that we decide things should move more quickly.

But the Lord is looking at the long-term. If all of the inhabitants were taken out at once, the land would become desolate. The word *shemamah*, or desolation is introduced into Scripture here. The land was inhabited, and there were fields, crops, fruit trees, wells, houses, etc. everywhere.

If all the people were taken out at once, there would have been an insufficient number of people to take them over. The productivity would have been lost. Further, these nations were collectively destroyed, but not all individuals were. Some of them came into the people of Israel and actually lead even to Christ Himself – Rahab and Bathsheba are but two known for sure.

Further, it is later stated that some of the inhabitants were left in order to test Israel and see if they would keep the way of the Lord or not. This is seen in Judges 2:21-23.

And finally, it was because the beasts of the field would become too numerous. This actually occurred after the exile of the ten tribes. In 2 Kings, we read this –

“And it was so, at the beginning of their dwelling there, *that* they did not fear the Lord; therefore the Lord sent lions among them, which killed *some* of them.”

-2 Kings 17:25

It was noted after the Franco-German war that many districts in France had an explosion of wolves. These wouldn't just be physically harmful to people, but they would be devastating to flocks and they would bring diseases with them as well. The Lord knew these things would occur and so he determined to methodically take care of the occupation of Canaan...

³⁰ Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land.

meat meat agareshenu mippanekha – “little little I will drive them out from before your face.” The idea here is the completed explanation from the previous verse. It implies that Israel will be fruitful and multiply. They will increase in numbers and as they do they will be able to assume the responsibility for the land.

It is, in picture, somewhat like what Adam could have done in the Garden of Eden. If he was obedient, then he would have increased there, but in his disobedience, he was cast out to the east. In a similar way, Israel was given this wonderful land of Promise and they were told to increase there, being obedient to the Lord.

Instead of this, they were eventually driven out and sent east to Babylon. The pattern repeated itself. From abundance to want, from a land of delight to a land of captivity, and from the west to the east – both Adam and Israel failed to keep the good things they had been given. The Lord had done all the work; all they needed to do was exercise faith, trust, and obedience. Both failed.

³¹ And I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the sea, Philistia, and from the desert to the River.

The boundaries of the land are defined here and they cause those who deny predictive prophecy no end of stress. It wasn't until the time of Solomon that this prophecy was actually realized, and yet the Lord told them that this would be the land they received.

The Red Sea is the southern extremity, the sea Philistia, or the Mediterranean was to be the western border. The desert, meaning where they are now in Sinai, was to be the land border on the south, and the River, meaning the Euphrates, was to be their border to the north and east.

The term for “the river,” which is *ha’nahar*, cannot be taken as meaning the Jordan. It is later explicitly described as the Euphrates twice in Deuteronomy and once in Joshua. This immense expanse of land is what was promised to Israel after it having first been promised to their forefather Abraham in Genesis 15:18.

³¹ (con’t) **For I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you.**

This verse here clearly explains the previous conundrum concerning the term “the hornet.” The Lord says He will deliver the inhabitants of the land into the hands of Israel. When He does, they are to respond by driving the people out. Thus, the term “the hornet” must be taken metaphorically. The Lord prepared the people for being driven out and Israel accomplished the matter.

³² **You shall make no covenant with them,**

Interestingly, the Book of the Covenant, which begins in Exodus 20:22, began with a warning against idolatry. It now closes with the same theme. It is an exceptional warning to the people that they were to take heed and not participate in any idolatrous worship. They were admonished to keep far from it.

In these words, the people are warned to not cut any covenant with the people. This was violated almost immediately after they entered the Land of Promise. Joshua failed to check with the Lord concerning a covenant with the Gibeonites and he, in fact, made a covenant with them. This wasn’t the only such infraction either, in Judges 2:2, 3 we read –

“And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? ³ Therefore I also said, ‘I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be *thorns* in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.”

What is important to understand is that such a covenant was normally not only with the people. There was more to it than a simple treaty...

³² (con't) **nor with their gods.**

In making a covenant with a people group, it was the custom to acknowledge the god or gods of that people group. Sometimes it was implicit, at other times it was explicit. Sacrifices would be made and then acknowledgement of the god's ability to protect and to keep secure the covenant was involved.

Thus, by cutting such a covenant, it was acknowledging the belief system of the other group. This is, unfortunately, now what has happened between many Christian sects and Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, etc. There is either an implicit or an explicit acknowledgment of the power of the false gods, or of the incorrect faith in the true God, of these other religions.

This shows the epitome of contempt for the One true God when it occurs. Like Israel of old, many will face the same sad end because of their failure to hold to the Lord alone.

³³ **They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me.**

Allowing pagans to remain in the land will inevitably result in turning from the Lord. This is seen time and time again in the Bible. If a person became a part of the covenant people, they had to give up on their religion and turn to the Lord.

Ruth, for example, was one who was famous for having clung to the Lord God of Israel. But for those who didn't cling to Him, only trouble could result. This is the story of America today. Little by little, false religions have crept in and the collective heart of the people has turned from Him.

There is no longer a fear of the Lord, and the land has devolved into utter wickedness because of it. This was the final warning to Israel. Like them, we failed to take heed...

³³ (fin) **For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you."**

Making alliances with those who worship other gods will inevitably result in a weakening of the true faith. It is as a snare by which one is caught. This is the first time that the word *moqesh*, or snare is used in this way concerning the true faith.

It is as if one is walking along, and without even seeing it lying there, they step in it and are set on a path to destruction. This is the end for all who mingle the true faith with

that which is false. Unfortunately, Israel failed to heed, and unfortunately, we have failed to heed as well.

The gospel has gone out, it has been well received by the world, and now it is on a path of apostasy from which it will probably not recover. The Lord will take action and He will destroy Mystery Babylon from the face of the earth. All who are a part of her will be destroyed with her.

But before that day comes, there is still a chance to get right with the Lord. There is time to call on Christ and be saved from the inevitable. You see, the book is written and the judgments are already laid out. All we can do is endure until He calls us home to be with Him.

After that occurs, the world will be cast into a time of global destruction. It is all because we have failed to simply receive the word and stand fast on it. Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart. Call on Jesus and be reconciled to God through Him. Let me tell you how to you can, even right now...

Closing Verse: *"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." 1 John 5:21*

Next Week: Exodus 24:1-8 *Israel agreed to the word He sent...* (This is the Blood of the Covenant) (65th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Covenant Promises and Expectations

Behold, I send an Angel before you
To keep you in the way
And to bring you into the place
Which I have prepared; it is waiting you there today

Beware of Him and obey His voice
Him do not provoke
For He will not pardon your transgressions
For My name is in Him; do as I spoke

But if you indeed obey His voice
And do all that I speak: you my word with you do carry
Then I will be an enemy to your enemies
And to your adversaries an adversary

For My Angel will go before you
And bring you in to the Amorites
And the Hittites and the Perizzites too
And the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites
And I will cut them off, this I will do

You shall not bow down to their gods
Nor serve them, nor do according to the works they make
But you shall utterly overthrow them
And their sacred pillars down you shall completely break

So you shall serve the Lord your God
And He will bless your bread and your water too
And I will take sickness away
From the midst of you

No one shall suffer miscarriage
Or be barren in your land
I will fulfill the number of your days
Pay heed to this word; please understand

I will send My fear before you
I will cause confusion, it is true
Among all the people to whom you come
And will make all your enemies turn their backs to you

And I will send hornets before you
Which shall drive out the Hivite
The Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you too

I will not drive them out from before you in one year
Lest becomes desolate the land
And the beasts of the field that cause fear
Become too numerous for you, lest they get out of hand

Little by little I will drive them out
From before you until you have increased
And you inherit the land
And any terror from them will have ceased

And I will set your bounds
From the Red Sea to Philistia's sea
And from the desert to the River
All this, your territory shall be

For I will deliver the inhabitants
Of the land into your hand
And you shall drive them out before you
This I proclaim for you to understand

You shall make no covenant with them
Nor with their gods, I tell you now plainly
They shall not dwell in your land
Lest they make you sin against Me

For if you serve their gods
It will surely be a snare to you
And so I admonish you now
This thing you shall not do

Help us Lord to follow in Your way
Help us to live rightly according to Your word
Let our lives be dedicated to you, renewed each day
And let our deeds be for the sake of our Lord

Great are You, O God, and worthy of our praise
Your word is perfect and Your ways are just and true
And so we shall follow You with obedient hearts always
Unto the ages of ages we will praise and glorify You

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 24:1-8

(THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT)

Many times people have asked me, “Which book of the Bible should I start with.” Others have asked me, “Which book of the Bible should I read next.” Questions like that come up often. My friend Sergio asked me for advice in a Bible study he was doing with his friend in Israel.

He is a Jewish guy, living in the land, and Sergio was helping him through the book of Romans. After that he asked, “What next?” I told him “Galatians.” The reason for this is that the guy was a young Jewish Christian and he was also in Israel. I can’t think of a more difficult place to be in regards to encountering legalism and the reinsertion of the law. Galatians would see him through this.

Paul explains very clearly what reinserting the law, which has been fulfilled in Christ, means. One becomes a debtor to the whole law. It is setting aside the grace of Christ and saying, “I can do it better.” After doing the study, Sergio agreed that it was the perfect book to go through.

For those who know the law, especially Jews, and even more especially observant Jews, my answer would be either “Read Matthew” or “Read Hebrews.” Matthew shows Christ as the King of Israel and is written from a Jewish perspective.

Hebrews explains Christ as “Better Than.” He is better than the angels, He is better than Moses, He is better than Aaron, He is better than the law, He is better than anything and everything that the Old Testament put forward.

All of the Old only pointed to our Better Than; our Jesus. In today’s eight verses, we will see the cutting of the covenant between Lord and the people of Israel. It is a covenant which can only lead to failure. Not because the laws aren’t holy, but because they *are* holy.

Man can never be obedient to such marvelous laws. And so it was a good thing that the Lord later gave them the Day of Atonement to keep them from disaster. And it is a marvelous thing that He later stepped out of His eternal realm and took that same holy law upon Himself.

Text Verse: *“But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.”¹² Not*

with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ¹⁵ And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” Hebrews 9:11-15

The words “the Lord” meaning the name Yehovah, are mentioned eight times in today’s eight verses. The word *elohim*, or God, is never mentioned. It is abundantly clear that Yehovah is God, but it is how He reveals Himself, meaning as Yehovah, that he deals with Israel concerning this covenant.

Many look at this covenant as one of works, or at best “grace plus works.” But there is no such thing as “grace plus works.” It is either grace or it is works. The two are mutually exclusive. We’ll see a picture of salvation by grace in today’s verses.

It is the same picture we saw with Abraham and it is the same thing we find in Christ. God doesn’t change how He saves. However, He does change how He deals with us through dispensations in order to show us our need for Christ in an incremental way.

On the trip to Chicago, I found this second chiasm which follows directly after the one we looked at in last week’s verses...

Exodus 24:1-9 The Cutting of the Covenant
Israel's Verbal Agreement to the Words of the Lord (2/9/2016)

- a. v.1 Now He said to Moses, “Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel...”
- b. v.3 Moses submits the covenant for acceptance
- c. v.3 “All the words which the Lord has said we will do.”
- d. v.4 Wrote out the words of the Lord.
- e. v.4 Built an altar
 - f. v.4 The twelve tribes of Israel
 - f. v.5 The children of Israel
- e. v.6 Sanctified the altar
- d. v.7 Read the words of the Lord
- c. v.8 “All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient.”
- b. v.8 Moses seals the covenant after acceptance
- a. v.9 Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel

The law is a giant step in the dispensational model. We'll see the dispensation of the law further realized and refined in our verses today. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Who Shall Ascend the Hill of the Lord? (verses 1 & 2)

¹ Now He said to Moses,

Scholars are often perplexed at the sequence of what is going on and the seeming want of order in the surrounding verses. What we would normally expect at the beginning of a new passage are the words, "Now God said to Moses," or "Now the Lord said to Moses..." This is excluded and it gives us a clue as to the order of where we are.

The words "Now He said to Moses..." put the emphasis on Moses in what is a continued stream of thought from an earlier part of the Exodus narrative. This emphasis on him also implies that the Lord had been speaking to more than just Moses just before this verse.

At no place, however, is anyone else addressed and so some scholars think that a part of the narrative has been lost. That would be a rather incompetently compiled word of God, wouldn't it! Instead of taking such an easy-to-dismiss approach at the seeming confusion, we need to go back and look at what has just transpired.

The Book of the Covenant was just given to Moses. This included everything from verse 20:22 until 23:19 for the giving of the rules which regulate judicial conduct. Then from verse 23:20 until 23:33 came the promises associated with obedience to those rules. Thus all of Exodus 20:21 until 23:33 merely insert of the Book of the Covenant. The account now picks up where it left off in Exodus 20:21. Therefore, let's read that verse –

"So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God *was*." Exodus 20:21

From there, the words of Exodus 24:1 can be seamlessly added onto that verse – So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God *was*. Now He said to Moses..."

In other words, and as I've already said, the account encompasses the giving of the Book of the Covenant. This is actually logical and orderly. One thing is given at a time and in a

way which is intended to reveal to us the mind of God in written form. The importance of recording the Book of the Covenant in the middle of these verses is to show what is preeminently on His mind.

As we saw in those many verses, Christ was meticulously recorded time and time again in them. The earthen altar! The Hebrew slave! And so on. Each portion of the Book was revealing to us our need for Christ. That is why the order is as it is. We now return to just before the giving of the book. This will continue until verse 3.

^{1 (con't)} **“Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu,**

It is implied that the Lord spoke these words to a group of people *before* Moses received the Book of the Covenant. It explains the emphasis on Moses in the first part of verse 1 which those thoughtless scholars ascribed to a missing portion of God’s word. Instead of God sloppily and carelessly losing a portion of His word, or even laying that at the careless feet of Moses, it shows us that nothing is missing and that God’s word is complete. It may be confusing until you search out what is going on, but it is not a book of missing information or sloppy preparation.

In this clause, Moses is told to ascend to Yehovah and bring along with him Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu. Aaron is Moses’ older brother by three years, and Nadab and Abihu are Aaron’s two oldest sons. These three, along with Aaron’s two younger sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, will be set apart as priests to the Lord in Exodus 28.

Unfortunately for Nadab and Abihu, they will be destroyed by fire when they present unauthorized incense before the Lord in Leviticus 10:1. For now though, they are given the honor of ascending the mountain with Moses as well as some others...

^{1 (con't)} **and seventy of the elders of Israel,**

The total number to ascend the mountain will be 74 – Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders. These 70 elders, along with Nadab and Abihu, would then make 72 people to represent the 12 tribes of Israel. This logically divides into six people from each tribe, but this is unstated and only speculation.

The seventy elders would be those who were first mentioned in Exodus 3 when Moses stood at the burning bush and heard this –

“Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, ‘The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared to me, saying,

“I have surely visited you and *seen* what is done to you in Egypt; ¹⁷ and I have said I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey.” Exodus 3:16, 17

It is not stated why all of these people were to ascend with Moses, but it is probably for at least three reasons. The first is that they could then prove to the people that Moses actually received the words from the Lord and made nothing up on his own. In essence, they would be witnesses to the matter, just as the disciples were witnesses of the ministry of the Lord.

The second reason is tied into this. When the words were presented to the people, it would add in a greater weight to the ratification process. It would be much easier to dismiss the words if Moses stood there alone and told them what was expected. But with these witnesses, they would more readily accept what was received and honor it for what it was – the word of God revealed to them.

The third gives a picture for us. God is their King – it is a theocratic rule. Moses is the prophet, Aaron is to be the priest, and the 72 represent Israel; the kingdom. It is a picture of Christ and His church – the Prophet, Priest, and King among his people.

¹ (con't) **and worship from afar.**

In Exodus 20, the people said to Moses “You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” After that, it said, “So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God *was*.”

From this verse now, we can see that there are three different classifications and groupings. The first is the people of Israel who are at the base of the mountain, and in fact they are on their way back to their own tents.

Next, there are Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders who have ascended the mountain but remain somewhere on its declivity. They will maintain a middle position between the people below and Moses and the Lord who will be above them.

Finally, there is Moses the prophet who alone will ascend to where Yehovah is. He has been set apart as most holy in this awesome matter of receiving the Book of the Covenant. It should be a sufficient warning to the people, especially the elders, that they

are not set apart in the same way as those the Lord chooses to designate for whatever reason.

But it quickly became, and continued to be, a constant problem among the people of Israel to blur these lines of distinction which were set by the Lord. In a short time from now, a man named Korah will rebel and assume that he and the whole congregation of the Lord are holy. The penalties for this rebellion will be memorable. First, for Korah we will see this –

“Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them,³² and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all *their* goods.³³ So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly.” Numbers 16:31-33

For the two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation who rebelled with him, we read of their demise –

“And a fire came out from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense.” Numbers 16:35

Even as late as the time of King Uzziah, the Lord still demanded a distinction between his people for set purposes. The priest’s job was not to be accomplished by the king. However, King Uzziah rejected this notion and went to offer incense to the Lord on his own. The penalty for his arrogance was swift –

“Then Uzziah became furious; and he *had* a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the Lord, beside the incense altar.²⁰ And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and there, on his forehead, he *was* leprous; so they thrust him out of that place. Indeed he also hurried to get out, because the Lord had struck him.” 2 Chronicles 26:19, 20

Because of his disobedience, the Bible goes on to say that he remained a leper until the day of his death, that he lived in an isolated house, and that he remained cut off from the house of the Lord. The Lord hasn’t changed today.

Though we are brought near to God because of Christ, we still need to remember that He is God and we are His creatures. The judgment seat of Christ will reveal much about how we conducted ourselves in this life in regards to this matter.

² And Moses alone shall come near the Lord,

Some scholars go in the opposite direction with what they believe is going on and they insert these verses between 24:8 & 9. This is also incorrect as those verses carry us into new and uncharted waters. But on the surface they seem to fit there, unless you are looking at the natural progression of what is occurring.

As you can see, there is nothing really easy about discerning what is going on. Each section requires real consideration to grasp. Even some of the finest biblical scholars of all time get confused here. Because of this, there is no shame in any of us being confused.

However, to study them and then misrepresent the progression of what is going on can only lead to incorrect conclusions about later concepts which arise in the Bible. It is for this reason that instead of telling you about how good next week will be for you, I want to explain to you the details of this magnificent word.

It opens up treasures of wisdom and knowledge if you are willing to mentally challenge yourself to explore not just the surface, but the reasons behind the difficult finer points. It is so easy to simply read over them and say, "I'll look at this more closely... next time." Maybe next time won't come.

For now, and still prior to the giving of the Book of the Covenant, Moses leaves behind the rest. He is told that he alone would come to the peak where the Lord was.

^{2 (con't)} but they shall not come near;

This is speaking of Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy. They have been given a high honor in being allowed to come to the mountain and to partially ascend it, but their honor has a point of termination. The psalms speak of ascending to the Lord in several places. One of the notable passages is found in the 24th Psalm –

Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord?

Or who may stand in His holy place?

⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart,

Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol,

Nor sworn deceitfully.

⁵ He shall receive blessing from the Lord,
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

⁶ This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him,
Who seek Your face. Selah Psalm 24:3-6

In the case of receiving the Book of the Covenant, the question is, “Who may stand in His holy place?” The answer is “Moses alone may ascend. Even the elders of Israel may not.”

² (con’t) **nor shall the people go up with him.”**

Again we have words which confirm that this was spoken just before Exodus 20:21. This is referring to the rest of the people of Israel who had asked that the Lord not speak to them any longer. When the Lord called Moses up, he designated a certain group of people to come and no others. It is here that we can insert the words of Deuteronomy 5 where the Lord said this to Moses –

Go and say to them, “Return to your tents.” Deuteronomy 5:30

To ensure that the people would not attempt to follow Moses and the elders up the mountain, they were told to return to their tents.

Who may ascend the hill of the Lord?

Who may stand in His holy place?

The answer is slowly revealed in His precious word

Those who will someday gaze upon His face

It is those who have been cleansed by the blood

It is those who have called out to receive Jesus

Purified by Him, under the cleansing flood

This is what God has through Him done for us

Those who have from Him received such favor

Will surely receive an eternal blessing from the Lord

In His marvelous paradise each moment we shall savor

This is the promise found in His holy word

II. We will Obey, and We will Hear (verses 3-8)

³So Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments.

From this point on the narrative now starts anew. Moses and those with him had ascended the mountain. At a set point, Moses alone went up to the Lord the rest of the way. There he received the words of the Book of the Covenant. And now it will be presented to the people.

What is implied, but unstated, is that Moses heard the words, descended to those awaiting him on the mountainside, and then they together went down to present the words to the people. However, the word used to describe his transmitting the covenant to the people is *saphar*. It means “to recount.”

Although it is not an unusual word in and of itself, it is a word which is rather special. Instead of simply saying that “He told them what the Lord said,” or “He gave them the gist of what was spoken,” it says that he “recounted” the words of the Lord to them.

This word, *saphar*, is used just four times in Exodus and this is the last of those four times. In *recounting*, Moses is carefully speaking out the words to the people. It is as if he counted each word and carefully catalogued it in order to recount what he had counted.

In essence, “I heard these words and I am now *recounting* them to you as I heard them.” He is speaking the very words of God to them in a faithful manner. “These are all the words of the Lord and all the judgments as I received them.” Why is this important to understand?

The answer is that we cannot add something to the word of God, or fail to include something in the word of God, and still have the word of God. Either it is His word, or it is His word twisted with man’s word, or it is man’s word alone.

This is especially important for us because these words, which form the covenant made between God and the people, make a foreshadowing of the future covenant of grace which God made with us through the blood of Christ.

In Chapter 20, they said, “You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” Well, God *is* still speaking to them, just through a mediator. Proof that it is God’s word and not his is that Aaron, his sons, and the elders went with him. They can substantiate the truth of the matter. And so the words are *recounted* and an answer to them is expected...

³ (con't) **And all the people answered with one voice and said,**

v'yaan qal ha'am qol echad – “And answered all the people voice one.” The word *echad*, or one, is used because although there were many voices, there was one unified message in the voices. A cluster of grapes is one, but it is made of many grapes. *Echad* allows a plurality within the singular.

³ (con't) **“All the words which the Lord has said we will do.”**

This is now the third time that the people have voluntarily committed themselves to the words they are given. The first was in verse 19:8. They did it again in 20:19. Now they say, “All the words which the Lord has said we will do.”

They have faithfully confirmed what they had committed to. The words were spoken and the words were accepted. However, there is the truth that a crowd will often agree to something in an animated fashion which the individuals in the crowd may either later shun, or that they may disagree upon concerning what was said. And so Moses will now go one step further...

⁴ **And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord.**

Again, this clause confirms the order of sequence as I laid it out. The words were received from the Lord on Mount Sinai, but only *now*, after speaking them to the people, are they written down. Each step is logical and orderly. And all of it fits together harmoniously when looked at properly. This is all confirmed by the chiasm we looked at when we started. (chiasm importance)

Note the order: The glory of the Lord was seen coming down on Sinai in chapter 19. In Chapter 20, the Ten Commandments were given. After that, the people were so overwhelmed that they asked for Moses to speak to them and they would agree to hear.

Moses went up the mountain with a selected contingent of people. He left them and continued up to the Lord where he received the Book of the Covenant. After that, he came back down and *recounted* what he was told. The people agreed to do what they have heard. Only now are the words written down.

Concerning the writing down of the words, it again points to the importance of the word *saphar*, or “recount.” The words that are written are the words which were spoken. If they were just the substance of what the Lord said, then they weren’t what the Lord actually said. However, the importance of the words is entirely tied up in the coming covenant with the people.

Now that the words are written down, they cannot be contested any longer. Instead, they are the *written* word of God based on the *spoken* word of God. They are the continued recording of the Holy Bible which began in earnest in Exodus 17:14 when Moses was first told to write something as a record for future generations.

It is this set of words known as the Book of the Covenant, which will now be the basis of the most remarkable of dealings of God with man since time had begun.

^{4 (con’t)} **And he rose early in the morning,**

Nothing is without significance in the Bible, even a clause such as this. To rise early signifies diligence and preparedness. It signifies a willingness on the Lord’s behalf to impart His graces upon us. The Lord didn’t rise late on Resurrection Day, as if He needed the rest. Instead He rose early.

This then is a pictorial idiom as much as anything else. And it will be used exactly as an idiom later in Scripture. In fact, numerous times in Jeremiah alone, it is used to show the Lord’s diligence and willingness to instruct the people. One example is –

“And they have turned to Me the back, and not the face; though I taught them, rising up early and teaching *them*, yet they have not listened to receive instruction.” Jeremiah 32:33

^{4 (con’t)} **and built an altar at the foot of the mountain,**

This would have been the very first earthen altar ever constructed according to the Book of the Covenant. The instructions for it were given in verses 20:23-26. In verse 24, we read this –

“An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you.”

Thus this altar is where the Lord would come to bless His people. If you didn't sleep through those verses, you know that this altar forms a picture of Christ. Thus, it signifies the first party in the covenant – God in Christ.

⁴ (con't) **and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel.**

These twelve *matstsebah*, or pillars, are explicitly stated to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. They would have been stone which was stood up in an erect manner. These would have been more than just memorial stones. Each would indicate the placement of the tribe in relation to the covenant. Thus they represent the second party in the covenant.

Moses would have walked between the altar and the stones as a mediator between the two. The standing up of the stones would be a picture of the permanence of these twelve tribes. For as long as the covenant remained, so each tribe of Israel would remain standing.

Eventually a New Covenant would be made and it would *again* be with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. The implication is that Israel will stand forever. God would forever remain faithful to them based on His covenants with them.

⁵ **Then he sent young men of the children of Israel,**

There is much speculation as to why young men are specifically mentioned here. It is not the elders, nor is it any other specific group who is selected. Instead, it only says that "he sent young men of the children of Israel."

No priesthood had yet been established and thus the priestly duties fall on Moses alone for the ritual. These young men have been selected to be servants of Moses. It is possible, though unstated, that they were selected from each tribe to represent their tribe, but even this only speculation.

All that we are given is that young men were selected. The word to describe them is *na'ar* and in this context, it generally denotes a person from a very small child to one around the age of puberty. It has other significations, but in this context, it seems to imply children of a youthful age, not yet adults.

The reason why this is important is that in just about a year from this point, the people will leave Sinai on their way to Canaan. On the way, spies will be sent to search out the

land. When they return, a bad report will be spread throughout the community and the people will complain against the Lord. In their complaining, the judgment against them will be severe. Numbers 14 says this –

“The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above.” Numbers 14:29

What this verse now seems to imply is that these young men will not be punished in the wilderness. The Lord, knowing what will occur, has selected youth from Israel for this task who will be young enough at that time to be exempt from the curse, and who will thus be allowed to enter the Land of Promise.

What is surprising in this is that even Moses himself will be barred from entering Canaan because of his own misdeeds. If these young men are allowed to pass over Jordan and into Canaan, it is for a good reason. *They* will be able to recount the day that they stood at the base of Sinai and participated in the reception and confirmation of this sacred covenant.

In this verse is a foreshadowing of Christ’s selection of the twelve apostles on another mountain 1500 years later.

^{5 (con’t)} **who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord.**

The burnt offering, or *olah*, is given in gratitude to the Lord, and as a means of seeking his favor and receiving propitiation from Him. Noah made an *olah* after coming out of the ark. He sought the favor of the Lord and he sought a restored relationship with mankind through it as well. These burnt offerings would normally be completely burned up on the altar as an offering to God.

The *shelem*, or “peace offerings” comes from the word *shalam*, which means “to make amends.” The peace offering then is one intended to satisfy the Lord and to bring about a sense of alliance or friendship. For this reason, some translations call them “fellowship offerings.”

Unlike the burnt offerings, these peace offerings would normally have a portion burnt up on the altar. At the same time, the portion which was not burnt up would be eaten by the participants. Thus the idea of a “fellowship” offering conveys the thought quite well.

The young men of Israel are those who were chosen for this task. In looking at their age based on what I mentioned concerning the punishment on those twenty and above, we can see that the Lord regards them as in more of a state of innocence than those who are older, and thus another possible reason for their selection.

⁶And Moses took half the blood and put *it* in basins,

It is of singular note that Moses takes half of the blood and uses it for one purpose and the other half for another. It is all the same blood, but the division has purpose and intent. He takes one half of it and put it in basins.

This basin is a new and unusual word found in the Bible. It is *aggan*, and it is only seen three times – once here, once in the Song of Solomon, and finally once in Isaiah. It is not a priestly word that is later used for such things. Rather it is a common type of basin. It would have had handles as we see from this verse in Isaiah –

“They will hang on him all the glory of his father’s house, the offspring and the posterity, all vessels of small quantity, from the **cups** to all the pitchers.” Isaiah 22:24

As Isaiah notes, they can be hung, thus implying handles. Surprisingly, the only other time this word is used, which is in the Song of Solomon, it is speaking of the navel of Solomon’s beautiful bride –

Your navel *is* a rounded **goblet**;
It lacks no blended beverage.
Your waist *is* a heap of wheat. Song of Solomon 7:2

Are we to learn from Isaiah’s explanation of this verse that Solomon’s beauty had love handles? All fun aside, one half of the blood is set aside for one purpose; the other half is now explained.

⁶(con’t) and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

The word here for “sprinkle” is *zaraq*. It means “to scatter.” The only other two times it was used was during the plague of boils when Moses scattered the dust of the furnace towards the sky. Now it is first used in connection with sacrifices. However, in this verse, it is more appropriately translated as “splashed.”

The amount of blood would be considerable and it would be poured out or splashed on the altar. According to the Bible, the life is in the blood. The blood being poured out signifies the death of the innocent animals in place of sinful man. They died in order to confirm the covenant.

The blood of the sacrificial animals, standing in place of the people, is symbolic of a complete surrender of the people to God. It is as if it is *they* have died and *their life* was being poured out in acceptance of what would then be read. And yes, the words have not yet been read to the people.

In this, John Lange most wisely notes, "...surrender in general, in accordance with the conditions of grace, must precede obedience in particular, according to the law." In other words, *yielding* comes before obedience. It is a picture realized in Ephesians 2:8, 9-

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast."

Even the Old Testament shows that one comes to God with empty hands. It is not by deeds that one is saved. Rather, it is by grace and through faith. The people have done nothing yet to merit God's grace except to assume that the blood of the covenant is sufficient to enact the covenant. Abraham discovered this –

"And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."

-Genesis 15:6

It is the seal of his righteousness. It is also the evangelical seal of our righteousness. And guess what, it is also sealed upon the Law of Moses itself. Even the Ten Commandments are introduced with this language –

"I *am* the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Exodus 20:1

God redeems. We have no part in our salvation except to believe and receive. This is what Paul precisely states in Ephesians 1 –

"In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of

promise,¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”

Moses, acting as their mediator, splashes the blood of the animal on t

he earthen altar, thus signifying their yielding to God. All of it is picturing the future work of Christ for us – the altar, the blood, the grace through faith. Only after the blood is splashed on the altar are the words of the covenant read aloud...

⁷ Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people.

Only after yielding to God through the sacrifice does Moses now read the written word to the people. It says, *v'yiqra b'azene ha'am* – “And proclaimed in the ears of the people.” It is more graphic in the Hebrew than when translated. It is the very words that they had heard and agreed to, but now they are set in writing. He is repeating the Book to them now so that they know that it is what the Lord is also agreeing to with this covenant.

^{7 (con't)} And they said, “All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient.”

These words *qol asher dibber Yehovah na'aseh v'nishma*, are almost exclusively translated in this way. “We will do and be obedient.” In fact, only one of the twenty Bibles I read, the Jubilee Bible, says, “All that the LORD has said we will do, and we will hear.” This is correct.

The word *shema* means to hear, but hearing is often associated with obedience, such as “I want you to hear me,” which means “I want you to do as I say.” However, one cannot be obedient unless they first hear. In the final portion of the Book of the Covenant, which is the section concerning the promises, it says –

“Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.²¹ Beware of Him **and obey His voice**; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name *is* in Him.²² But if you indeed **obey His voice** and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.”

In other words, more words of instruction are coming from the Lord to which the people must be attentive. This is why they have added on to their statement of verse 3 the words, “...and we will hear.” They have committed to doing even before hearing.

Note: it doesn't say that we will hear and then we will obey. It says that we will do, and we will hear. The Book of the Covenant is not the entire body of the Law. It is what the entire body of the law is based on. And so, only after this commitment does the Lord accept the people's offerings through Moses' mediation...

⁸And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words."

If the splashing of the blood on the altar denoted the surrender of the people to the will of God, then the sprinkling of the people with the blood is the acceptance of the people by God who proposed the covenant to them. The same word *zaraq*, is used, but Keil notes that the form it is in indicates sprinkling rather than splashing.

The poured out blood symbolized their *death*; the sprinkled blood denotes the *renewal of life* and thus the people's transposition into the kingdom of God. The sins of the people are symbolically carried away and they are sanctified as the people of God. All of this only looks forward to the greater work of Christ. The half of the blood splashed on the altar looked forward to the satisfaction of God's *anger* at our sin through the shed blood of Christ. The half sprinkled on the people looked forward to the *purification of us* through His blood (Hebrews 10:22) and the sanctification of the Spirit (1 Peter 1:2).

Today's eight verses have been literally filled with information; certainly more than we will be able to remember. But remembering the details isn't the point. Understanding the overall premises is. If you can remember that you are saved by grace through faith apart from works, then you have understood the overall message.

As we continue through the law, you'll also learn that good works aren't going to keep you saved. This is why God gave Israel a Day of Atonement. If you trust in your good works, then you're probably not a saved person. What you need to do is to trust in God's continued mercy, despite your many failings.

If you have good works for the Lord, that's a good thing, but they can never replace your wholehearted dependence on Christ. As the Bible says, "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord." And if you have never trusted in the grace of Christ to save you from the pit of hell, today would be a good day to get that settled. Here's what you need to know...

Closing Verse: "For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. ¹⁷For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at

all while the testator lives. ¹⁸ Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood. ¹⁹ For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰ saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.'" Hebrews 9:17-20

Next Week: Exodus 24:9-18 *What will Moses find there? A bubbling fountain?* (Come up to Me on the Mountain) (65th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Blood of the Covenant

Now He said to Moses, He did tell
"Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu
And seventy of the elders of Israel
And worship from afar, as I am instructing you

And Moses alone shall come near the Lord
But they shall not come near
Nor shall the people go up with him, hear my word
Only Moses shall come up here

So Moses came and told the people
All the words of the Lord; the judgments through and through
And all the people answered with one voice and said
"All the words which the Lord has said we will do

And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord
And he rose early in the morning as well
And built an altar at the foot of the mountain
And twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel

Then he sent young men of the children of Israel
Who offered burnt offerings

And sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord
These were the people's profferings

And Moses took half the blood
And put it in basins, for the covenant rite
And half the blood he sprinkled on the altar
The sacrificial blood, crimson and bright

Then he took the Book of the Covenant
And read in the hearing of the people too
And they said, "All that the Lord has said
We will do, and be obedient; this our word to you

And Moses took the blood
Sprinkled it on the people, and said to them too
"This is the blood of the covenant
Which the Lord has made according to all these words with you

The covenant was sealed in blood before the Lord
The people agreed to its words as one
And it came into effect that day
With the sprinkling of the blood the sealing was done

A New Covenant came many years later
Christ offered to the house of Israel and the house of Judah too
And it was sealed in His blood for them
But the Gentiles have been offered it too

All who come to Christ through faith
Will be received as children of God
It is a promise for all times, thus the Lord saith
That through Christ for eternity heavenly streets we will trod

What a marvelous thing to understand
To know what God has done for the world in Christ Jesus
Thank You, O God, for promises so grand
Thank You for all You have done for us

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 24:9-18

(COME UP TO ME ON THE MOUNTAIN)

A chiasm spans these verses. I found this one just a couple days ago as I figured there may be one here based on the 2 chiasms which spanned our last two sets of verses –

Exodus 24:9-18 Moses Went Up

Designation of Aaron and Hur to Lead During Moses' Absence (3/2/2016)

- a. 9 Then Moses went up
- b. 10 (Description of the Lord's glory)
- c. 12 T Lord said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and be there;
- d. 13 Moses went up to the mountain of God.
- x. 14 (instructions to the elders/designation of Aaron and Hur as leaders
- d. 15 Then Moses went up into the mountain,
- c. 16 And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.
- b. 17 (Description of the Lord's glory)
- a. 18 So Moses went into the midst of the cloud

There is something pretty special about climbing mountains. There is work involved in it, like a test of endurance, but when you get up to the top, it can be the most rewarding thing. This is why Christians often use the term "a mountaintop experience." When you are up there, you can raise your arms and feel the victory of having defeated the granite foe which tired your legs and exhausted your lungs.

From the mountain top, you can look back down on the mountain in derision – "You couldn't beat me, instead I overcame!" And you can look around at the world around you and feel victorious over all of it. You have ascended to a point where everything else looks small and insignificant.

For the Christian, a mountaintop experience is one which says, "I am alive! I have come to the place of God and to the throne of His grace. Nothing can defeat me because I am up here with Him. Everything else is overcome."

In today's verses, there will be a mountaintop experience for the nobles of Israel. They will rejoice and feast in the presence of the Lord. And yet, they hadn't really overcome anything. They simply agreed to the covenant and so the covenant was cut between the Lord and them.

If they saw God, feasted in His presence, and rejoiced at the marvel they beheld while still bound under the law which was set against them, then how much more should we rejoice at being in the presence of God while having the law fulfilled in our place? I mean, Christ is the One who did the work. Christ is the one who overcame. And by calling on Christ, we too are seated with Him in the heavenly places, not below Him looking up.

Text Verse: *O Zion,
You who bring good tidings,
Get up into the high mountain;
O Jerusalem,
You who bring good tidings,
Lift up your voice with strength,
Lift it up, be not afraid;
Say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" Isaiah 40:9*

Today is a great passage because it shows us that we can, in fact, draw near to God. Not too long after this account, Israel will really mess up and will violate the very law that they go up the mountain to celebrate in its establishment. Their mountaintop experience will end. But for those who are in Christ, the law is fulfilled. And so our mountaintop experience is just getting started. And it is one which will last for all eternity. Great stuff from our glorious Lord!

It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. They Saw the God of Israel (verses 9-11)

⁹Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel,

This must be a second ascension by these men after the ratification of the covenant. Some scholars see it as the same ascension mentioned in verse 1 and then verses 2-8 would be parenthetical. But as we saw last week this is not correct.

The first ascension was for the receiving of the Book of the Covenant. After that, it was brought to the people where agreement of it was made. After that it was ratified in

blood through sacrifice. Now, a second ascension is made. This is for a different purpose which logically follows such a sacrifice.

The question of why each of these named people has ascended needs to be answered. Why are Aaron and his two eldest sons mentioned? Why didn't one of the sons of Moses come? And why seventy elders? Moses is selected because he is God's chosen prophet. There is no family line of succession in the Bible for prophets. Thus his sons are not included.

Aaron is to be the high priest. This line will include genealogical succession all the way until the time of Christ. Thus, his two eldest sons are recorded in anticipation of this. And the seventy elders are representative of their respective tribes. Seventy has already been seen numerous times as reflective of divine perfection. Thus these seventy leaders divinely represent all of Israel. Of this ascension, Keil notes –

“Through their consecration with the blood of the covenant, the Israelites were qualified to ascend the mountain.” Keil and Delitzsch

In other words, Keil is saying that it is because of the sacrifice and the sprinkling of the blood that they may now ascend the mountain. This is not entirely correct as they had already ascended once. Rather, the consecration with the blood allows for what *follows* during this ascension, something marvelous for them to behold...

¹⁰ and they saw the God of Israel.

This verse is one which deniers of the Bible will use to challenge the inerrancy of it, and so it is good to evaluate it carefully. First, the words are clear – *v'yiru eth elohe yisrael* “...and they saw the God of Israel.” The first seeming contradiction arises from the words of Deuteronomy 4:12 where we read this –

“And the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; *you only heard a voice.*”

A moment later, the explanation for having seen no form is given –

“Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, ¹⁶ lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, ¹⁷ the likeness of any animal that *is* on the earth or the likeness of any

winged bird that flies in the air, ¹⁸ the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that *is* in the water beneath the earth.”

-Deuteronomy 4:15-18

This is easily explained in that Moses was speaking to the entire congregation of people in Deuteronomy. The people as a whole were denied this privilege that the elders were granted. Secondly, in Exodus 33, Moses asked to see the Lord's glory. In response, the Lord said, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.”

Again, there is no contradiction here. Nothing is said of seeing the Lord's face at this time with the elders on Sinai. It simply says they saw the God of Israel. After Moses was told he couldn't see the face of Yehovah, he was still allowed to see his back. If He has a back, then He has a front.

We cannot see the future, but we can see the present, and in our mind we can still see what it past. Again, there is no contradiction. Third, twice in the New Testament, we are told that seeing God isn't possible. Those verses are –

“No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.” 1 John 4:12

“I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and *before* Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴ that you keep *this* commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, ¹⁵ which He will manifest in His own time, *He who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honor and everlasting power. Amen.” 1 Timothy 6:13-16

These verses are speaking of God the Father and the Divine essence within the Godhead. No man can see Jesus' deity, and yet we see His humanity. Someday we will see His *glorified* humanity in a splendor that we cannot even imagine, but it will still be the part of God that is revealed in the present. The vastness of God will never be fully seen by us, even to all eternity.

It is Jesus who reveals God to us. And this then explains what the people there on the mountain saw. The “God of Israel” is Yehovah, the Lord. This is stated explicitly in Exodus 5:1. He is called the “God of Israel” here “because He, the God of the fathers, had become in truth the God of Israel through the covenant just made.” (Keil)

And as the Bible will continue to reveal as we progress, Yehovah, the Lord is Jesus our Lord. Therefore, the vision that they see in no way contradicts another portion of Scripture. Jesus revealed Himself to the people as Yehovah, the God of Israel.

This same God of Israel, Yehovah, will continue to manifest Himself to select people in various ways. Among others, He will appear in bodily form to Joshua, to Gideon, and to the parents of Samson. He will appear in divine splendor to Isaiah and to Ezekiel. Each time He reveals Himself in Scripture, we will get a better understanding of His glorious nature, all of which is revealed in Jesus. The author of Hebrews explains this –

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ² has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; ³ who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person...” Hebrews 1:1-3

¹⁰ (con't) **And *there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone,***

The fact that the feet of the Lord are mentioned shows that they beheld the Lord. It would make no sense, as so many scholars say, to note what is under His feet if they didn't see His feet. Instead, it would simply leave that out, but it doesn't. And if there are feet, then there is a body connected to the feet.

The words here read, *kemaaseh livnat ha'sappir* – “a work of the clearness of sapphire.” Two words are introduced into Scripture here. The first is *livnah*. This is its only use in the Bible. The word means “brick,” and thus properly whiteness, and then by implication, transparency.

The second new word is *sappir*. This is the first of just 11 times it will be used. *Sappir* comes from the word *saphar* which means “to count.” And thus it is a gem, perhaps used for scratching other substances. It is debated whether this is actually a sapphire or a lapis lazuli, but it is probably the sapphire.

The reason why is because it is said in Isaiah 54:11 to be one of the foundation stones in the New Jerusalem. John then mentions the same concerning sapphire in Revelation 21:19. Thus, this clear sapphire pavement (if you will) is a part of the vision of God which is beheld by the elders of Israel.

¹⁰ (con't) **and it was like the very heavens in *its* clarity.**

u'ke-etsem ha'shemayim la-tohar – “and the bone of the heavens in clearness.” The word “essence” is *etsem*. This word means “bones,” and thus it is a comparative word which stems back to the creation of Eve for Adam. In Genesis 2:23, Adam proclaimed this –

“This *is* now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man.” Genesis 2:23

He was making a comparison based on the rib from which she was made. Thus “bone” is a word of comparison. The *etsem* or “bone” of the heavens means “like the heavens.” And so this is not the sky that they saw, but something like the sky.

The word for “clarity” here is *tohar*. This is the first of only two times it will be used in the Bible, here and Psalm 89:44. In that psalm, it will be used in a negative way when the Lord is said to have caused the glory, or the clarity, of the throne of David to cease. *Tohar* comes from *taher* which means “clean.” Thus it literally signifies brightness; ceremonially purification; and glory.

Of this remarkable vision which these men beheld, Matthew Henry gives the following advice –

“The sapphires are the pavement under his feet; let us put all the wealth of this world under our feet, and not in our hearts. Thus the believer sees in the face of Jesus Christ, far clearer discoveries of the glorious justice and holiness of God, than ever he saw under terrifying convictions; and through the Saviour, holds communion with a holy God.” Matthew Henry

What Matthew Henry is saying is that this most precious of gems is used as a mere place for the feet of the Lord. And so let us not fix our eyes on even something so precious as this. Instead, let us fix our eyes on Jesus who is the Source and Creator of even such magnificent things.

¹¹ But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand.

A curious word is introduced here which is translated as “nobles.” It is *atsil*, and it is only found twice in the Bible, here and in Isaiah 41:9. Instead of “elders,” they are called *atsil*. The word gives the sense of separation.

In other words, the verse explains the use of the word. If we paraphrased it to say, “But on the separated of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand” then we can grasp why the word is used. These men were granted the right to have close proximity with the Lord because of their separated status. From this, the translators have designated them as “nobles.”

And again, this verse shows us that these men actually saw the God of Israel. If they didn’t and if they only saw a glimpse of His glory in light or fire as so many scholars suggest, then there would have been no need to include the words that He did not lay His hand on them.

The entire congregation has seen glimpses of His glory in light and in smoke, and in fire in both the pillar and in the manifestation at the giving of the law. Instead, these men are being given a view of far more.

11 (con’t) So they saw God, and they ate and drank.

Some translations give the idea of two separate occurrences – first they saw God, and then they ate and drank. This is incorrect. The two are simultaneous – they saw God *while* they ate and drank. This was a meal in the presence of the Lord as they dined on the peace offerings of the sacrifices of verse 5.

In this meal is a foreshadowing of the Lord’s Table which we participate in each week. It is a remembrance of the meal which was shared by Christ and His apostles at the giving of the New Covenant. We remember this by faith in the accuracy of the Bible and so, in Christ as revealed in Scripture we see, and fellowship, with God.

It needs to be noted that the word for “God” is used three times in our verses today. The first was calling him *elohe yisrael*, or “God of Israel.” The next two times it will say *ha’elohim* or “the God.”

This is the first such time. *v’yekhezu et ha’elohim* – “And they beheld the God.” The article is unfortunately left off once again by translators, but it is an important clue as to the nature of the Lord. This is evident because of the coming words of verse 12...

*On the mountain of God His people will meet
There in His presence they will look upon His glory
The banquet will be delicious and the fellowship sweet
It will be the consummation of a marvelous story*

*There on the mountain of God the people will rejoice
For eternal days there will be gladness and delight
Never again will be heard the saddened voice
Never again will there be a dark fearful night*

*On the mountain of God where Christ will forever reign
The people will stream to Him, His glory they shall see
Never will there be troubles or trials, never again pain
Instead there will be only blessing and joy – for all eternity*

II. The Mountain of the God (verses 12-15)

¹² Then the Lord said to Moses, “Come up to Me on the mountain and be there;

What can be assumed is that when the meal ended, all of the people descended the mountain and went back to the camp once again. This is to be inferred based on the events of Exodus 32. At some point after that, it says that “‘the Lord’ said to Moses.”

The God whom the elders saw is Yehovah. This name is mentioned 11 times in this chapter. The three times the word “God” is mentioned are only in this last section from verses 9-13.

They are given in relation to who the Lord is. He is the God of Israel. He is the God who can reveal Himself to the nobles, and He is the God who displays His power on the mountain. It is the God, Yehovah, who now petitions Moses to come up once again. It is for a very specific purpose that He does so...

^{12 (con’t)} and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them.”

The word “tablets” is *luakh*. This is the first of 43 times it will be used. It comes from a root which means “to glisten.” Thus it is a tablet (as polished), of stone, wood, or metal.

This is now the third time that writing has been mentioned in the Bible, but this time the words are said to have been written by the Lord Himself.

There is great debate as to the meaning of the words found here. Is this speaking of only the Ten Commandments in a triple description? In other words, the tablets of stone are the law and the commandments. Or, will the Lord give him tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments and also the law and commandments which He has written?

Deuteronomy 5:22 says this –

“These words the Lord spoke to all your assembly, in the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and He added no more. And He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me.”

-Deuteronomy 5:22

This sounds like only the Ten Commandments were inscribed on stone. However, it could mean that only the Ten Commandments were spoken to the people and nothing more. This doesn't preclude other words having been included on the tablets. In Exodus 31, after seven chapters of instruction to Moses, it will say this –

“And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.” Exodus 31:18

This seems to imply that all of what was said in those seven chapters is recorded on the tablets, but it also doesn't preclude the assumption that the Lord simply waited to give the tablets, which contained only the Ten Commandments, to Moses just before he went back down the mountain. The answer to this seems to come from Exodus 34 where it says this –

“So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.” Exodus 34:28

In that chapter, Moses was told to write the words of the Lord, but the words of the Ten Commandments were written on the new set of Tablets by the Lord. So, what seems to be the case is that *only* the Ten Commandments were written by the Lord on tablets. The rest of the instructions which follow in the next seven chapters will be recorded by Moses as the Lord instructs.

The stone tablets are given as a picture of our spiritual state. They are durable, but capable of being broken. In this, God knew that man would break them. It was therefore a picture of the hardness of the human heart upon which no impression can be made except by God's finger. Paul explains this in the New Testament with the coming of the New Covenant. In his second letter to the Corinthians, he says –

“...clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is*, of the heart.” 2 Corinthians 3:3

Thus this entire giving of the law, with Moses' breaking of the first tablets and then a second set being made, is a picture of Christ. God made the first tablets and recorded the law on them. But man was incapable of obeying them, pictured by Moses dashing them to pieces.

The second set of tablets was made by Moses and then the Lord wrote the commands on them. This pictures Christ, who came from man and yet who fulfilled God's word without breaking it. The humanity/deity of Christ is the Stone of the tablets, unbroken and who is the Word of God.

Everything else that Moses will be told in the next seven chapters will also picture Christ. There will be instructions for religious life, a form of worship given, ceremonies, a tabernacle with associated furniture, garments, etc. All of these are given for the benefit of the people, but they will all picture the work of the Lord. These will be recorded by Moses at the Lord's instruction.

¹³ So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God.

As suddenly as he appeared in Exodus 17, Joshua now appears again. Together with Moses, they both ascend *har ha'elohim* or the “mountain of **the** God.” As always is the case, when the mountain is referred to in connection with God, there is an article in front of “God.” The One true God, Yehovah, dwells there.

Joshua is certainly being brought along because he was not only the general of the forces as we saw in the battle with Amalek, but he was also his close and trusted assistant. He was shown to be accepted by Moses as his designated representative and successor. In every way so far he forms a beautiful picture of Christ.

What is just as remarkable here as in the account in Exodus 17, is that the name *yehoshua*, or Joshua, is used, but his name was originally Hoshea. It won't be until Numbers 13 that the change in his name is recorded. And yet Moses calls him Joshua now. Thus, in this we are to see a further picture of Christ.

The commentator Bishop Pearson explains this as "...without Jesus, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, there is no looking into the secrets of heaven, nor approaching the presence of God."

¹⁴ And he said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we come back to you.

All that is said here is that they were to wait for the return of Moses and Joshua. No timeframe is given for their return, but verse 12 says that he would remain there. The time was, however, unspecified. What is implied though is that no matter how long they were gone, they were to wait there and not ascend the mountain where the presence of God was.

¹⁴ (con't) Indeed, Aaron and Hur *are* with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them."

As in the battle with Amalek, Aaron and Hur are given special attention. During that battle, which was led by Joshua, Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hands to ensure the battle would end in Amalek's defeat. Josephus says that Hur is the husband of Miriam and thus he would be the brother-in-law of Moses and Aaron.

¹⁵ Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain.

With his instructions for the affairs of the camp settled, it says that he went up into the mountain. The same words are used here as in verse 13 – *v'yaal moshe el* – "and went up Moses to." When we get to verse 18, it says that Moses will go up again, using the same word *v'yaal* or "and went up."

Because of this, scholars say that Moses went up the mountain with Joshua a part of the way and then when he is called again, he will go up the rest of the way alone. But it doesn't say this. That is only speculation and it is unfounded. What appears to be happening is that verses 13, 15, and 18 are all the same ascent.

So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. (13)

Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain. (15)

So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. (18)

Between the first two notes of ascent, is a parenthetical thought –

And he said to the elders, “Wait here for us until we come back to you. Indeed, Aaron and Hur *are* with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them.” (14)

Now the glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. ¹⁷The sight of the glory of the Lord *was* like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel. (16,17)

No scholar looks at the first mention of going up as him actually going up until he first instructed the elders about Aaron and Hur. So why should the second mention be any different? Rather, that thought is given while Moses is still with the people. He waited six days until he was called and then he went up with Joshua into the cloud which had descended on the mountain before they departed.

It’s important to note that in Hebrew it doesn’t say “a cloud” covered the mountain. It says “the cloud” covered it. Thus, it is the same cloud which guided the people through their wanderings, through the Red Sea, and which has brought them to where they are. It is the cloud which both conceals the glory of the Lord and in which the glory is revealed.

What makes this interesting is that only Moses is mentioned from now through verse 32:17 when Joshua will again be mentioned. Despite him being with Moses all of the time, he will not be mentioned through the entire account.

*We have not been left alone in the wilderness
Though the Lord is not here, He has a Helper given to us
And His word is written so we don’t have to guess
Which path to take to lead us straight to Jesus*

*And if it be the word of God, then let us daily attend to it
For in its pages are all that we need as our guide
With our feet shod, to its words let us submit
And walk the path it reveals, never turning aside*

*And when we come to the end of our days
For our efforts, upon us the Lord will smile
Because we have been obedient to all of His ways
Applying His words to our lives all of the while*

III. The Glory of the Lord (verses 16-18)

¹⁶ Now the glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days.

Why is it important to determine if Moses went up part of the way and then waited six days to go up the rest of the way, or if he ascended the mountain on the seventh in one ascent? The reason is that Matthew uses the same terminology for the account of the transfiguration that is used here in Exodus. Here is what he wrote –

“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; ² and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. ³ And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.” Matthew 17:1-3

The specificity by Matthew is given for a reason. In the preceding verse, which is Matthew 16:28, Jesus said this to His disciples –

“Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.” Matthew 16:28

It was on the seventh day that Jesus, Peter, James, and John ascended the mountain and Jesus was transfigured, thus revealing the glory of the Lord. Matthew is tying the glory of the Lord seen at Sinai to the glory of Christ on the high mountain.

All three of the synoptic gospels tie in the glory of the Lord on the mountain with the promised taste of the kingdom. For the people of Israel, the law had been received and the elders had seen the glory of God. Now a repeat of this is seen in Christ.

In Matthew 16, Peter had made his proclamation that Jesus is the Christ. It was to be known and understood that He is the incarnate Word, Yehovah, just as Yehovah is understood to be “the God” by the elders of Israel. Unfortunately, in both occasions, the people failed to stand on the evident truth. In Exodus, they will fashion a false god, and in Matthew they will crucify Christ. But there is also another picture in both accounts which will be seen as we go on.

¹⁶ (con't) **And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.**

It is certain to me that Moses and Joshua are still with the people in the camp. Six days had gone by since the cloud descended upon Sinai. Now, on the seventh day, the call is made for Moses from the midst of the cloud. It is time for him to ascend the mountain.

Many – even most – scholars see this as a Sabbath day. I don't see any reason to assume this. Rather, as Moses has to ascend the mountain, that would mean that he would have to work to go up, thus it would certainly be a violation of the very law that has been given and which will be engraved on stone. That makes no sense.

What makes more sense, if we are to speculate, is that this is the first day of the week. The call would have been made *after* the Sabbath when Moses had rested, not on it. Further, it would then match the day which John received his vision of the future which is recorded in Revelation 1:10, which was on Sunday, Lord's Day.

¹⁷ **The sight of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel.**

The six days equate to the first six thousand years of man on earth. The seventh day equates to the millennium. This is the same picture that Christ was giving the disciples. He said that some standing with him wouldn't taste death till they saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.

The transfiguration anticipated the fulfillment of this. The glory of the Lord was seen to them on the mountain on the seventh day, just as the glory of the Lord will be seen in the coming millennium during the final thousand years of God's 7000-year plan.

The people of Israel had a taste of this truth 1500 years earlier. To them, the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain. The author of Hebrews uses the same terminology to speak of Christ our God. He is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29).

The outward appearance of God's glory on the mountain in this fiery display was given to demonstrate the "unapproachable justice of God" (Lange), just as it was when the cherubim stood at the east of Eden with their flaming swords and as is seen throughout the rest of the Old Testament symbolism.

Only in the death of Jesus, where the veil of the temple was rent in two, could man once again find access to God. The law which was received, and which Moses will now continue to receive, is only another barrier to true fellowship with God. Only in its fulfillment can that be realized. And only Christ has fulfilled it.

The Pulpit Commentary notes concerning the six days of delay before calling Moses to Himself that “God thus taught Moses, and through him the world, that near approach to him requires long and careful preparation.” That careful preparation of six days is directly equated to the six thousand years of careful preparation that God has taught us through until the coming of Christ in His kingdom.

It is true, we already have access to God through Christ, but this is not yet realized in its fullness. The account today shows us though that it won’t be long before it is. We are at the cusp of a great day in redemptive history.

18 So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain.

Moses alone is recorded as going up, but we know that Joshua was with him. The picture we see in this is realized in the layout of the temple. The people remained outside while the high priest alone went behind the veil. Thus Sinai, or the Bush of the Thorn, is given as a picture of that which is unapproachable but to the high priest. The people of Israel waited while Moses and Joshua went up.

Jesus is that High Priest, pictured by Moses and the unnamed Joshua. He wore a crown of thorns pictured by the naming of Sinai in verse 16. It is the only time Sinai is mentioned in this chapter and the first time it has been named since chapter 19, thirteen sermons ago. It was He who bore the crown of thorns who also went behind the veil.

And like bookends, the names are calling out to us. Moses is the one to receive the Law, Jesus is the One to fulfill it. Thus even the names fit the picture. Moses, or “He who draws out,” is the one to draw out the law for the people. Joshua or “Yah is Salvation” is there to picture Jesus, the Lord who saves, who fulfilled it for us.

18 (con’t) And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

The chapter ends with these surprising words. If you had never read the account before, and if you had to stop here for a while, you would be left wondering about it. But as we

know, Moses received an immense amount of information during those forty days. They will comprise the next seven chapters of Exodus.

But the number forty isn't just an arbitrary amount of time that Moses happened to take to receive the instructions. The timeframe has been given for us to reflect on. Like all numbers in Scripture, there is a purpose for each. EW Bullinger defines the significance of the number forty –

“Forty has long been universally recognized as an important number, both on account of the frequency of its occurrence, and the uniformity of its association with a period of *probation, trial, and chastisement*—(not *judgment*, like the number 9, which stands in connection with the punishment of enemies, but the chastisement of sons, and of a covenant people). It is the product of 5 and 8, and points to the action of *grace* (5), leading to and ending in *revival and renewal* (8). This is certainly the case where *forty* relates to a period of evident *probation*.”

The forty days are rightly defined by Bullinger as a time of evident probation. The people had been given the law and now they were to be tested with that law without their leader there to supervise them. How would they fare during the period that he is gone?

There are eight such great forty day periods recorded in Scripture. One of them corresponds to this period in a marvelous way. Israel was given these forty days of testing and they will fail. Jesus was given forty days of testing and He prevailed.

And His forty day period also matches the other periods of forties found throughout the Bible; both periods of forty days and of forty years. In all ways, He was shown to be superior to those who came before Him. He never failed and He is consistently shown as our “Greater than...” In all ways and in all types and pictures, He is truly “Greater than.”

One thing is for sure about these many stories of the Old Testament. Time and time again, they are given to show us not just stories of things that really happened, but of something else, something that we cannot do without.

Each story points to our failings, but they are intended to lead us to Jesus' victory. It may seem a curious way that God deals with us, but one thing is sure – nothing can be more rewarding than finding Christ on every page. The love of God for us is poured out in the ink which permeates the pages of the Bible.

All of this effort is to show us that God really cares enough to take the time through the ages of human history to weave together a most marvelous picture of Jesus. If you are seeing this, but are still on the outside of His grace, why don't you settle that today? Call on Christ, receive His offer of grace, and be reconciled to God through that act. Let me tell you how you can do just that...

Closing Verse: *"This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, ²⁰ where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." Hebrews 6:19, 20*

Next Week: Exodus 25:1-9 *Many details for Moses to tackle...* (Preparations for the Tabernacle) (67th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Meeting with God on the Mountain

Then Moses went up
Also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu
And seventy of the elders of Israel
Well, those seventy went up too

And they saw the God of Israel
Something marvelous that to their grandchildren they could tell

And there was under His feet
As it were a paved work of sapphire stone
And it was like the very heavens in its clarity
There below the feet of His awesome throne

But on the nobles of the children of Israel
He did not lay His hand
So they saw God, and they ate and drank
A marvelous feast, one ever so grand

Then the Lord said to Moses
“Come up to Me on the mountain and be there
And I will give you tablets of stone
And the law and commandments for you to share

Which I have written
That you may teach them

So Moses arose –
With his assistant Joshua together they did tread
And Moses went up to the mountain of God

And he said to the elders
“Wait here for us until we come back to you
Indeed, Aaron and Hur are with you
If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them; this you shall do

Then Moses into the mountain, up he went
And a cloud covered the mountain for this event

Now the glory of the Lord rested
On Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days
And on the seventh day He called to Moses
Out of the midst of the cloud; such were His ways

The sight of the glory of the Lord
Was like a consuming fire, as the record does tell
On the top of the mountain
In the eyes of the children of Israel

So Moses went into the midst of the cloud
And into the mountain up he went
And Moses was on the mountain
Forty days and forty nights; the time that he there spent

So Moses went there to meet with the Lord
And to bring back instructions for Israel
All the instructions according to His word
Those words which the Bible does now tell

And all of this was a part of the story
To lead us to the coming of Jesus
Each step reveals a bit more of His glory
Each step is revealed in the word to us

Lord God, we thank You for this marvelous book
We thank you for all the wonder it does relate to us
Give us the burning desire each day to take a look
And to bring us ever closer to our Lord Jesus

Yes, through Him to You we shall eternally praise
Yes O God, so it shall be for eternal days!

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 25:1-9

(PREPARATIONS FOR THE TABERNACLE)

The day I typed this sermon was the day after the tornado on Siesta Key, which was a Sunday. That Sunday I got home and nothing went right with the video work. It didn't all get done until about 12:30 that night.

Monday morning I was tired and I was frustrated. So much so, that when I was at my morning job cleaning the mall, I could hardly get the mental strength to talk to the Lord about the upcoming sermon. I mumbled my prayer for guidance and help to get through it, and I think I may have mumbled a prayer for a car to run me over and save me from any more life.

When I got home, I thought, "How am I ever going to get through these nine verses with a sermon?" I figured there would be a lot of filler and not much detail. However, despite being hugely tired and saying out loud to the Lord, "I don't think I can do this today" I began studying.

Where I had begged for relief from the task, I began to beg for relief from any distractions. Every word and every detail pointed to Christ and all I could wish for was more... give me more of You, O Lord. Thanking the Lord for once again surprising me with an overwhelming abundance of detail!

Text Verse: *"Let us go into His tabernacle;
Let us worship at His footstool." Psalm 132:7*

Nine short verses that simply won't wait another moment to be looked into. Let's skip the fluff and dive right into them. Christ is there... It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Willingly Made Offering (verse 1-7)

¹Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

v'dabber Yehovah el Moshe l'mor – "And spoke Yehovah to Moses saying." The first verse of the chapter is offset as an anticipatory statement. Normally when it says something like, "Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying..." the same verse will contain at

least a portion of what the Lord said. This however is not the case here. Instead, the words are given by themselves.

In this, it makes the chapter a verse longer than it would have otherwise been, and thus the book of Exodus is a verse longer, and so the Bible as a whole is also. Because the obvious patterns which run through Scripture based on the verse divisions, it is always interesting to highlight the offset verses.

In the case of this one, it is the only one to be found in the entire chapter. But even more, it is the main introduction for everything from now until Exodus 30:10. Everything that is recorded between those two verses is one running commentary of instruction from the Lord to Moses.

The record of the Bible is that no break at all is found in the instruction during that period. This then is 197 verses of detailed instructions which Moses was given at one time in order to show us Christ. It is an amazing amount of information, but because it was all given at one time, we will also evaluate it all at one time.

This means that this sermon will last for the next 37 hours without a break. I hope you ate breakfast... Seriously though, these verses through Exodus 30:10, are laid out precisely and with intent. As an overall brushstroke of what lies ahead there, these are the major sections of instructions which are given –

The Offerings of the People for the Tabernacle

The Details for the Construction and Care of the Tabernacle

The Ark of the Testimony and the Mercy Seat
The Table for the Showbread

The Gold Lampstand (meaning the Menorah)

The Tabernacle (the Dwelling place) and the Tent

The Altar of Burnt Offering

The Court of the Tabernacle

The Care of the Lampstand

Garments for the Priesthood

- The Ephod

- The Breastplate

- Other Priestly Garments

The Consecration of Aaron and His Sons

The Daily Offerings

The Altar of Incense

As verse 1 notes, it is the Lord who gives all of the instructions for this dwelling place and all of its associated care. The Book of the Covenant with its main civil, political, and social laws were imparted to Moses who then presented them to Israel. These laws were both moral and judicial in nature. They agreed to them and this was confirmed in the cutting of the covenant and the partaking of the covenant meal.

However, to this point no form of worship, or specified conduct for the necessary religious rites, has been given with the exception of the instructions for the earthen altar. This section begins that process. This will be the ceremonial aspect of the law.

In order to ensure that the people would remember and follow the Lord who had become their God, and to ensure that they would fix their eyes, heart, and attention on Him alone, the instructions that follow are necessary.

They will have a priest to minister, they will have the implements of that priesthood for him to properly do so, and they will have a place where he could effectively conduct the rituals. It should be noted that the design and materials for this ritual worship are all going to be instructed by God, specifically and precisely.

The reason for this is that if it were left to the people to construct the tabernacle and to design all of the associated implements, it wouldn't properly reflect who He is. The design would be arbitrary and without any real connection to the holiness of the Lord.

Looking at the countless religions of the world, and the often tragic ways in which they worship their gods, it is not surprising that the Lord will give such minute detail for worshipping Him. And this is so important to proper worship that these instructions will be given first in chapters 25-31 as a divine command from the Lord.

Then they will be repeated after they are accomplished to show complete adherence to what was mandated. This will be a historical record of the fulfillment of the command and will comprise most of chapters 35-40.

In New Testament Christianity, there is no such specificity given for the worship of the Lord. There are big churches and little ones. There are ten thousand styles of them, and they meet at whatever time is acceptable to the congregation. The New Testament believer is to worship in Spirit and in truth with very little to instruct us in how to conduct ourselves during the times of worship with the noted exception that our conduct is to be centered on the study, explanation, and application of the Word of God.

Unlike us, however, the minute and precise instructions for tabernacle construction will be given beginning first with the making of the Ark of the Covenant. This is the place where the Lord will manifest Himself to the High Priest. The final instructions in chapter 30 will deal with the altar of incense.

This altar of incense was to stand immediately in front of the Ark. Therefore, the layout of the next 6 chapters is specific and purposeful. As Keil and Delitzsch note –

“The dwelling was erected round Jehovah’s seat, and round this the court. The priests first of all presented the sacrifices upon the altar of burnt-offering, and then proceeded into the holy place and drew near to Jehovah. The highest act in the daily service of the priests was evidently this standing before Jehovah at the altar of incense, which was only separated by the curtain from the most holy place.” Keil and Delitzsch

In Exodus 17, while at Massah and Meribah, the people contended with Moses and tempted the Lord, saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?” The tabernacle would be a permanent reminder to them that He was, in fact, among them.

And even more, because they were in the wilderness and dwelling in tents, this royal and kingly edifice would likewise be a tent. When they broke down and moved, He would also move with them. This would continue all the way through the time of the judges, and even until the time when Solomon would build a permanent edifice to the Lord.

In the same way, Jesus came and pitched His tent among us. He dwelt as we dwell, He moved as we move, and His tent was not unlike our own. Israel was given instructions for the place where the Lord would dwell and it would only be a reflection of the more perfect tabernacle not made with hands.

Everything about what they would construct was given to testify to the people of Israel that the Lord had made His abode among them. Each aspect of it, from the materials used and the form of construction, to the rituals associated with them, picture the work of the Lord Jesus. In other words, everything that lies ahead testifies to the coming Messiah – the Incarnate Word of God.

This even includes the seemingly unrelated aspect of obtaining the materials for the construction. Though it is true that materials need to be collected in order to build the tabernacle, the fact that they are collected, and from where they have come, are in themselves pictures of Christ.

²“Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering.

With Moses having ascended to the Lord, the first words recorded here are not “Welcome Moses. Sit down and let’s talk.” Rather they immediately begin with a command to him, “Speak to the children of Israel.” Whatever may have been said prior to this is not the concern of the account.

There are no superfluities recorded here, only precision and determined purpose. And what he is to speak to them concerns an offering. The word is *terumah*. This is its first of seventy-six uses in the Bible.

It is mostly found in Exodus, Numbers, and Ezekiel, but also in quite a few other books of the Old Testament. It means “a present” (as offered up), especially in sacrifice or as tribute. A *terumah* can be voluntary or it can be prescribed, but either way it is something that is presented upwards.

It comes from the word *rum* which means to be high, or exalted. Thus one can see the idea of something being offered up, like an oblation. In the case of this offering, the Lord is requiring it from the people for the purpose of building Him a tent.

From the external appearance of it, it will seem rather mundane. And yet, the interior will be grand, beautiful, and pure. The parallel to Israel should have then been evident. They were a group of people, like any other. And yet, they were to be a grand people, beautiful to God, and pure in their lives and conduct.

As the abode of their King was, so were they to be. And so, the offering is requested of them in the same manner as the offerings of any subjects appearing before their king would be made. They were to bring from their own stores that which would be lifted up as a special gift for this precious dwelling.

And yet, there was nothing compulsory about this particular offering. Unlike a large percentage of the other offerings which will be noted in Scripture, this one was to be wholly voluntary...

^{2 (con’t)} From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering.

The Hebrew here reads *kal ish asher yidevenu libbow*, literally “...of every man whose heart impels him.” This is the first of eighteen times that the word *nadav* will be used. It

means to incite or to impel. It is the kind of willingness that would impel a person to volunteer as a soldier after their country was attacked.

It would also be the type of offering someone would make when a great need arose in a community or a church. They would see the need and their heart would *impel* them forward to meet the need. This is exactly what the Lord is looking for.

It is the same sentiment that Paul uses in the New Testament concerning one's giving in church for any reason. In his second letter to the Corinthians, he gives one of only two specific verses concerning giving in our dispensation of grace. There he wrote –

“*So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.*” 2 Corinthians 9:7

There was to be nothing forced upon the people for this most sacred of habitations. Rather, the bestowal of the offerings was solely up to how their heart urged them on. On the giving of the gifts and in the use of them after they have been given, Matthew Henry writes the following –

“The best use we can make of our worldly wealth, is to honour God with it in works of piety and charity. We should ask, not only, What must we do? but, What may we do for God? ... What is laid out in the service of God, we must reckon well bestowed; and whatsoever is done in God's service, must be done by his direction.” Matthew Henry

³And this *is* the offering which you shall take from them:

For the third time in just 2 verses, the word *terumah*, or “offering” is used. The things that are to be presented are an offering or an oblation to the Lord. They are to be willingly given, not demanded, and they are to come from the people.

All things are from the Lord and He could have demanded these things as a compulsory tax, but this was not how it was to be. There will be taxes and other compulsory gifts, but these were to be solely from the heart. And the list begins with three metals.

It is not at all unlikely that there would have been an immense amount of each of these at hand. First, the sheer number of the people meant that if every family had only a little of each metal, it would still add up to an immense amount. These metals would have been accumulated over the centuries, plundered from the Egyptians when they left, and even plundered from the Amelekites during that battle. The named metals are...

³ (con't) **gold,**

zahav – Gold is the finest of the biblical metals. In the Bible it spiritually indicates purity and holiness, royalty, and divinity. It is one of two metals that have a natural color which is not silver. Thus it is both a metal and a color, and not surprisingly, both are associated with kingship.

It is precious because of its rarity, and it is valuable. Throughout history it has been used as a basis for monetary systems, and it is the standard by which the value of other things is set. It is also considered an incorruptible metal.

³ (con't) **silver,**

v'keseph – “and silver.” Silver is another precious metal which is associated in particular with a major subject of the Bible – redemption. *Keseph* comes from another word *kasaph* which means to “be eager” or to “long for.” Thus we have a hidden pun from Paul’s hand concerning redemption and our longing for it –

“Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, **eagerly** waiting for the adoption, the **redemption** of our body.” Romans 8:23

The root from this state of eagerness means “to become pale.” Thus the color of silver, which is pale, finds its source. Our redemption is something we *eagerly* await, and in so waiting our countenance is pale, waiting to be filled with the resplendent glory of the Lord.

Throughout history, silver has been used as one of the major mediums of monetary exchange. This is especially evident in biblical history where it is almost synonymous with money. This is so much so that translators quite often translate the word *keseph* as “money” rather than as “silver.” And in a large portion of these instances, the silver or *keseph*, is noted in the purchase, or redemption, of people, materials, or objects.

³ (con't) **and bronze;**

u-nekhosheth – “and bronze.” The metal here is called bronze, but it refers to copper and its alloys. For example, in Deuteronomy 8:9 using this same word and speaking of

the land of Canaan, it says “...a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones *are* iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper.”

However, the KJV incorrectly translated that verse as “brass” instead of “copper.” Brass is an alloy and is not dug out of the ground, and it was too early in history for brass to have been a part of the metal making process. Rather, copper is dug from the ground in an impure state and then it is refined to become pure copper, or it is mixed with other elements to become an alloy.

The metals, whether copper, bronze, or brass, get their color from the copper which is the other rare metal that possesses a natural color which is not silver. The *nekhosheth*, or bronze hasn’t been seen since Genesis 4:22, but it will become a common word from this point on. It mainly symbolizes judgment, but also endurance. Like the other two metals, the symbolism for this will be seen throughout the Bible and in both testaments. This judgment can be negative, such as in the case of bronze fetters being worn by those who have been sentenced for a crime, or in a pictorial judgment such as that found in the curses of Deuteronomy 28:23 where the punishment for disobeying the Lord is described as “...your heavens which *are* over your head shall be bronze.” That picture is one of rainless skies, heat, and anguish.

However, the judgment can also be one of purification and justification. This is seen time and time again as well, but one fine example is that of the brazen serpent of Numbers 21. There the people sinned against the Lord and the Lord judged them for it. However, at the same time as bringing judgment upon them, He gave them grace and a chance to be justified by mere faith –

“Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. ⁵And the people spoke against God and against Moses: ‘Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For *there is* no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread.’ ⁶So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. ⁷Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, ‘We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord that He take away the serpents from us.’ So Moses prayed for the people.

⁸Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Make a fiery *serpent*, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.’ ⁹So Moses

made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.” Numbers 21:4-9

Following the literal, spiritual, and pictorial meanings of these metals throughout the Bible, you will find consistency and marvelous pictures of Christ. The same is true with colors...

⁴ **blue,**

u-tekeleth – literally, “and blue.” This is the first time that *tekeleth* or “blue” is mentioned in the Bible. It is believed to come from the word *shekheleth*, the cerulean mussel. In other words the color obtained from it or that is dyed with it. Blue in the Bible is associated with the law, especially the keeping of the law. This is seen explicitly in Numbers 15 –

“Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners. ³⁹ And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them, and that you *may* not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, ⁴⁰ and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God.” Numbers 15:38-40

⁴ (con’t) **purple,**

argaman – Again, this is the first use of this word in the Bible. It is purple or blue/red. The color in the Bible, like in many other cultures, is one of royalty or that which pertains to or belongs to a king. As it is a mixture of blue and red, in meaning it thus is a combination of what those two colors mean – the law for blue; and war, blood, and/or judgment for red, as we now see...

⁴ (con’t) **and scarlet *thread*,**

v’towlaat shani – literally, “and from worms red.” Two words here are used to describe the color. The first is *towla*. This is actually a worm known as the crimson-grub. However, here it is used only in this manner concerning the color from it and cloths dyed with it. The second word is *shani* which means scarlet.

Taken together, they are translated as “scarlet,” but implying the scarlet which comes from the *towla* or crimson-grub worm. The double words “implies that to strike this color the wool or cloth was twice dipped” (Clarke). The scarlet, or red, in the Bible pictures and symbolizes war, blood, and/or judgment. All of these colors picture the future work of Christ.

⁴ (con’t) **fine linen,**

v’shesh – literally, “and linen.” This is only the second time that *shesh* has been seen in the Bible. The first was when Joseph, who himself was a marvelous picture of Christ, was clothed in fine linen after interpreting Pharaoh’s prayers and being elevated to his high position in the land. The symbolism of the *shesh*, or fine linen, is explicitly explained in the book of Revelation –

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give glory to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his bride has made herself ready. ⁸ And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.” Revelation 19:7, 8 (Jubilee Bible)

Therefore, the linen symbolizes righteousness.

⁴ (con’t) **and goats’ hair;**

v’izzim – literally, “and goats’.” It is the plural of the word *ez*, or female goat. But it is masculine in the plural here to indicate goats’ hair. Hair in the Bible gives us a picture of awareness. Esau was a hairy man and he pictured fallen Adam, aware of sin.

The goat is a picture of punishment of sin. The hairy goat offering was one of the sin offerings, but more so is that goats are only used in sin offerings. Other animals might be used for several offerings, but goats were always for judgment on sin. Therefore, the goat’s hair here pictures awareness of sin and that it will be punished.

⁵ **ram skins dyed red,**

v’orot elim me’addamim – literally, “and skins of rams dyed red.” The ram is the leader of the flock and its protector. The protection is seen in its power to butt with its horns which are also a symbol of strength in the Bible. The symbolism we are to see then is that of Christ, the protector of His people.

The verb for “dyed red” or *adom*, is found 10 times in the Bible. It comes from the idea of being made red, or to show blood in the face. The use of these ram skins dyed red will picture Christ’s covering of our sins. It is explained by the use of *adom* in Isaiah –

“Come now, and let us reason together,
Says the Lord,
‘Though your sins are like scarlet,
They shall be as white as snow;
Though they are **red** like crimson,
They shall be as wool.’” Isaiah 1:18

After this, Paul explains how this points to Christ in his second letter to the Corinthians –

“For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

⁵ (con’t) **badger skins,**

v’orot tekhashim – literally, “and skins of porpoise.” The word here is *takhash* and it is always governed by the word *oroth*, or skins. Therefore it is certainly the hide of an animal. The translation of the KJV and the NKJV of “badgers” is dubious at best. The badger is rarely, if ever seen in Sinai and it lacks any cognate language support. Rather, this word is cognate to the Arabic word *tukhas*, or porpoise. Therefore, in modern translations it is normally called the porpoise, the dolphin, or the dugong, which is like a manatee. Thus it would be a light gray to sky-blue covering.

This is the first of 14 times it is used in the Bible and it is always used in connection with the covering for the tabernacle, with but one exception in Ezekiel 16 where it is used to describe figurative sandals worn by Jerusalem. As Bedouins still use the dugong for such sandals even in more modern times, such a sea animal is the most likely translation.

As this skin will be used as the outermost covering of the tabernacle, “the skin of a marine animal like the dolphin would have been eminently suitable, both for its toughness and for its waterproofing properties” (HAW).

As the sea is representative of the world of chaos and confusion and rebellion, this would then make a beautiful picture of Christ’s covering of us from that. This would fit well also with the one non-tabernacle use of this word in Ezekiel concerning the sandals

made of this skin. Having such skin for shoes would then infer that the chaos of the sea was under-foot and subdued.

⁵ (con't) **and acacia wood;**

va'atse shittim – literally, “and wood acacias.” This is the first of 28 times that *shittah*, or acacia wood, is used. Acacia is a very slow growing tree that would be readily available in the area where they were. Its heart wood is dark reddish-brown and it is beautiful when sanded and polished.

It is like cypress in Florida which is resistant to decay because it deposits in its heartwood waste substances which turn into preservatives. This renders it unpalatable to insects. It is also dense and difficult to be penetrated by water and other decaying agents. Thus it is considered an incorruptible wood. Therefore, it pictures the incorruptible nature of Christ's humanity. This will be seen as the implements for the tabernacle are constructed.

⁶ **oil for the light,**

shemen la'maor – the noun *shemen*, or oil, comes from the verb *shamen*, which means “to grow fat.” The oil will be used throughout the Bible as a picture of that of the presence of the Spirit. In this case, it would be for spiritual understanding, specifically that which provides illumination.

⁶ (con't) **and spices for the anointing oil**

b'samim l'shemen ha'miskhah – the word *bosem*, or spice, is introduced into the Bible here and will be used 30 times. It means “fragrance” and so by implication, spicery. It is also the balsam plant, which has a sweet odor. One can hear the similarity in sound – balsam and *bosem*. These spices would be used for anointing those designated for a particular task.

The spiritual picture is that of the anointing of the Holy Spirit first for Christ's work and then that which is given to us through Christ's work. A simple and yet direct verse which shows this is found in Luke 4 –

“The **Spirit of the Lord** is upon Me,
Because He has **anointed** Me

To preach the gospel to *the* poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to *the* captives
And recovery of sight to *the* blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed; Luke 4:18

⁶ (con't) **and for the sweet incense;**

v'liqtoreth ha'sammim – These two words, *qetoreth*, or “incense,” and *sam*, or “fragrant,” are both used for the first time in Scripture. The Bible explicitly explains what incense pictures and therefore we need go no further than what it says –

“Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.” Revelation 5:8

This will be further explained as we travel through the instructions from the Lord to Moses.

⁷ **onyx stones,**

avne shoham – “stones onyx.” We already met this stone, *shoham*, once before in Genesis 2:12. We can't be adamant about what it actually is, but it will be seen a total of 10 times in Scripture.

“Then you shall take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel: ¹⁰ six of their names on one stone and six names on the other stone, in order of their birth. ¹¹ With the work of an engraver in stone, *like* the engravings of a signet, you shall engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel. You shall set them in settings of gold. ¹² And you shall put the two stones on the shoulders of the ephod *as* memorial stones for the sons of Israel. So Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord on his two shoulders as a memorial.”

-Exodus 28:9-12

These will be explained when we get to that passage.

⁷ (con't) **and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate.**

v'avne milluim la'ephod v'lakhoshen – And now we have a few new words once again. The first is *millu*, or “setting” which is used just 15 times. The stones are to be “set” into place. This word also means “ordination” where someone is “set” into a position. The next is *ephod*. It’s a word that will be used 49 times. In this case, it means a girdle; specifically the ephod or high-priest’s shoulder-piece, but it also generally means “an image.”

And the last word is *khoshen*. This is a word which comes from another unused root probably meaning to contain or sparkle, perhaps a pocket; or rich, as containing gems. It is used only of the breastplate of the high priest. It is only seen 23 times in Exodus and twice in Leviticus. These will be explained in detail in those passages.

*Christ is there in every detail of the book
Waiting for us to study and show ourselves approved
What a marvel when we open it up and look
How our souls are stirred! How our hearts are moved*

*Christ is there, it all speaks of Him and His work
What He has done for us was all told in advance
Let us not fail to look for Him, let us not this obligation shirk
Each discovery is like joining in a heavenly dance*

*Thank You for this marvel, Your precious superior word
It is filled with wonder! It is beautiful and marvelous
Christ is there in every detail; it’s all about our Lord
Yes, every single verse tells us of our Lord Jesus*

II. A Sanctuary to Dwell In (verses 8 & 9)

⁸ And let them make Me a sanctuary,

This is the purpose of everything that has thus far been told to Moses. All of the specifics requested by the Lord as a free-will offering were for the purpose of making a *miqdash*, or sanctuary.

The *miqdash* has only been named in a general sense in Exodus 15:17. This was in the Song of Moses and spoke of the sanctuary of the Lord, the place where He dwells,

specifically the land of Canaan, but more especially the eternal dwelling place for the saints. Now a specific *miqdash* is named for construction, and it has a very specific purpose to it...

⁸ (con't) **that I may dwell among them.**

v'shakanti betowkam – “and I will dwell in their midst.”

I said while looking at verse 1 that though it is true that materials needed to be collected in order to build the tabernacle, the fact that they are collected, and from where they have come, are in themselves pictures of Christ.

What I meant is that the same materials which are being used to build this tabernacle found their source in the world, especially Egypt. This was seen at the time of the Exodus –

“So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go. ²¹ And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be, when you go, that you shall not go empty-handed. ²² But every woman shall ask of her neighbor, namely, of her who dwells near her house, articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing; and you shall put *them* on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians.” Exodus 3:20-22

The Lord set it up so that Israel could plunder the Egyptians for a specific purpose; so that He could build a tabernacle that He might dwell in their midst. This is exactly what Christ did in His coming. The world of Egypt, as was clearly seen in those sermons, was a picture of the world of sin where fallen man dwells.

In Christ, God plundered from humanity in order to build His greater and eternal Temple where He would dwell, meaning the Person of Jesus Christ. He did it in that Christ came from the stream of humanity. He came through the sinful world of humanity to dwell among us – even though He was without sin. This was just as the tabernacle was built from the land of Egypt, and yet it would be a pure and undefiled place for Him to dwell.

This verse of Exodus 25 is perfectly realized in John 1:14 –

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

And just as incredible, He has now done it from His people who have become living stones in His temple. We were “plundered” as it were from the devil and yet we are being built into a holy temple in which Christ will eternally dwell “in our midst.” Every word we are seeing today is simply a picture of a greater spiritual truth.

⁹ According to all that I show you, *that is*, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make *it*.

Two final new words are introduced into Scripture here. The first is *tavnith*. This is the first of 20 times it will be used. It comes from *banah*, to build. It indicates a structure; by implication, a model or resemblance. In these instructions, there will be a pattern or a model for Moses to work with.

The second and final new word of this passage is *mishkan*, or “tabernacle.” It is the place where the Lord will “dwell” or “tabernacle” among His people. As we continue to see the details for its construction, we will need to continuously remind ourselves that what we are seeing is a picture of our Lord in a physical representation.

If we can remember this, then we must be certain that every single detail will point to Him and His ministry. We need to treat the coming passages as carefully and meticulously as we have these nine verses today, understanding that we are being given pictures of the greatest glory we could ever imagine.

It goes unstated how Moses was shown what to make. Whether he was shown something as if an artist’s drawing, whether it was with a sculptured model, whether it was impressed upon his mind supernaturally, or even if he was given a glimpse at what these things actually picture, it is unknown.

What the Bible does tell us is that he saw a pattern. This is confirmed by Stephen’s words in Acts 7:44. And what the Bible tells us further is that there is a reason for the specificity. It is explained to us in Hebrews 8 –

“For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore *it is* necessary that this One also have something to offer. ⁴ For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; ⁵ who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, ‘See *that* you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.’” Hebrews 8:3-5

These minute details are given because the *mishkan*, or tabernacle, is a copy and a shadow of the heavenly things. The precision was needed because it deals with the very dwelling place of the Lord in heaven. Let's close with a splendid thought concerning this detail from the pen of Joseph Benson –

“When Moses was to describe the creation of the world, though it be such a stately and curious fabric, yet he gave a very short and general account of it; but when he comes to describe the tabernacle, he doth it with the greatest niceness and accuracy imaginable; for God's church and instituted religion are more precious to him than all the rest of the world. And all the Scriptures were written, not to describe to us the works of nature, (a general view of which is sufficient to lead us to a knowledge of the Creator,) but to acquaint us with the methods of grace, and those things which are purely matters of revelation.” Joseph Benson

It should go without saying that God really wants us to see His Son in every detail of what He has given to us in Scripture. As this is so, wouldn't we be wise to search Him out while He can be found by us? We don't know our last moment. It could be fifty years away or five minutes from now.

Let us use our time wisely and search out Christ who alone can reconcile us to our Creator. If you have never taken the simple step of receiving Him as Savior, I would pray that today would be the day. Let me tell you how you can be sure of a heavenly home with Him who is pictured by the many details we've seen here...

Closing Verse: *“How lovely is Your tabernacle,
O Lord of hosts!
My soul longs, yes, even faints
For the courts of the Lord;
My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.” Psalm 84:1, 2*

Next Week: Exodus 25:10-22 *It's made of wood and gold, not of stoney...* (The Ark of the Testimony) (68th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

A Willingly Made Offering

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
These are the words to Moses he then was relaying

“Speak to the children of Israel
That they bring Me an offering
From everyone who gives it willingly, this I tell
From his heart he shall make My proffering

And this is the offering
Which you shall take from them, so I have said:
Gold, silver, and bronze
Blue, purple, and scarlet thread

Fine linen, and goats’ hair too
Ram skins dyed red, badger skins
And acacia wood; this you shall do

Oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil
And for the sweet incense; for the perfumer’s toil

Onyx stones, and stones to be set
In the ephod and in the breastplate
These you shall not forget

And let them a sanctuary make Me
That I may dwell among them, so shall it be

According to all that I show you
That is, the pattern of the tabernacle, one that is fit
And the pattern of all its furnishings
Just so you shall make it

The Lord gave instructions for the tabernacle
So that He could dwell among the children of Israel
And He requested from them the offering
So that of their hearts He could tell

Would they give the best of all that they had?
Would they bring for Him these things He noted
It would only be right for them to provide these
Because upon them His affection He had doted

And so it should be with us
Each of us should give of our very best
For God gave His Son, our Lord Jesus
And so let us not fall short in our test

Let us give of our time, our abilities, and our treasure
And let us be willing to do so, even without measure

For He is a great God, and so let us to Him our voices raise
And let us give to Him the best of our lives as an offering of praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 25:10-22

(THE ARK OF THE COVENANT AND THE SEAT OF MERCY)

Since Genesis 1:1, we have seen literally thousands of pictures of Christ and His work. The total number is literally astonishing. Surely His words to the leaders of His time about all of Scripture testifying of Him are true!

Today we have 13 verses which are literally filled with pictures of Him. So many so, that some had to be passed over in order to fit the verses into a single sermon. However, when we are done, I'm sure your head will be filled with delight at the absolutely marvelous display of the revealing of Him in each word or thought.

The Ark of the Covenant is probably the most notable aspect of all of Israel's worship. People who don't know a single thing about the rest of the Old Testament have still heard of the ark and have an idea of what it is supposed to look like. It is the center of attention in movies, documentaries, books, and so on. We are fascinated by it like no other piece of antiquity.

If it is real, then it means that the story of the Hebrews is true – and so everyone is looking for it. Some have even, untruthfully, claimed to have found it. But there is no need for an ark any longer. Why, because we have the true Ark which this one only pictures. We have Christ Jesus. Today, you will see why we can make the claim that He is the fulfillment of this marvelous piece of furniture where God met with man.

Text Verse: *“Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days,’ says the Lord, ‘that they will say no more, “The ark of the covenant of the Lord.” It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made anymore.”* Jeremiah 3:16

Jeremiah foresaw a time when Israel would no longer direct their attention to an implement made of wood and gold. Instead, they would have their attention directed elsewhere. That time is beginning to occur, even before our eyes. Jewish people are coming to their Messiah in a magnificent way.

And someday, the nation as a whole will acknowledge Him for who He is – the place where God meets with man. Many pictures of this are found in today's thirteen verses. So let's get right into them. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Details for the Ark (verses 10-16)

¹⁰ “And they shall make an ark

The word *aron*, or ark, has only been used one time so far in the Bible, and yet its use actually gives us an early insight into the purpose of the ark which Moses is now going to be instructed to make. In Genesis 50:26, we read this –

“So Joseph died, *being* one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.” Genesis 50:26

The *aron* simply describes a box or chest of some sort. In the case of a coffin, it is a type of chest with a specific purpose. The ark which will now be described is also a type of chest and it will have quite a few purposes, all of which picture Jesus Christ. Every detail about this marvelous piece of furniture looks forward to Him.

It has to be noted now that in these directions for the construction of the sanctuary and the implements in it, the ark is the first piece of furniture to be named and described for construction. And yet, we will find out later that its actual construction is detailed *after* the detailing of the construction of the tabernacle. This is seen in Exodus 36 and 37.

It is right and appropriate that the housing of the ark would be constructed and ready for the ark itself. However, everything about the tabernacle is centered on this ark and therefore, it is also right that the details for its construction should come first.

It should be noted here and now that what is being constructed is very similar to arks that have been found in ancient Egypt and elsewhere. For this reason, the Pulpit Commentary says –

“Arks were an ordinary part of the religious furniture of temples in Egypt, and were greatly venerated. They usually contained a figure or emblem, of some deity.

Occasionally they were in the shape of boats; but the most ordinary form was that of a cupboard or chest. They were especially constructed for the purpose of being carried about in a procession, and had commonly rings at the side, through which poles were passed on such occasions. It must be freely admitted, that the general idea of the “Ark,”

as well as certain points in its ornamentation, was adopted from the Egyptian religion.”
Pulpit Commentary

Other scholars agree with this, but I think it is incorrect. What is being described is, according to the book of Hebrews, a “copy and shadow of the heavenly things.” Therefore, the similarity between the artifacts of other cultures should be attributed to their attempt to copy the true heavenly things, not the other way around.

¹⁰ (con’t) **of acacia wood;**

This is the wood which was requested for the construction of the tabernacle and all its furniture in Exodus 25:5, and so this is the second time that *shittah*, or acacia wood, is named in the Bible. As I said last week, acacia is a very slow growing tree that would be readily available in the area where they are. Its heart wood is dark reddish-brown and is beautiful when sanded and polished.

It is like cypress in Florida which is resistant to decay because it deposits in its heartwood waste substances which turn into preservatives. This renders it unpalatable to insects. It is also dense and difficult to be penetrated by water and other decaying agents. It is considered an incorruptible wood, thus picturing the incorruptible nature of Christ’s humanity.

¹⁰ (con’t) **two and a half cubits shall be its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height.**

A cubit, or *ammah*, is a unit of measurement which is the length of the forearm below the elbow. It comes from *em* which means “mother” and thus it is the mother measurement. It is debated what the exact length of a cubit is, but it is about 16 inches. The only other time that such precise measurements were given in Scripture so far was in the construction of Noah’s Ark in Genesis 6. The same words are used – length, width, and height. The dimensions of the ark mean that it will be 5.625 cubits in space.

The actual dimension in feet is debated, but scholars go from about 3’ 9” long to 4’ 5” long. Assuming the smaller measurement, it would be 3’ 9” x 2’ 3” x 2’ 3”. It is not an especially large box. Rather, it is humble in its size.

¹¹ **And you shall overlay it**

Moses is next instructed to “overlay” the ark. The word “overlay” is introduced into the Bible here. It is *tsaphah* – it will be used 48 times, the majority of them are in Exodus when detailing the construction of the tabernacle, or in Kings and Chronicles when detailing the construction of the temple.

This word means exactly as it is translated, to lay out or to “overlay.” Importantly, it is identical to another word, *tsaphah*, which means “to look out or about, spy, keep watch.” That was first used in Genesis 31:45-49 during this exchange –

“So Jacob took a stone and set it up *as* a pillar. ⁴⁶ Then Jacob said to his brethren, ‘Gather stones.’ And they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there on the heap. ⁴⁷ Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed. ⁴⁸ And Laban said, ‘This heap *is* a witness between you and me this day.’ Therefore its name was called Galeed, ⁴⁹ also Mizpah, because he said, “May the Lord **watch** between you and me when we are absent one from another.”

-Genesis 31:45-49

If you remember the details of that sermon, the heap that was constructed, and all of the surrounding details, pictured the formation of the Bible, the Word of God.

11 (con’t) **with pure gold,**

The overlaying of the ark is to be with gold. As seen last week, *zahav* or gold is the finest of the biblical metals. It indicates purity and holiness, royalty, and divinity. It is one of the few metals that has a natural color which is not silver. Thus it is both a metal and a color, and not surprisingly, both are associated with kingship.

It is precious because of its rarity, and it is valuable. Throughout history it has been used as a basis for monetary systems, and it is the standard by which the value of other things is set. It is also considered an incorruptible metal.

But the gold to be used has an adjective to describe it, *tahor*, or “pure.” It means clean or pure and comes from the verb *taher* which means pure in a physical, chemical, ceremonial, or moral sense. In this we can see that the gold is to be wholly undefiled.

11 (con’t) **inside and out you shall overlay it,**

The gold was not only to overlay the outside, but the inside as well. What was incorruptible in wood was to be completely covered in a layer of what is incorruptible in gold.

¹¹ (con't) **and shall make on it a molding of gold all around.**

The molding or *zer*, is introduced into the Bible here. It will be used just 10 times and only in Exodus. It is a molding which spreads around the top as if a crown. It is comparable to an Aramaic word which means a wreath or a crown. This may have been used to keep the mercy seat in place.

¹² **You shall cast four rings of gold for it,**

Moses is next instructed to “cast four rings of gold.” The word for “ring” is *tabbaath* and it will take a moment to explain. The word means ring, but it comes from another word, *taba*. That is a verb which means “to sink.” This then gives the idea of a signet which is sunk into clay or wax in order to make a seal. From this comes the idea of any ring. This is seen in the first use of it in the Bible back Genesis 41-

“Then Pharaoh took his **signet ring** off his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.”

-Genesis 41:42

¹² (con't) **and put *them* in its four corners;**

Some versions say “four corners” and some “four feet.” The word is *pa’amoth* and it means times, or occurrences. Literally, it is “to strike.” One will strike an anvil. One’s foot strikes the ground as he walks, etc. This is why some translators choose the word “feet.”

If you look at different pictures of the ark, you will see some with the carrying poles along the sides anywhere from the bottom to the top at the molding. Others put the poles right at the feet so that the entire ark is elevated above the carriers. I would favor the idea of “feet.” This would keep the ark wholly elevated above the priests who carried it and it would keep them from having any part of their body touch it as they did so.

¹² (con't) **two rings *shall be* on one side, and two rings on the other side.**

The obvious question is “which sides? Almost all drawings show the poles along the long side of the ark, not the short side. However, that raises a problem which we will see in a moment...

¹³ And you shall make poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold.

The word for “poles” is *bad*. It means “alone.” It indicates a single piece of wood which stands alone. These were also to be made of *shittah*, or acacia wood, and they too were to be overlaid with gold.

¹⁴ You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, that the ark may be carried by them.

The poles were to be placed into the rings in order for it to be carried. This then brings in the problem of “which side” the rings were on. Was the ark carried like a funeral bier or what is carried like a throne? If the poles were in the long sides, then it would be as if carrying a funeral bier; if in the short sides, then like a throne. The reason why this becomes complicated is because we read this in 1 Kings 8 –

“Then the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the temple, to the Most Holy *Place*, under the wings of the cherubim. ⁷ For the cherubim spread *their* two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim overshadowed the ark and its poles. ⁸ The poles extended so that the ends of the poles could be seen from the holy *place*, in front of the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside.” 1 Kings 8:6-8

It is without a doubt that the ark rested length-wise in the temple with the cherubim on the ark on each side, to the left and right as one walked in. Thus the poles were along side the *short side* of the ark. The poles were extended, but not removed, from the ark so that they could be visible in the holy place. It was a symbol that the ark had reached its place of rest.

From this, we can know that unlike the pictures we commonly see, the ark was carried by the priests as a throne. The ark would face forward with the cherubim on each side as it was carried.

¹⁵ The poles shall be in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it.

From even before its construction, the law was given that the poles should never be removed from the ark. They were to be as permanent as any other part of it. This was to ensure that the ark would never be touched. Should someone presume to do so, there would be an immediate penalty. 2 Samuel 6 shows us –

“And when they came to Nachon’s threshing floor, Uzzah put out *his hand* to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. ⁷ Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for *his error*; and he died there by the ark of God. ⁸ And David became angry because of the Lord’s outbreak against Uzzah; and he called the name of the place Perez Uzzah to this day.”

-2 Samuel 6:6-8

¹⁶ And you shall put into the ark the Testimony which I will give you.

Once the ark was completed, the Lord directs that the Testimony, meaning the two tablets of stone which are the basis of the law, were to be put inside of the ark itself. As the basis of the law, they represented the entirety of the law. And what is the purpose of the law? It is explained in Deuteronomy 31 –

“Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there as a witness against you; Deuteronomy 31:26

The law was a witness against the sin and rebellion of the people. The substance of that law, based on the Ten Commandments, was contained within the ark itself.

*Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty
And glorious is the Lord in His place
To stand in His presence, a glorious sight to see
And to gaze upon the beauty of His face*

*But fallen man cannot so upon Him look
Lest we die from the stain of sin we bear
The words which testify against us are written in His book
In the law, only condemnation is found there*

*But at the throne of Christ, there is mercy and grace
At the place where God and man do meet
Once again through Christ, we can look upon God’s face
And for eternal ages, enjoy fellowship so sweet*

*Glory, glory, glory to the Lord, Christ Jesus
Who has made the way back to God for us*

II. There I will Meet with You (verses 17-22)

¹⁷ “You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold;

As important as the ark and what it pictures is to the theology of the Bible, the mercy seat is no less so. This mercy seat is known as the *kapporeth*. This word is introduced into the Bible here, it is used 27 times, and only when speaking of this mercy seat.

It is identical in meaning to *kopher*, which means “a cover” but in this case it indicates “a satisfaction.” This comes from the word *kaphar*, which in this situation means “to appease” or “to satisfy.” The theological implications of what this mercy seat, and its use, pictures are of the highest importance for fallen man.

This seat was to be made of pure gold, indicating no defilement. It was to be unstained in any way. John Lange describes its purpose –

“...the mercy-seat (*kapporeth*), as a symbol of God’s gracious willingness to accept expiation as such a fulfilment of His general will as covers and removes the demands imposed by the law, or the special will, on account of guilt.” John Lange

In 1 Chronicles 28, the Holy of Holies, where the ark and its mercy seat were contained, was called *bayith ha’kapporeth*, or “house of the mercy seat,” or “house of the expiation.” It is the place where sins were dealt with once a year on the Day of Atonement. As a squiggle for your brain, which you will need before we finish today, the Greek translation of the OT translates this word, *kapporeth*, as *hilastérion*.

^{17 (con’t)} two and a half cubits *shall be* its length and a cubit and a half its width.

The mercy seat was to be made to the exact size of the top opening of the ark itself, thus it served as a lid to the ark while serving as the place of expiation for the sins of the people at the same time. The tablets inside were thus embodied within the ark.

¹⁸ And you shall make two cherubim of gold;

What a cherub looks like is debated over. Ezekiel gives a vivid description of them in his book. Among other things, he says –

“Each one had four faces: the first face *was* the face of a cherub, the second face the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.”
-Ezekiel 10:14

Whether these cherubim above the ark looked like those in Ezekiel or not cannot be known for certain. From the Bible, we can deduce that cherubim were a special class of being. The first time they were mentioned was in Genesis 3 –

“So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.” Genesis 3:24

They are a select class of angels which, among other things, are near to God, they have great power, and they act as guards. As they are guards of the tree of life, they are the ones who can point man to the way of accessing the right to that tree. Two of them are to be depicted on the mercy seat.

As a note of rectification, the KJV incorrectly uses the term “cherubims.” The “im” at the end of the word makes the word plural in Hebrew. Therefore, the plural is either “cherubs” for English or “cherubim” for Hebrew. “Cherubims” is incorrect.

18 (con't) of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat.

The term “hammered work” or *miqshah* is used for the first of ten times, and its meaning is disputed. It comes from *miqsheh* which means “a fancy hairdo.” So, it could be a turning of metal, like the braids of hair, or it could be a hammering of metal for shaping.

The word “ends” is another new word – *qatsah*. It means “the extremity.” Here, the Hebrew reads “from the two ends,” and thus the term “hammered work” is probably correct. The cherubim are made to rise out of the mercy seat itself. The central thought of these cherubim is that they were there, beholding the mercy seat, and thus the ark, because their form comes out of the mercy seat itself. In other words, the two are inextricably linked together.

19 Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat.

The verse is explicit and well translated. One cherub was to be at one end, and the other at the other end. And each was to come from out of the mercy seat. They were not to be made separately and then soldered on (see Cambridge), but instead they were to be fashioned out of the same piece of gold that the mercy seat was made of. John Lange provides a thought on the symbolism –

“...the two cherubim as symbols of God’s righteous dominion in the world, proceeding out of God’s gracious will and the law, in order to the maintenance of the justice which is represented by the union of the ark and the cover [the mercy-seat].” John Lange

20 And the cherubim shall stretch out *their* wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings,

The word for “wings” here is *kanaph*. It means “an extremity.” It can be wings on a bird, the edges of a garment, the corners of the earth, etc. If these cherubim resembled men as some speculate, then the “wings” could be their garments spread out over the mercy seat. This would do no harm to the idea of “wings.” Or they could be literal wings as angelic figures are often represented as having.

20 (con’t) and they shall face one another;

This means that they will positionally face each other. One cherub is facing the other on the opposite side. The word for “another” here is *akh*, which means “brother.” Thus in the larger sense it indicates “one like another.” One is facing the other of its kind.

20 (con’t) the faces of the cherubim *shall be* toward the mercy seat.

Although the cherubim are positionally facing, their attention is directed not towards each other, but towards the mercy seat. It is true that they could see the reflection of one another in the gold, but the attention would be focused on the place itself. Everything else would merely be a reflection of what took place there.

21 You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you.

Although it hasn't been said yet that the mercy seat would be placed atop the ark, it could be inferred by the dimensions of it which matched the dimension of the ark. Now what seemed implicit is made explicit. The mercy seat is the top of the ark and the covering for what is inside. And what is in there is repeated from verse 16 – the Testimony that I will give you.

What is implied is that what is under the mercy seat and within the Ark *requires* mercy. Were it not so, a mercy seat would not be needed. What seems cumbersome in this verse is that the lid is said to be put on the ark before the testimony is placed into it. This isn't the case. The word "and" can be used to mean "after." Therefore, it would say, "...after you have put in the Testimony."

Again, the tablets are called the "Testimony" for a reason. They are a testimony to the people concerning their duty, and they were a testimony against them when they violated its standards. However, because they were inside the ark, they were sealed there, within the ark and under the mercy seat.

²² And there I will meet with you,

The word "meet" here is *yaad*. It doesn't just mean to meet, but rather "to appoint" or "to designate." In other words, this is the designated spot of meeting. It isn't a random meeting place as if it could be there or somewhere else. Nor was it a random time of meeting, as if He may be in or He may not be in. Rather, it is the designated place *of* meeting. And the word "you" here is singular. It is a personal meeting place with the one who was allowed to come into it. It is not a general meeting place where anyone can come and meet with the Lord.

^{22 (con't)} and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat,

If the cherubim are on each side, and their wings cover the mercy seat from above, then it must be that *where the cherubim are looking* is the spot where the Presence would be, not above them as if He sat atop them. If that were so, then it would have said that. Rather, it is between the cherubim and below their wings; above the mercy seat. The word for "speak" is the general word for speaking. It is therefore, from this spot that His word would go out.

^{22 (con't)} from between the two cherubim which *are* on the ark of the Testimony,

The cherubim would be on the right and on the left of Moses, or the designated High Priest. From the center of the mercy seat, between the cherubim is where the word would issue from. But it also notes “which are on the ark of the Testimony.” The mercy seat, and thus the cherubim, are on the ark itself.

^{22 (fin)} **about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.**

The ark is the focal point of Israel’s relationship with the Lord and the mercy seat above it would be the place where the commandments would issue forth from. Again as before, what is implied is that mercy *is needed* concerning the commandments of God. From that, it is implied that the commandments will, in fact, be broken.

One doesn’t need mercy if they are in compliance with the law. Mercy is *not getting* what you *do* deserve. Therefore, it is from this spot that propitiation of the people’s sins would come and mercy would be granted.

*Into His presence I came, the Ruler of all
I came boldly because the mercy seat was there
On the name of Jesus, I did call
And covered by His blood, with God, fellowship I could share*

*I was going astray, and was as lost as I could be
Yes, one of the world’s many lost children
But in a mere moment, mercy found me
I was cleansed and purified right there and then*

*It was at the spot where my Lord did die
And where His blood soaked into the ground
There at the place of mercy, for Him I did cry
And there at that place... mercy was found*

III. Wonderful Pictures

You’ve already been given all of the information you need to know for what the things we have seen picture. Let’s just think of Jesus – His Person and His work – and it will all fall into place. The *shittim* wood is the base material for the ark. Its heart wood is dark reddish-brown and is beautiful when sanded and polished.

This pictures Christ's humanity. He, a Son of Adam from the Middle East would bear the same general color as the wood. Shittim is an incorruptible wood, thus picturing His incorruptible nature. Though a Man, He never sinned.

The ark was not of a very large size. In fact, it was humble in that regard. Rather than being some giant, ostentatious thing that people would flock to, it was rather lowly. This pictures Christ in His humbled and lowly human state. He didn't come as a larger than life figure, but rather He came to a poor family and led a rather small existence by the world's standards.

The ark was overlaid with gold, the most precious of the biblical metals. This represents His deity which overlays the wood, or His humanity – He being the God/Man. The word for "overlay" was *tsaphah*, which as I noted is identical to another word which means "to look out or about, spy, or keep watch."

Thus His divine nature is what watches over His subjects, keeping an eye on them. The gold therefore not only pictures His divine nature, but it is also a picture of His royal, kingly status. One who has subjects is the ruler of those subjects. And finally, the gold is the standard by which the value of all other things is set. Therefore, He *is* the standard by which all others are compared to.

The gold of the ark is described by the adjective *tahor*, or pure. This comes from the verb *taher* which means pure "in a physical, chemical, ceremonial, or moral sense." In this we can see that the gold is completely undefiled in any way, thus it pictures Christ's perfect purity in all ways – physical, moral, etc.

The ark was covered inside and out with gold. This pictures his complete incorruptible human/divine nature. He is simultaneously fully Man and fully God. And He is completely incorruptible in both respects.

The molding of the ark is a continued picture of His kingly status. Though the word *zer* is never used in the Bible to indicate a king's crown, in picture this is exactly what is seen. This crown was at the top of the ark, which pictures His body, and it is the place where the mercy seat would rest. Thus, it is a picture of the merciful king.

Next we saw the four rings. The number four in the Bible always speaks of the physical creation. The four corners of the earth are represented by the four rings. The four-fold division of mankind – the families, tongues, countries, and nations are represented by

these four rings, and thus the four rings are represented by the message of the four gospels going out to all people and all places.

The ring is the symbol of authority, as a signet. Just as a signet sinks into wax as a sign of authority and as a testimony of the king's rule, the four gospels sink into the hearts of man and are a testimony and authority of the rule of Christ the King.

These rings are attached to the four *paam* or "feet" of the ark. The word used indicates a strike as if the steps of a foot. These four feet then are the gospels themselves. They are the written record of the work of Christ from which the message of Him is derived. These gospels represent Christ the King, the Servant, the Son of Man, and the Son of God as depicted in those four gospels.

The poles of the ark, or *bad*, are that on which the ark rests as they carry the ark. The number two in the Bible indicates that there is a difference in things – they contrast, and yet they confirm. There is day and there is night. They contrast, and yet they confirm the duration of a day. There is salvation and there is condemnation. They contrast, and yet they confirm the end for all men.

The word *bad* means "alone." There are two poles which together support the one ark. The ark pictures Christ and thus they are the two testaments which present the work of Christ. They are what makes Christ mobile to the world as their word carries Him, each contrasting – the law and grace, but each supporting the whole and confirming the message of Him.

And each is made of the same materials, shittim wood and gold. Together, they proclaim the dual nature of the coming Messiah, and of the Messiah who has come – He is the God/Man. As the four gospels are the transition from Old to New, it is the four rings, attached to the four feet, to which the two testaments are affixed. They are the *tabbaath*, or seal, of His rule.

As Christ is the King, the carrying of the ark on the poles pictures the palanquin which a king would have been carried around in. He is the King depicted in the four gospels which are tied to the two testaments of the Bible.

The Bible is explicit that the poles were *not to be removed* from the Ark. Should either or both testaments of the Bible be removed, we would not have a proper presentation

of who Christ is. Without one or the other, we would have a faulty view of Him, and without either, we would have no knowledge of Him at all.

This is why Paul says in 2 Timothy, “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” During a Bible study some weeks ago, our precious Mabel asked what the poles represent. This is the answer.

After the description of the ark, came that of the mercy seat. It was to be of pure gold. Again, it pictures Christ’s deity, His kingship, purity, and moral perfection. It was to be the same size as the ark because it was to be that which encloses it.

The mercy seat is the spot where the blood was to be applied and it is the spot where God would meet with man. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the mercy seat is called the *hilastérion*. The word means, “A sin offering.” It is that by which the wrath of God would be appeased, and thus it is a propitiation. And this is exactly how Isaiah describes the coming Christ –

“Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him;
He has put *Him* to grief.
When You make His soul an offering for sin,” Isaiah 53:10

Paul picked up on this in the New Testament and uses the same word, *hilastérion*, to describe the finished work of Christ –

“For there is no difference;²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,²⁵ whom God set forth *as* a **propitiation** by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,²⁶ to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” Romans 3:22-26

As the mercy seat sat on the crown molding, the propitiation for the sins of the people at the cross of Calvary is considered to be the crowning achievement of the work of Christ.

The cherubim were first seen in Genesis 3:24 as the ones who guarded access to the tree of life. To guard something means that access *is* available. If it weren't, then there would be no need for guards. Cherubim then had the means of access.

And though these two are not guards, they show that the way to the tree of life is realized in the propitiation of Christ's death as a sin-offering. They are united with the mercy seat, being worked out of the same piece of solid gold. As there are two of them, then it implies that even though they come from the same metal, they differ. Two implies a difference. And yet, they confirm that they are one, having come from the same metal.

What the meaning of these cherubim are is debated. There are three prevalent views:

- 1) They represent actual angels as those guarding the tree of life.
- 2) They are symbolic representations of the Godhead.
- 3) They represent all of redeemed humanity.

Their positioning shows us what they represent. They are of the *same gold* as the mercy seat, thus they bear the *same nature*. However, there are two of them and they are facing one another bodily and yet looking down at the place of mercy. They thus represent the redeemed of all humanity, Jew and Gentile alike.

They come from the same metal and so they are one, and yet they are separately fashioned and so they are two. They contrast and yet they confirm the redeemed of man. This is why the term *tahor*, or "pure," was used. This adjective wasn't used to describe either the gold of the rings or of the poles. Why? Because the gospels and the written testimonies have been handled by man. They have our taint in them, even if they are the inspired word of God. In the ark and mercy is a picture that we have become like Christ, pure and undefiled because of His work.

Many verses in the New Testament confirm that we will be like Christ and that we will be one, even though two. In one example of our new, Christ-like nature, Paul gives us these words –

“For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection,⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.” Romans 6:5, 6

In support of the fact that we are one in Christ and yet still two in distinction, Paul writes this to us in Galatians 3 –

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:28

We remain Jew and Gentile, and male and female, and yet we are one in Christ. The meaning of the cherubim looking towards the mercy seat then becomes obvious. All of the redeemed of humanity have but one place to look for mercy from God – to the finished work of Christ.

It is a marvelous set of pictures we have been given, but there is more. Twice it notes that the Testimony was to be placed in the ark. The ark then isn't just a picture of Christ, but it is also a picture of Christ's death. Despite being incorruptible and fully God, He still died, pictured by the ark itself.

Inside it was the tablets which represent the entire law. Those, being inside the ark, picture Christ embodying the law. He is the fulfillment and embodiment of it. However, without His death, the law could not be considered fulfilled.

In His death, the law *was* fulfilled and thus nullified. He is the *end* of the law. And in His death a new covenant came into place, seen in the mercy seat. Both the fulfilling of the law for us, and the granting of mercy *from* the law, come through His death. He is the place where propitiation with God is restored. John tell us it is so –

“In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation (hilasmos) for our sins.” 1 John 4:10

It is Christ who fully answers each demand of the law; it is Christ who covers over our sins with His own shed blood; and it is Christ who has come between us and the curse of the law. Again, Paul shows us this truth in Galatians 3:13 –

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree’).”

The testimony is sealed in the ark; the law is completed in the work of Christ. The blood covers the transgressions of the law in both – one in picture; one in Person. Christ's blood has taken away the curse of the law from us, covering it for all time.

As a pictorial lesson for those who are looking to see if Jesus really is the One to come and fulfill these things, John shares with us a marvelous account which occurred just after the resurrection. It is so innocuous that most of us just read over it and never realize what he is trying to tell us –

But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down *and looked* into the tomb. ¹² And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. ¹³ Then they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?”

She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.”

¹⁴ Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?”

She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, “Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.”

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary!”

She turned and said to Him, “Rabboni!” (which is to say, Teacher).

¹⁷ Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’” John 20:11-17

Mary looked into the tomb. And what did she see? “...two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.” A picture was being made of the true mercy seat where the blood of Christ left His body and sprinkled the earth below Him.

The two angels were there, fulfilling the picture of the ark which was given to Moses 1500 years earlier. These two angels, or “messengers” as the word implies, are Enoch and Elijah – one Gentile, one Jew who represent the redeemed of the ages. They were taken to attend to the Lord and His ministry as is seen in both testaments of the Bible.

It is in Christ where we are designated or appointed to meet with God. Christ is no random meeting place as if He could be there or somewhere else. Nor in Christ is there

some random time of meeting, as if He may be in or He may not be in. Rather, He is the designated place of meeting.

In Him, God is always there, in both time and in place. If you are in Christ, you have personal access to the throne of grace, because in Christ you have been granted the mercy to again enter into God's presence.

If you wonder why the cherubim had their "wings" raised, it is a picture of the redeemed, gazing at the sight of Christ's work and raising their arms high in victory. In our white garments of purity it will be ten thousand times ten thousand wings as we hail the matchless King of Glory and shout "Hallelujah! Christ has prevailed!" If you have never called on Christ as Your Savior, *why not!* Do it today.

Closing Verse: *"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² And He Himself is the propitiation (hilasmos) for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."* 1 John 2:1, 2

Next Week: Exodus 25:23-30 (A Table in the Presence of the Lord) (69TH Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

A Place Where Mercy is Found

And they shall make an ark of acacia wood
Two and a half cubits its length shall be
A cubit and a half its width, this is understood
And a cubit and a half its height, you see

And you shall overlay it with pure gold
Inside and out you shall it overlay
And shall make on it a molding of gold all around
So shall it be done, I do say

You shall cast for it four rings of gold
And in its four corners shall they be applied

Two rings shall be on one side, as I have told
And two rings on the other side

And you shall make poles of acacia wood
And overlay them with gold, let it be understood

You shall put the poles
Into the rings of the ark on each side
That the ark may be carried by them
In this you shall certainly abide

The poles shall be in the rings of the ark
They shall not be taken from it, it is true
And you shall put into the ark
The Testimony which I will give you

You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold
Two and a half cubits shall its length be
And a cubit and a half its width
Such are its dimensions you see

And you shall make two cherubim of gold
Of hammered work them you shall make
At the two ends of the mercy seat
Not a single detail shall you forsake

Make one cherub at one end
And the other cherub at the other end, to make it complete
You shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it
Of one piece with the mercy seat

And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above
Covering the mercy seat with their wings, you see
And they shall face one another
The faces of the cherubim toward the mercy seat shall be

You shall put the mercy seat
On top of the ark, this you shall do
And in the ark you shall put the Testimony
That I will give you

And there I will meet with you
And I will speak with you
From above the mercy seat, so I will do
From between the cherubim two

Which are on the ark of the Testimony
About everything which I will give you
In commandment to the children of Israel
All the things they are to do

O God, how marvelous are You in all ways
For giving the true Ark of the testimony to us
And so forever, yes even through eternal days
We can fellowship with You, through our Lord Jesus

All of these pictures from Israel's past
Have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ our Lord
And through Him and His work we are reconciled at last
Yes, through Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word

Praises, yes praises we shall eternally sing to You, O God
And forever in Your marvelous light, golden streets we shall trod

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 25:23-30

(A TABLE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD)

I had to make a choice on Monday the 1st of February. When I first got up, I thought, there's a lot of verses left in chapter 25, eighteen in fact. But the instructions for the table of showbread are only eight verses and parts of them are very similar to parts of the details for the Ark of the Covenant.

So I started compiling a sermon which would include the entire 18 verses to finish off the chapter. I didn't really want to do that because the details for the menorah are so exacting and precise, I figured I had have to cut them short and not do a full evaluation of that most precious item.

However, after a few hours of study and typing, I realized that I could get a full sermon out of just the verses concerning the table of showbread. There is repetition with the construction of the ark, yes, and I'm not one that likes to repeat things. However, the Lord repeated these details for a good reason and who am I to ignore repeating the meaning of them.

And so some of this sermon will repeat details of what we saw concerning the Ark, except they are modified for the construction of the table. Maybe you will get distracted at a different point in the sermon today than that of the sermon on the Ark. If so, then you might hear something new that you missed before. And there is plenty of completely new detail in this passage as well. So sit back and please enjoy what the Lord has tucked away for us.

Text Verse: *"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*

*² I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress;
My God, in Him I will trust.'" Psalm 91:1, 2*

What is it like to be in the presence of the Lord? Adam and Eve were in His presence, but they lost that right. The naming of the two boys, Cain and Abel, tell us a great deal about how Eve felt. She desperately wanted to go back to that land from which she was exiled.

And this has been the great hope of mankind ever since. Every culture has some ideal of what it will be like, but only the Christian has a foretaste of it in reality. We are literally

brought back into the presence of God and into right fellowship with Him once again because of the work of Christ.

Now we can truly experience a glimpse of what lies ahead. In Christ, we are safe, we are secure, and we are heard. Our prayers can ascend to our heavenly Father and He really hears them. The table of the showbread gives us an Old Testament look into this truth. So let's jump right into it and see what the Lord has in store for us to see.

It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Table of Showbread (verses 23-30)

In the Holy of Holies there was one piece of furniture, the Ark of the Covenant. The next room of the tabernacle, proceeding out from the Holy of Holies, was the Holy Place. In this room there were three pieces of furniture: The table of showbread, the golden menorah, and the altar of incense.

The first two of these are described here in Chapter 25 and the third will be detailed in Chapter 30. The placement of the altar of incense is debated, but we will worry about that when we get to those verses. For now in this chapter, we are concerned with the table of showbread and the menorah.

The table and the menorah are both depicted on the Arch of Titus. When the Romans plundered Jerusalem, they carried these implements off as war booty. In commemoration of that, they were engraved on this arch to show the magnificence of the conquest.

It is an extra-biblical note to the surety that this record dating back to the time of Moses is accurate, and that the Jewish presence in Israel is exactly as the Bible proclaims. In other words, one cannot carry away plunder from a Jewish temple if a Jewish temple did not exist! This flies in the face of the many deniers of a Jewish presence in the land in times past.

Of the two pieces of furniture after the Ark, the table has a special significance and is to be considered of great importance. For this reason, its details follow immediately after that of the Ark and Mercy Seat. This table of showbread, like the Ark of the Covenant, pictures Christ and His work and its details begin in verse 23...

23 “You shall also make a table of acacia wood;

Moses is now instructed to make a table. The word for table is *shulkhan*. This is the first of 71 times it will be used in the Bible. It comes from the verb *shalakh* which means “sent” or “to spread out.” The idea is that a table is spread out for a purpose. This is reflected, for example, in the words of the 23 Psalm –

ta’arokh lephanai shulkhan ne’ged tsoretai – prepare before my face a table in the presence of my enemies. “Spread it out! O Lord!”

The table, like the ark and like all of the tabernacle’s furniture, is to be made of *shittim*, or acacia wood. As I described in the instruction for the building of the Ark, acacia is a very slow growing tree that would be readily available in the area where they were. Its heart wood is dark reddish-brown and it is beautiful when sanded and polished.

It is resistant to decay because it deposits in its heartwood waste substances which turn into preservatives. This renders it unpalatable to insects. It is also dense and difficult to be penetrated by water and other decaying agents. It is considered incorruptible, picturing the incorruptible nature of Christ’s humanity.

23 (con’t) two cubits shall be its length, a cubit its width, and a cubit and a half its height.

The table is one half a cubit less than the Ark in both length and breadth and it is the same height. The Pulpit Commentary says it would then be about three feet long, one foot six inches wide, and two feet three inches high. It is a humble sized table.

24 And you shall overlay it with pure gold,

Again, like the Ark, the wood is to be overlaid with gold. And again, it needs to be noted that *zahav* or gold is the finest of the biblical metals. It indicates purity and holiness, but also royalty – kings and kingdoms. It is one of the few metals that have a natural color which is not silver. Thus it is both a metal and a color, and not surprisingly, both are associated with kingship.

It is precious because of its rarity, and it is valuable. Throughout history it has been used as a basis for monetary systems, and it is the standard by which the value of other things is set. It is also considered an incorruptible metal.

And the gold here, like with the ark, has an adjective to describe it, *tahor*, or “pure.” It means clean or pure and comes from the verb *taher* which means pure in a physical, chemical, ceremonial, or moral sense. In this we can see that the gold is to be completely undefiled in any way. As the wood pictures Christ’s human nature, the gold pictures His divine nature.

²⁴ (con’t) **and make a molding of gold all around.**

This molding is similar to the idea of the molding on the Ark. There, the molding was for the placement of the Mercy Seat. On the table, it is for beauty and adornment, as if it were a crown. But it was also for keeping the items of the table securely on the table. The bread which will be placed on the table will remain there, even when the table is moved. This crown is not said to be of wood which is then overlaid with gold. Rather, it is a solid gold molding.

²⁵ **You shall make for it a frame of a handbreadth all around,**

The word for the “frame” which is to be made is a new word in the Bible – *misgereth*. It means “borders” as in something which encloses. The word for “handbreadth” is *tophakh* and it is actually quite rare. This is the first of only five times it will be seen, all in Exodus and Ezekiel.

This rim then is to be a structural support for the legs of the table. Views vary on where this frame is. Some depictions have it directly below the top of the table, or even level with it. Some have it somewhere down the legs of it. The depiction of the table on the Arch of Titus shows something halfway down the legs, but that is not a frame.

Rather, those were pieces attached to the legs for the holding of silver trumpets. The frame itself appears to be right at the top of the table.

²⁵ (con’t) **and you shall make a gold molding for the frame all around.**

This is not the same molding as that of verse 24. The first molding went around the table at its top. This one would be outside of the rim itself, either outside of the first rim or under the table top. Looking at various photos of replicas of this table will show you how different artisans view these words.

²⁶ **And you shall make for it four rings of gold,**

The only real difference between this verse and verse 12, is that it says the rings for the Ark were to be cast out of gold. However, it can still be assumed that these were also to be of cast gold. The word for “ring” is *tabbaath* and it should be re-explained for you to remember.

The word means “ring,” but it comes from another word, *taba*. That is a verb which means “to sink.” This then gives the idea of a signet ring which is sunk into clay or wax in order to make a seal. From this comes the idea of any ring.

²⁶ (con’t) **and put the rings on the four corners that *are* at its four legs.**

The Ark had feet to which the rings were attached. This table has legs and so a new word, *peah*, is used here to indicate “corners.” As each leg is at a corner, the rings are attached there. However, the rings are not at the top or the middle of the legs. Rather, it says, *al arba ha’peot asher l’arba raglav* – “in the four corners that *are* on the four feet.”

In other words, the rings were at the very feet of the table. When it was carried, like the Ark, it would be completely elevated above those who carried it. No image that I looked for accurately depicted this aspect of the table. But, this is exactly depicted on the Arch of Titus. Like the Ark, it does not specify whether these rings are on the short side of the table or the long side.

However, the depiction on the Arch of Titus shows that the top is considerably longer than the legs. Therefore they ran along the longer side of the table. Unlike the Ark, the table would sit along the side of the holy place in a lengthwise manner. Therefore, even with the poles inserted, they would not interfere with the movement of the priests.

²⁷ **The rings shall be close to the frame, as holders for the poles to bear the table.**

These words can be interpreted in several ways. Because we have the depiction of the Arch of Titus, we know what the table looked like. Therefore, these words are not correctly translated as “close to the frame.”

As the poles were at the feet of the table, and the frame was at the top, the words mean something like “opposite the frame” or “over against the frame.” Barnes correctly says, “...the rings were to be placed not upon the framing itself, but at the extremities of the legs answering to each corner of it.”

The rings were as far from the top of the border as the border was from the top of the feet. This then means that the poles were right at the bottom, and when it was carried, the entire table was above the carriers.

²⁸ And you shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold,

The same process for the poles of the Ark is seen for the poles of the table. They were to be made of *shittim*, or acacia wood, and they were to be overlaid with gold.

If you noticed, the same thing has occurred here as occurred in the description of the Ark and the Mercy Seat. Neither the rings, nor the gold of the poles has the adjective “pure” associated with them. Why? The answer is the same as for that of the Ark, which I will explain later.

²⁸ (con’t) that the table may be carried with them.

There is a difference between this and the instructions for that of the Ark. In the construction of the Ark, it specifically said –

“The poles shall be in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it.”

-Exodus 25:15

For this reason, many scholars come to the conclusion that the poles *were* removed from this table when it was placed in the tabernacle. This is how Jamieson-Faucett-Brown states it –

“The staves, however, were taken out of it when stationary, in order not to encumber the priests while engaged in their services at the table.” JFB

There is no reason to assume this and every reason to assume otherwise. First, the fact that the rings were said to be cast for the Ark and not for the table doesn’t mean they weren’t cast. It logically follows that they were.

Secondly, the reason for explicitly stating that the poles were to remain in the Ark is because they, in fact, would be considered as encumbering movement in the Holy of Holies. Logically, one would think they would be removed so that the priest wouldn’t have to walk between or around them to apply the blood on the mercy seat. But this was what was expected.

And third, it has already been shown that the poles were alongside the longer side of the table. It's placement in the Holy Place means that the staves would in no way encumber the movement of the priests, even if they remained in the table. Considering what they picture, there is every reason to assume that they were *not* taken from the table, even at rest.

29 You shall make its dishes, its pans, its pitchers, and its bowls for pouring.

Each of the words – *qearah* or “dishes,” *qasah* or “pitchers,” and *menaqqith* or “bowls,” are used for the first time in the Bible. The word *kaph* or “pans,” is a common word which means “hands.” However, this is the first time it is used in this sense.

qearah, or dishes, is used 17 times and only in Exodus and Numbers. It comes from a word which means to tear, or cut out. Thus it is something hollowed out like a shallow bowl. These were probably used for bringing the loaves of bread to the table.

kaph, or pans, simply means hand. Thus it is something like a hand. Some translations say “spoon,” but pan, or even “cup” seems more likely. These would have been used to hold incense which was placed with the bread.

qasah, or pitchers, comes from an unused word meaning “to be round” and so it is a jug or a pitcher. It is a rare word used only four times in the Bible. These would have been used for pouring out drink offerings in conjunction with the changing of the loaves each week.

menaqqith, or bowls, indicates a sacrificial basin for holding blood. In this case, it would be wine, as in a drink offering. It is also a rare word found only four times in the Bible. Like the previous word, these would have been used for pouring out drink offerings in conjunction with the changing of the loaves each week.

Each of these is noted as “for pouring.” The word for “pouring” is *nasak* and it means “to cover.” Thus, when something is poured out, it *covers* something else. This word has been used only once so far, in Genesis 35 where it said this –

“So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, a pillar of stone; **and he poured** a drink offering on it, and he poured oil on it. ¹⁵ And Jacob

called the name of the place where God spoke with him, Bethel.”

-Genesis 35:14-15

It is obvious that the table of showbread was used not only for the display of the bread, but it is where these instruments were placed in conjunction with the rituals which accompanied ministering to the Lord. One bowl is seen atop the table in the depiction on the Arch of Titus.

²⁹ (con't) **You shall make them of pure gold.**

Like the gold for the construction of the table, only the finest and purest of gold was to be used for these items. They were to be used in the service of the Holy Place and each is given as a picture of the Lord, His work, and His church to come.

³⁰ **And you shall set the showbread on the table before Me always.**

From this verse, we derive both the object of the table's use and the name which we ascribe to the table; it being called "the table of showbread." However, this name is really a paraphrase of the Hebrew. It was first introduced into English as "showbread" in William Tyndale's translation of Hebrews 9:2 back in 1526.

What it actually says is *lekhem pannah lephanay tamid*, or "bread of the faces before My face continually". Therefore it is the Bread of the Faces, or as some call it, the Bread of the Presence. The word "always" or *tamid*, means "perpetually." This comes from an unused root meaning to stretch, as an indefinite extension. Thus one gets the idea of "perpetual" or "that which is continuous."

This table then will be used for the placement of twelve loaves of bread which were to be set continually before the Lord, as is noted in Leviticus 24 –

“And you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it. Two-tenths of an *ephah* shall be in each cake. ⁶ You shall set them in two rows, six in a row, on the pure *gold* table before the Lord. ⁷ And you shall put pure frankincense on *each* row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, an offering made by fire to the Lord. ⁸ Every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually, *being taken* from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. ⁹ And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it is most holy to him from the offerings of the Lord made by fire, by a perpetual statute.” Leviticus 24:5-9

*He is our Bread of Life, the one who sustains us
And through His life, we have been given life too
A constant theme in the Bible, it does discuss
From the beginning to the end; yes, through and through*

*In Christ we can again draw near to the Lord
And in His presence forever remain
We are counted as holy, so says His word
Never again will God look upon us with disdain*

*Justified! We are allowed access once again
Through the blood of Christ, our fellowship is restored
Redeeming grace to Adam's race, the sons of men
For those who have not His calling ignored*

II. Wonderful Pictures of Christ

Like the Ark of the Covenant, and the Mercy Seat, the descriptions in these verses all point to the work of Christ. The Ark is a picture of Christ, the embodiment of the law. The Mercy Seat pictures Christ, our place of propitiation and atonement. These are in the Most Holy Place.

Outside of that place we have the first piece of furniture described, the Table of the Bread of the Faces, the Bread of the Presence, or the Table of Showbread. All three names are depicted in the details. The furniture is described as *shittim* wood covered in gold.

The *shittim* wood is the base material for the table. Its heart wood is dark reddish-brown and is beautiful when sanded and polished. It pictures Christ's humanity. He, a son of Adam from the Middle East, and thus bearing the same general color as the wood. Shittim is an incorruptible wood, thus picturing His incorruptible nature. Though a Man, He never sinned.

The table, like the Ark, was not of a very large size. In fact, it was humble in that regard. Rather than being some giant, ostentatious thing that people would flock to, it was rather lowly. This pictures Christ in His humbled and lowly human state. He didn't come

as a larger than life figure, but rather He came to a poor family and led a rather small existence by the world's standards.

The table was overlaid with gold, the most precious of the biblical metals. This represents His divinity which overlays the wood, or His humanity – He being the God/Man. The word for “overlay,” *tsaphah*, is identical to a word which means to look out or about, spy, keep watch.

Thus His divine nature is what watches over His subjects, keeping an eye on them. The gold therefore not only pictures His divine nature, but it is also a picture of His royal, kingly status. One who has subjects is the ruler of those subjects. And finally, the gold is the standard by which the value of all other things is set. Therefore, He is the standard by which all others are compared to.

The gold of the table is described by the adjective *tahor*, or pure. This comes from the verb *taher* which means pure in a physical, chemical, ceremonial, or moral sense. In this we can see that the gold is completely undefiled in any way, thus it pictures Christ's perfect purity in all ways – physical, moral, etc.

The table was completely covered with gold. This pictures Christ's complete incorruptible human/divine nature. He is simultaneously fully Man and fully God. And He is completely incorruptible in both respects.

The molding of the table is also a picture of His kingly status. Though the word for this molding is never used in the Bible to indicate a king's crown, in picture, this is exactly what is seen. This crown was at the top of the table, where the bread was to be placed, the symbolism of which I'll get to when we get to the bread.

After the crown molding, the frame is next described. It is said to be a “handbreadth” thick all around. This word handbreadth, or *tophakh*, comes from another word used only twice in the Bible. Once in Isaiah 48:13 where the Lord is said to have “stretched out” the heavens by His right hand.

And once again in Lamentations where it speaks of children who are held by another, as if dandled in their hands. Thus the idea of the handbreadth shows the ability to accomplish a feat. In this case, it is sufficient to support the table of the bread of the faces. This pictures the Lord's ability to establish and sustain His people through His own work. This is seen, for example, in Isaiah 59 –

Then the Lord saw *it*, and it displeased Him
That *there was* no justice.

¹⁶ He saw that *there was* no man,
And wondered that *there was* no intercessor;
Therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him;
And His own righteousness, it sustained Him.

¹⁷ For He put on righteousness as a breastplate,
And a helmet of salvation on His head;
He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing,
And was clad with zeal as a cloak. Isaiah 59:15-17

In the Bible, Christ is said to wear “many crowns.” The molding for that frame reflects another of His many kingly roles, that of establishing and sustaining.

After this, the four rings are mentioned. These have the exact same symbolism as for that of the Ark. The number four in the Bible always speaks of the physical creation. The four corners of the earth are represented by the four rings.

The four-fold division of mankind – the families, tongues, countries, and nations are represented by these four rings, and thus the four rings are represented by the message of the four gospels going out to all people and all places.

The ring is the symbol of authority, as a signet. Just as a signet sinks into the wax as a sign of authority and testimony of the king’s rule, the four gospels sink into the hearts of man and are a testimony and authority of the rule of Christ the King.

These rings are attached “in the four corners that *are* on the four feet.” These four feet then are the gospels which are taken to the ends, or the four corners of the earth. They are the written record of the work of Christ from which the message of Him is derived. The placement of the rings at the feet of the table thus elevates the table above those who carry it. It is a picture of exalting the work of Christ above all else. As our feet move, carrying the gospel, Christ is elevated to His proper position, above all.

The poles of the table, or *bad*, are that on which the table rests as it is being carried. The number two in the Bible indicates that there is a difference in things – they contrast, and yet they confirm. There is the heavens and the earth. They contrast, and yet they confirm the extent of creation. There is man and there is woman. They contrast, and yet they confirm the totality of humanity.

The word *bad* means “alone.” There are two poles which together support the one table. The table pictures Christ and thus they picture the two testaments which present the work of Christ. They are what makes Christ mobile to the world as their word carries Him, each contrasting – the law and grace, but each supporting the whole and confirming the message of Him.

And each is made of the same materials, shittim wood and gold. Together, they proclaim the dual nature of the coming Messiah and the Messiah who has come – He is the God/Man.

As the four gospels are the transition from Old to New, it is the four rings, attached to the four feet, to which the two testaments are affixed. As Christ is the King, the carrying of the table on the poles pictures the palanquin which a king would have been carried around on. He is the King depicted in the four gospels which are tied to the two testaments of the Bible.

As the table can only be carried by two poles, not just one, it teaches us that should either or both testaments of the Bible be removed, we would not have a proper presentation of who Christ is. Without one or the other, we would have a faulty view of Him, and without either, we would have no knowledge of Him at all.

The reason why the adjective *tahor*, or “pure,” is not used to describe this gold is because the gospels and the two testaments have been handled by man. They have our taint in them, even if they are the inspired word of God.

How often have I highlighted for you errors in the KJV, the NKJV, or in the many other translations which I refer to! Though the word of God is pure, man’s hands and his fallible interpretations have been used in the process of sharing it. The lacking adjective is no mistake. Instead, it is another picture for us to understand.

After this the four items for the service of the table were mentioned – the dishes, pans, pitchers, and bowls. These were to be used for the bread, incense, and wine which accompanied the rituals surrounding the weekly bread offering.

Although these will be described later, and their symbolism fully addressed then, a quick look at them now will help us see the purpose of the table. It and the provisions are both types of Christ. The bread pictures Christ explicitly in the Bible.

First, He was born in Bethlehem, in Hebrew *beit lakhem*, or “the House of Bread.” It was given as an initial clue that from the House of Bread would come the true Bread of Life. Throughout His ministry, he used bread in both picture and word to demonstrate fundamental truths about Himself, the word of God, and our need for both. Several times in John 6, Jesus says that He is the Bread of life, such as this –

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰ This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” John 6:47-51

This now explains why the poles run along the longer side of the table, rather than the shorter side. It is because this table, unlike the Ark, is being carried as a funeral bier. Christ died as our Bread of Life. Only in His death can we have this life. This is why when we take the Lord’s Supper; it says we “proclaim His death until He comes.” Every detail is perfectly ordered and arranged.

The fact that there are 12 loaves shows the totality of His church. Bullinger defines twelve as a perfect number, which signifies “*perfection of government, or of governmental perfection*. It is found as a multiple in all that has to do with *rule*.” And this is exactly what the bread signifies.

The “bread of the faces” pictures those who are all of the subjects of their King.” As we are in Christ, we are, as Paul notes in the New Testament a part of the same lump of bread as that of the Firstfruits, meaning Christ. Here is one such verse –

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” 1 Corinthians 15:20-22

The bread had no yeast in it, picturing His sinless perfection. As we are in Him, we too are now deemed sinless. This bread was to be placed in two rows, six per row. These then show that they are of the same lump and yet they differ. Two implies a difference. The number six is the number of man. Two sets of loaves shows two types of man. Therefore, it is a picture of both Jew and Gentile being one in Christ.

We now are in Christ and share in His sinless state before God. In other words, these two rows of bread carry the same general significance as the two cherubim that were on the Mercy Seat. The frankincense placed on the bread pictures Christ's work. He was presented with frankincense at His birth, picturing what was to come in His ministry.

At His death, His body was wrapped in spices according to the Jewish customs. This would have included frankincense. His death is remembered at the presenting of the loaves. It is His death that makes us acceptable to God once again.

The changing of the loaves each week on the Sabbath was a sign that we are always being renewed in Christ. Even though we currently live in fallen bodies, we are even now positionally seated with Christ in the heavenly places. But more importantly, it is a picture of our being rested in Him, our true Sabbath Rest.

This is why we don't need to observe a Sabbath day any longer. He is our rest and our place of rest. This is confirmed by those most memorable words of fulfillment found in Hebrews –

“For we who have believed do enter that rest.” Hebrews 4:3

Our status in Christ, and our eternal spiritual renewal in Him, is pictured by this changing of the loaves. Paul speaks of our renewal in Christ several times such as in this passage from 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 –

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward *man* is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which *are* not seen are eternal.”

As this bread is before the face of the Lord, it is also called the “Bread of the Presence.” In other words, in the bread, there is a picture of the people, but also in the location of the bread, there is a picture of being in the presence of the Lord. It pictures the communion between us and the Lord, because we are *in Christ*.

The bread being on the table pictures our being supported by Christ. He is the underpinning of our position. Without Him, the God/Man, there would be no place for us before the Lord, but because of Him we rest safely there in His presence.

The wine would have been poured out at the time of the changing of the loaves, picturing the pouring out of Christ's blood for His people. The incense being sprinkled on the loaves pictures our death with Christ. It symbolizes the access that we have to God's throne of grace in our time of need. This was made possible by His death. This is seen again and again in the New Testament such as –

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” Colossians 3:1-4

Until now, I have left off the symbolism of the crown molding which is at the top of the table simply because of what it pictures. It is obviously a picture of His kingly role, but because it is at the top of the table, it thus surrounds the loaves of bread, which picture those who are in Christ.

Therefore, this crown molding is a picture of the eternal salvation of those who are in Christ. He surrounds and encompasses them, and therefore, it pictures Christ our King in His role as the One who justifies His people before God.

The description of this second piece of furniture follows naturally after that of the Ark of the Covenant. One cannot be “*in Christ*” until the mission *of Christ* was fulfilled. Thus, the Ark was detailed first – His Divine/Human nature fulfilling the law and embodying the tablets of the law.

Next, the Mercy Seat was detailed. It was His sacrifice, which was in fulfillment of Scripture. Once that was accomplished, He began His next role, that of being our Bread from Heaven. We can now participate in His life by receiving His work. From that, we become a part of the lump of Bread, His body.

Our lives are now literally in the presence *of God* and our prayers are now acceptable *to God*. From this marvelous aspect of His work, we will move on next week to that pictured by the menorah, the golden lampstand, which will complete the chapter. We'll hope for wonderful things in that passage as well.

What we should learn from the repetition of many of the same themes as the construction of the Ark is that we are being asked to remember the truths they reveal. We are to remember what the acacia wood represents, we are to remember what the

gold represents, and we are to think on why some gold is to be “pure” and why other gold doesn’t have that adjective attached to it.

On and on, repetition is used in these pieces of furniture to show us things we are to remember. And above all, we are asked to direct our attention to Christ. It is He who is the subject of every picture we see. If we can remember this, then our continued studies throughout the rest of the Bible will all make complete sense.

And as God wants us to see Christ, it is an indication that He wants us to receive Christ. In so doing, we will again be pleasing to Him. Without the Son, no man can be pleasing to the Father. And so be sure to call out to Him for the forgiveness of Your sins. And then come forward and share in the Lord’s Table; a memorial of the giving of the true Bread of Life for us.

Closing Verse: *“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? ¹⁷ For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.” 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17*

Next Week: Exodus 25:31-40 *Something surrounded by a wonderful aura...* (The Menorah) (70th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Bread of the Presence

You shall also make a table of acacia wood
Two cubits shall be its length; that will be just right
A cubit its width; this is understood
And a cubit and a half its height

And you shall it with pure gold overlay
And make a molding of gold all around, just as I say

You shall make for it a frame
Of a handbreadth all around

And you shall make a gold molding
For the frame all around; its appearance will astound

And you shall make for it four rings of gold
And put the rings on the four corners
That are at its four legs; do this as I have told

The rings shall be close to the frame, this is where
As holders for the poles, the table to bear

And you shall make the poles of acacia wood
And overlay them with gold
That the table may be carried with them, as is understood

You shall make as you are now told
Its dishes, its pans, its pitchers, and its bowls for pouring
You shall make them of pure gold

And you shall set the showbread
On the table before Me always, as to you I have said

A marvelous table in its purpose and design
A table for bread to be in the presence of the Lord
And what it pictures is wonderfully sublime
Such beautiful pictures of Christ are found in this word

Lord God, how good it is to know that we now can rest
In your Presence because of the work of Jesus
It was He went to the cross, completing the test
And His work now restores access to You for us

We thank You and we praise You for this wondrous glory
Which You have revealed to us through the gospel story

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 25:31-40 (THE MENORAH)

The menorah is a marvel and a wonder concerning the wisdom of God. The details of its design and construction are literally filled with pictures of Christ and His work throughout the ages. Like the previous two pieces of furniture that have been described, contemplating the design and construction of the menorah is to take a look into the very mind of God.

His handiwork is evident in every detail, and the perfection of what we will see is more than astonishing when one thinks of all that is connected to it throughout the rest of the Bible. By the end of the sermon, we will have looked into a host of patterns and details, and yet I fear that we will have only touched on the things that this marvelous gold menorah actually symbolizes.

In the end, the menorah was only a representation of something else. It served its purpose during the years that Israel had a tabernacle and then a temple, but in the end, the true Menorah is found in our Lord Jesus. He is the true Light which shines in the world, and He is the one to illuminate the dark places with His radiant magnificence.

And to understand the Lord Jesus, we must look to another lamp which has been given to us, a lamp which is also pictured in the menorah. It is the lamp of Scripture which illuminates the work of Christ throughout all of human history...

Text Verse: *And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; ²⁰ knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹ for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." 2 Peter 1:19-21*

Peter tells us that it is the Holy Spirit who gave us the Bible through holy men of God. A few things about this are necessary to understand. The first that of the *inspiration of Scripture*. In Matthew 22:43, Jesus shows that the writings of God through David were from the Holy Spirit.

The logical deduction that we can make is that all of the Old Testament came with the same divine inspiration. Jesus' words throughout the gospels show that this is true. In

Luke 24, after the resurrection, Jesus explained all of the Scriptures to those He walked with and showed how they actually revealed Him.

But He had already told the people this. They just hadn't understood. This was seen in His words to the Jewish leaders –

“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.” John 5:39

The Scriptures which Jesus spoke of at that time were the Old Testament. Jesus plainly stated that the words of the Old Testament testify of Him. After this, and just before His crucifixion, Jesus said this to His apostles in John 16:13 –

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.”

In other words, the same Spirit who gave us the Old Testament has given us the New as well. The word of God is one unified whole which points to the work of God in Christ and it is illuminated to us by the Holy Spirit.

These truths are clearly and precisely detailed in the construction and design of the menorah. It is the light of the tabernacle which was designed by God. Understanding this, let's get right into the sermon today. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Lampstand of Pure Gold (verses 31-36)

³¹ **“You shall also make a lampstand of pure gold;**

The last item to be described in this chapter is that of the menorah. Some translations archaically call it a “candlestick,” but it is much more appropriately called a “lampstand.” The word *menorah* is introduced into the Bible here. It is essentially the same as the word *ner*, or “lamp.” Thus, the menorah is literally “a lamp bearer.”

This menorah, like the overlay of the ark, the entirety of the mercy seat, the overlay of the table of showbread, and the utensils for the table of showbread, was to be made of *zahav tahor*, or “gold pure.” Again, as before, the symbolism remains constant.

Zahav, or gold, is the finest of the biblical metals. It indicates purity and holiness, but even more it represents royalty – kings and kingdoms. Gold is both a metal and a color, and both are associated with kingship. It is also considered an incorruptible metal.

The adjective *tahor*, or “pure,” comes from the verb *taher* which means pure in a physical, chemical, ceremonial, or moral sense. In this we can see that the gold is to be completely undefiled in any way. It thus reflects that which is divine, and so it pictures Christ’s deity and perfect purity in all ways – physical, moral, etc.

³¹ (con’t) **the lampstand shall be of hammered work.**

Like the Mercy Seat which sat on the Ark of the Covenant, the lampstand was to be made of “hammered work.” *Miqshah* or “hammered work” comes from the word *miqsheh* which means “a fancy hairdo.” Therefore, it could be a turning of metal, like the braids of hair, or it could be a hammering of metal for shaping.

As was seen from the terminology used in the making of the Mercy Seat, it is more likely a hammering of metal than of a turning of metal. The skilled hands of a craftsman were to shape the menorah until it was complete and ready to be used.

³¹ (con’t) **Its shaft, its branches, its bowls, its *ornamental* knobs, and flowers shall be of *one piece*.**

The word translated as “shaft” is *yarek*, and it properly means “thigh.” The thigh stands as the foundation of man, the place for girding on one’s sword, and for the source of life. The first two times it was used in the Bible give us a hint of why the word is chosen here. It is found in Genesis 24 –

“Please, put your hand under my **thigh**,³ and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell;⁴ but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac.” Genesis 24:2-4

“So the servant put his hand under the **thigh** of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.” Genesis 24:9

This is the most intimate part of the man and this was therefore the most solemn vow that could be made. Under the thigh is where Abraham's life was continued on through his seed, resulting in Isaac. It is also where the rite of circumcision was conducted.

This request of Abraham pointed to the coming Messiah, because Abraham's seed would lead to the Messiah through Isaac, the son of promise. Further circumcision as a rite pictures the cutting away of the sin nature. The oath that was demanded concerned the highest decision in the life of Abraham and it would therefore be the highest priority of the servant who was to carry it out.

This "thigh" would be the central stem from which proceeded the pairs of branches, from it would continue the middle shaft all the way up to its lamp, and it would also include the base of the lamp.

The word *qaneh*, or "branches" follows the Greek translation of the Old Testament. In the Hebrew, the word is singular. It won't be plural until verse 32. Therefore, this is only speaking now of the middle branch. The word *qaneh* means "a reed" or a "stalk."

Next are mentioned "its bowls." The word is *gabia* which means a cup or a bowl. The "knobs" are a word introduced into the Bible here, *kaphor*. This word indicates either the capital on a column, or a bulb or knob which encircles the shaft of the lampstand. The word is identical to the name *Kaphor* which refers to the island of Crete and so it is believed that they are named from the place where such ornaments were first imported. (HAW)

And finally, the *perakh*, or flowers are now mentioned for the first time in the Bible. The word means a bud, a blossom, or a flower. What appears to be the intent, although this is debated, is that these bowls, knobs, and flowers represent the entire flower which includes the cup – the whole opened flower; the knob – which is the calyx of the flower; and the corolla – which are the outer leaves of the flower.

All of these were to be ornamented on the main shaft and were to be hammered from just one piece of gold. But there is much more to have come out of this single piece of metal...

³² And six branches shall come out of its sides:

Not only was the menorah to have such a marvelous shaft going straight up, but it was to have six branches which came out of its sides as well. Unlike other candelabra, this

one will be unique in that all of the branches come out of the sides only, thus they are all on the same plane...

32 (con't) three branches of the lampstand out of one side, and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side.

This menorah is to be hammered out of a single piece of metal. Thus it will be something which will require immense skill in order to fashion. Unlike something which is either cast from molten metal, or something which is soldered together, this will be like the mercy seat, completely formed from a single solid chunk of gold. From each side will come three individual branches which are to be symmetrical to one another.

33 Three bowls *shall be* made like almond *blossoms* on one branch, *with an ornamental knob and a flower,*

These bowls are not at the top of the branch, but are within the branch itself. And so what you have is the branch coming out of the menorah, and then an almond blossom with its knob and flower. Then there is more branch, and then another almond blossom with its knob and flower. Then there is more branch, and another almond blossom with its knob and flower. This would be followed by more branch leading to its top.

The verb for “made like almond” is *shaqad*. It is only used six times and all are in reference to the making of the menorah. This word comes from *shaqed*, or almond. It is used only four times in the Bible, but understanding its use will give insight into its symbolic meaning on the menorah.

In Numbers, Aaron’s staff is used as a sign to the people. In one night, it is said to have sprouted and put forth buds, produced blossoms, and yielded ripe almonds.

The almond is one of the first plants to flower in the spring, in late February to early March, and it is one of the last plants to have its fruit ripen – from August through October. Thus, this was an amazing miracle because it *spanned* the entire harvest season... in a single night.

In Ecclesiastes, the blossoming of the almond tree is said to reflect the aged condition of man. The almond blossoms are white just as an aged person’s hair is white. Following on with that, white hair is reflective of honor in Leviticus 19.

And in the book of Jeremiah, we read this last use of the almond –

“The word of the Lord came to me: ‘What do you see, Jeremiah?’

‘I see the branch of an almond tree,’ I replied.

¹² The Lord said to me, ‘You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled.’” Jeremiah 1:11, 12 (NIV)

In those verses is a play on words. The word almond is *shaqed*, but the word “watching” is *shoqad*. Therefore, the almond is being equated with an extended period of *time, honor, and watching*.

³³ (con’t) **and three bowls made like almond *blossoms* on the other branch, *with an ornamental knob and a flower*—**

Opposite each branch, there would be another branch which followed same pattern, repeating it on the other side.

³³ (con’t) **and so for the six branches that come out of the lampstand.**

All six of the branches were to come directly out of the lampstand, each with its corresponding branch on the other side. In total, the number of floral arrangements on the six branches would be 18. The branches derive their source from the stem of the menorah, thus the central branch is the heart of it and the branches are dependent upon the middle branch.

³⁴ **On the lampstand itself four bowls *shall be* made like almond *blossoms*, *each with its ornamental knob and flower*.**

Like the branches, there were to be floral arrangements as well, but instead of three on any other branch, there were to be four. Therefore, in all, there will be 22 of these floral arrangements on the menorah: 4 in the middle and 18 on the 6 branches, or 22. These 22 arrangements correspond to the 22 letters of the Hebrew aleph-bet. We are being given insights right from the mind of God.

³⁵ **And *there shall be* a knob under the *first* two branches of the same, a knob under the *second* two branches of the same, and a knob under the *third* two branches of the same, according to the six branches that extend from the lampstand.**

A question arises whether these three knobs are in addition to the four already on the lampstand, or if it is speaking of three of the four knobs on the flowers themselves. The

word “and” at the beginning of the verse could mean, “in addition,” or it could simply be a descriptor for the use of three of the bulbs.

Assuming that these are bulbs belonging to the flowers, the thought here can be understood in one of two ways, either the branches come out of the stem and there is a knob *below* that spot, and thus the knob is “below” the branches in altitude. If this is so, then the branches would *come out above* the knob and *below* the flower.

Or, there is a knob on the stem and the branches come *out of* the knob. If this is so, then the knob is below the base of the stems, but only in the sense of being where the stems begin. Various depictions show both options and it is hard to be dogmatic about which is correct, but the second option, that of the stems coming out of the knobs, seems correct based on the next verse.

The depiction on the Arch of Titus is no help at all as it doesn’t match the Bible in either regard.

³⁶ Their knobs and their branches *shall be of one piece*;

Because it says “their knobs and their branches,” it appears that the branches are actually coming out of the knobs and not out of the stem above the knobs. Otherwise, it appears that these words would be superfluous. But the intent here is that the branches were not to be fashioned separately and welded onto the knobs. Instead, they were to be of one solid piece with it.

^{36 (cont’)} all of it *shall be one hammered piece of pure gold*.

Everything thus far described was to be fashioned out of a single piece of metal by being hammered. It was not to be cast or welded, something that would be infinitely easier to do. Instead, it was to be shaped by the hand of the artisan through wisdom and skill.

Again, Moses is reminded that it is to be of *zahav tahor*, or “gold pure.” It was thus to have no impurities of any kind, but it was to be refined to the very highest degree possible. The repetition of the words is a stress all its own for Moses to consider and remember.

*The purest of gold, fit for a King
Was used to make a seven-branch lampstand*

*Seeing its beauty makes my heart sing
The workmanship marvelous; stunning and grand*

*Every detail is so beautiful, each knob and flower
The glistening of the branches as they catch the light
It shines in the dark for hour after hour
Illuminating the holy place throughout the night*

*The glory of God is seen in each detail
Every branch speaks out a marvelous story
And in what it pictures, nothing will fail
As the Lord reveals to us His unending glory*

II. A Lamp for Giving Light (verses 37-40)

³⁷ You shall make seven lamps for it,

What is implicit here is that there will be seven individual lamps for each of the seven branches. Though not described, they would be round or oval lamps with a mouth at one spot from which the wick would protrude.

They would probably have been worked into the top flower of each branch, or if the branch continued out of the top flower, they would be fashioned so that the lamp would be made to come out of the protruding branch.

³⁷ (con't) and they shall arrange its lamps

Some translations have these words read something like, "...and they shall light its lamps" instead of "and they shall arrange its lamps." The word is *alah* and it means "to go up." For this reason, it may be better translated as "set up" the lamps, rather than "light the lamps," although later in chapter 27 the same term will be used for the lighting of the lamps.

In other words, the details for the construction and arrangement of the menorah are being given now, not the details for the care of it. This is seen in the continuation of the verse...

³⁷ (con't) so that they give light in front of it.

The purpose of the menorah was to give *light* throughout the *night*. Exodus 30:8 says that the lamps were to be lit at twilight. Exodus 27:21 shows that it was to burn all night, being tended to from evening until morning by Aaron and his sons. And Exodus 30:7 shows that they were to be extinguished in the morning when the High Priest dressed them.

Exodus 26:35 then shows that the menorah was to be placed outside the veil, in the Holy Place, across from the Table of Showbread on the south side of the room. It would be parallel with the wall and so the words, “that they give light in front of it” means that the direction of the table of showbread would be that which was primarily illuminated, but the entire holy place would be fully lit from the lamps.

³⁸ And its wick-trimmers and their trays *shall be* of pure gold.

The word for wick-trimmers, *melqakh*, is introduced into the Bible and will be used six times. It comes from the word *laqakh* which means “to take.” And so it means “snuffers” or “tongs.”

It is that which will draw out the wick if necessary to keep the fire burning and also to terminate the burning of the wick at morning time. It is used in the sense of “tongs” in Isaiah 6:6 when a hot coal is taken from the altar and pressed to Isaiah’s lips.

The “trays” is another new word in Scripture, *makhtah*. It would be the snuff-dishes which were used to place the snuff which was taken from the wicks when extinguished. The same word is used in other places to indicate a fire-pan which is used for removing coals from a fire, and also it is translated as a censor. Like the menorah itself, these implements were to be made of pure gold.

³⁹ It shall be made of a talent of pure gold, with all these utensils.

The talent, or *kikkar* is reckoned by various sources from 75 to 130 pounds of gold. As a fun brain squiggle for you, the word *kikkar* comes from the word *karar*, which means to dance in a twirling manner, and thus “round.” Therefore the talent would be a large round ingot of gold. The menorah and all of its associated utensils was to be made from an ingot of the finest gold of this weight.

⁴⁰ And see to it that you make *them* according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.

Moses is reminded here that the things to be built are to be in accordance with the pattern that he was shown. The word “pattern” was first seen in verse 25:9 when speaking of the implements for the construction of the tabernacle.

The admonition is again given and it is not just speaking of the details of the menorah, but of all of the details of Chapter 25. The word pattern is *tavnith*. It comes from the word *banah*, to build. It indicates a structure; by implication, a model or resemblance.

*According to the pattern I showed you
So shall you make all of these things
Every detail shall be precise, so shall you do
For in the details there are pictures of marvelous things*

*Those things that I will later reveal
Are found hidden in each and every detail, you see
For now in symbols these things I did conceal
Yes, wonderful things I’m sure you will agree*

*And someday the mysteries will become clear
Those things that were once hidden from sight
Will be realized in My own Son, precious and dear
They will shine forth with a resplendent light*

III. Marvelous Pictures of Christ and His Work

In these instructions, there was a pattern or a model for Moses to work with. He was shown in advance exactly what the final results should look like. Nothing was to be left to the thoughts of man, but of God alone. Therefore, the tabernacle and all of its implements reflect that which is of divine origin. Everything about them then was to symbolize or picture something else.

In the case of the menorah, there is an immense amount of detail for us to consider. This third piece of furniture in the tabernacle follows logically after the first two – the Ark of the Covenant with its Mercy Seat, and then the Table of Showbread.

The ark with the law inside is a picture of the fulfilling of the law by Christ, thus He “embodies the law.” The crowning aspect of that was His death in fulfillment of the law, pictured by the mercy seat.

After His earthly work, pictured by these things, comes the Table of Showbread. With His work accomplished, He could truly be considered our Bread from Heaven. His resurrection proved it and His words were vindicated in that act. We can now participate in His life by receiving His work. From that, we become a part of the lump of Bread, His body.

Immediately following that are the details of the Menorah. The light of the lamp proceeds from the oil burning on the lamp. Thus, the oil is a picture of the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, illuminating the Holy Place. This could only follow after His death as He Himself said –

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.” John 16:7

After Christ’s death, we could receive His body as our Bread of Life. From that act, the Spirit is given to us. As you can see, the order in which each of these pieces have been named follows the pattern of the work of Christ for us as is outlined in the Bible. Each article follows logically and naturally, one after another.

Considering the menorah, the pure gold symbolizes His divine nature as well as total purity and His royal status. Notice that only *tahor*, or pure gold, is used in this lamp’s design. It speaks of pure divinity and absolute holiness. The menorah itself is designed specifically as an implement of illumination. In symbolism, it is the illumination and light of Christ. The light is what He spoke of in John 8:12 –

“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” John 8:12

Within the menorah though, there is much more symbolism than just this. Its seven branches marvelously unite all of the spiritual meanings of this divine number into one – holiness, perfection, fullness, and completion.

The shaft, or *yarek*, speaks of the Messiah, the fulfillment of the promised seed of Abraham. He is the divine entry into humanity in the Person of Jesus Christ; God incarnate. From that middle shaft six other branches come out. They are of the same nature as the branch, and yet they are distinct from it and totally dependent on it.

Further, though the details of these branches differ from the shaft, they are essentially the same in material and in final use. The number six in the Bible represents man, especially fallen man. But these six are united to the first and thus bear the first's same nature. Therefore, these picture *the redeemed of the Lord*, dependent on Christ, and yet bearing His nature. As there are two sides which are identical, they reflect the totality of man – Jew and Gentile.

Also, the seven lamps filled with oil reflect the *seven-fold Spirit of the Lord* mentioned first in Isaiah 11 –

“The Spirit **of the Lord** shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit **of wisdom** and **understanding**,
The Spirit **of counsel** and **might**,
The Spirit **of knowledge** and **of the fear of the Lord.**” Isaiah 11:2

This seven-fold spirit is referred to several times in Revelation, such as in Revelation 4:5–

“From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings, and rolls of thunder. Before the throne burned seven torches of fire. This is the sevenfold Spirit of God.” Berean Study Bible

Next, the seven branches reflect *the seven days* of the creation account. From top to bottom, and from right to left, the branches would be numbered going up on each side. Thus it would be branches 1, 2, and 3 on the right, and 4, 5, and 6 on the left.

The first and fourth branches would be at the same level. They reflect the creation of light on the first day, and the creation of the light bearers – the sun, moon, and stars, on the fourth day.

The second and fifth branches would be on the same level. They reflect the division of the waters above and below in the second day, and the filling of the waters with fish and the firmament with birds on the fifth day.

The third and six branches would be on the same level. They reflect the creation of the dry land and plants on day three, and the filling of the land with animals and man and the giving of the plants to man as food on the sixth day.

The seventh, middle branch, reflects the day of God's rest from His creative efforts and upon which the other six days branch out from, and of which they are actually dependent on. It is the foundation and the source of all else. All of creation is dependent on this seventh, and without it nothing else would have any true meaning.

This explains why there are four flowers on the middle shaft. The number four is the number of creation. All of creation is represented by these four flowers. Stemming from that are the branches which reflect the divine completeness of all of creation.

Next, the seven branches picture the entire *span of redemptive history*, its fullness. It is reflective of the 7000-year span of man's time on earth. The middle branch is unique from the others and it is that which the others stem from. The middle branch is known as the *shamash*, which means the helper or servant candle.

Tradition has it that this was the first lit and the others were then lit after it. It is still a practice of the Jews to this day. Thus this middle, or servant, candle is a picture of the time of the birth of Christ around the year 4000, or right in the middle of the 7000 year plan for man.

He came as the Servant at that time. He is the One who then lights up the ages of human history. The six branches of human history stem out naturally from this epoch moment when Christ came to dwell among us and they are actually dependent on His coming. He is the Foundation of man and He is our Source of life.

Further, He is our Rest. Therefore, the words of Hebrews 4:3 are confirmed in His coming at this 4000 year point –

“For we who have believed do enter that rest...”

Just as the middle branch pictures God's Sabbath rest in Creation, Christ is our true Sabbath rest because of His coming.

The seven branches also reflect *the seven-fold division of Scripture* – the Law, the Old Testament History, the books of Wisdom, the Major Prophets, the Minor Prophets, the New Testament History, and the New Testament Letters. This is the light of God revealed to us in written form.

These seven divisions follow in the same pattern as that of the seven days of creation. From right to left, the branches would be numbered going up on each side. Thus it would be branches 1, 2, and 3 on the right, and 4, 5, and 6 on the left.

The first and fourth branches would be at the same level. Branch one would be the five books of Moses, the Torah; branch four would correspond to the five Major Prophets.

The second and fifth branches would be on the same level. Branch two would reflect the twelve OT history books; branch five would reflect the twelve Minor Prophets.

The third and six branches would be on the same level. Branch three symbolizes the five wisdom letters; branch six symbolizes the five NT books of history Matthew through Acts.

The seventh, middle, branch symbolizes the 22 NT letters. Despite coming last in written history, they are what the six other categories branch out from and which those branches are dependent on – the revelation of the grace of Christ. They explain the foundation of biblical theology and they fully reveal Christ, our Source of life and our place of rest.

As a marvelous point of interest, if one takes the numbers from each corresponding branch (22, 5, 12, and 5), they will come up with the most splendid of patterns as revealed in the Hebrew aleph-bet. The 22 letters of the main branch correspond to the letter Tav in Hebrew, the 22nd letter of the aleph-bet.

The next two branches each have five corresponding letters. This is the fifth letter, Hey. The next two branches each have twelve corresponding letters. This is the twelfth letter, Lamed. The final two branches have five corresponding letters. Again, it is the fifth letter, Hey. In order, they are Tav, Hey, Lamed, Hey. Written out, they spell the word *tehillah*, or “praise.” It is where the name of the psalms, *tehillim*, comes from. Thus, radiating from the menorah in a pictorial display is the praise of God’s workings in creation, in history, and in the work of Christ, all which are revealed in the word of God, the Holy Bible; the structure of which is found in this beautiful pure gold menorah which stood in the holy place of the tabernacle.

Just as the menorah was to be fashioned by hand out of hammered work, the Bible was fashioned by the hand of man under the inspiration of the Spirit. It is one unified whole. It wasn’t cast, as if by the work of a single process, nor was it soldered together as if of many pieces.

Instead, it was made as a unified whole from one circle of gold. Just as the wheel of the Bible, forms a perfect circle which matches the form and structure of the menorah. The wisdom of the Lord, through the Spirit of God and through the hand of man, “dances” if

you will, twirling through the entire process, from beginning to end. The Bible is a single, unified, and marvelous whole.

The menorah is specifically called the “Lamp of God” in 1 Samuel 3:3. Likewise, the word of God is also called a lamp in Scripture, in Psalm 119, it says this –

“Your word *is* a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.” Psalm 119:105

Christ is the word of God, and the Holy Spirit is what illuminates the word of God. Thus both are intricately tied up in the symbolism of the menorah.

The 22 floral arrangements on the menorah first symbolize the Hebrew aleph-bet, which is the *basis for the structure* of the entire Bible. That they are almonds signifies the *entire period of the word of God* going forth throughout history. The almond being of the first blooms of the season, and of the last to ripen signifies the *entire duration of man’s time on earth*.

The almond also signifies the honor and wisdom tied up in the giving of the word, and that the Lord is watching over His word. He is watching to perform His word, and He is watching man’s adherence to it throughout all ages.

And this brings us to the next picture of the menorah. The seven branches represent the seven dispensations of redemptive history over which God’s light shines, and through which the word has been illuminated.

They are the dispensations of Innocence, Conscience, Government, Promise, Law, Grace, and the Millennium. God’s word has been given throughout all of them and the Spirit is what illuminates them for those who walk in His light; the light of Christ.

The 22 floral arrangements on these dispensations are then also reflective of the 22 letters, or epistles, of the New Testament. After the first five books of New Testament history, Matthew through Acts, these 22 letters are what testify to the doctrine of salvation through the work of Christ alone.

Therefore, although the dispensation of Grace is the sixth in the stream of time, it is the logical center of the seven. The dispensations then are represented on the menorah by branch **one** symbolizing *Innocence*; branch **four** corresponds to it in *Promise*. Branch **two** symbolizes *Conscience*, and branch **five** corresponds to it in *Law*. Branch **three** symbolizes *Government*, and branch **six** corresponds to it in

the *Millennium*. Each of these is supported by the foundation of *Grace* which fully reveals Christ, our Source of life.

The doctrine of salvation by grace through faith is that which lights up the entire Bible. Shadows of it were seen in the Old Testament, but only in the truths as revealed in the 22 New Testament letters, which explain the work of Christ, are they fully realized. In the 22 floral almond depictions, we see that which the Lord has watched over, from beginning to end. Only in them is this truly understood.

The tabernacle itself is a picture of the person of Jesus Christ. As the church is His body, then the makeup of the tabernacle also reflects this truth. On the menorah are the seven lamps, each representing the seven churches of the book of Revelation. They are a light to the world of darkness.

The menorah itself is a representation of the light of the word of God and of His Spirit as it is revealed through Jesus Christ. These are given to His people, the people of His church, to direct our praises, our worship, and our conduct. And they are also given as a means of comfort, and as a light shining in the darkness.

As the menorah pictures the word of God, the illumination toward the Table of Showbread in the Holy Place symbolizes the Bible illuminating the work of Christ, our Bread of Life. It was to be an ever-present reminder to God's people that Christ's life was given for us. It is the highlight of the message of the Bible.

When we look at the menorah, we can see a picture of that which is wholly marvelous. It is a snapshot of creation, of all of redemptive history, and it is a picture of the intricately detailed work of God in Christ for us.

Because this includes we who have been redeemed by God and sealed with His Spirit, let us therefore strive to shine out to the world the light of Christ and the warmth and comfort of His Holy Spirit. Let us be responsible members of His body, pursuing His word, and telling others of His marvelous deeds.

And if you have not yet called on Christ as your Lord, it is high time you do. God is shouting out to you through Scripture, and through both testaments that He loves You enough to present Himself in these most marvelous of types and pictures, and finally in what they represent – Jesus Christ. He is the fulfillment of all of it and in Him you can find your true Source of light and hope...

Closing Verse: *“For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” 2 Corinthians 4:6*

Next Week: Exodus 26:1-14 *Paying heed to this sermon will be time well spent...* (The Tabernacle and the Tent) (71st Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Christ, Our Shining Lamp

You shall also make a lampstand of pure gold
The lampstand shall be of hammered work
Its shaft, its branches, its bowls, its ornamental knobs, and flowers
Shall be of one piece, no detail shall you shirk

And six branches, out of its sides shall come
Three branches of the lampstand out of one side
And three branches of the lampstand will be from
Out of the other side; these instructions shall be applied

Three bowls shall be made like
Almond blossoms on one branch, you see
With an ornamental knob and a flower
Do this as you have heard from Me

And three bowls made like almond blossoms
On the other branch; so you shall understand
With an ornamental knob and a flower
And so for the six branches that come out of the lampstand

On the lampstand itself four bowls
Shall like almond blossoms be made
Each with its ornamental knob and flower
So shall it be arrayed

And there shall be a knob, thus you shall do
Under the first two branches alike shall be your aim
A knob under the second two branches of the same too
And a knob under the third two branches of the same

According to the six branches that extend
From the lampstand; to this you shall attend

Their knobs and their branches shall be of one piece, as I have told
All of it shall be one hammered piece of pure gold

You shall make seven lamps for it
And they shall arrange its lamps in this way
So that they give light in front of it
Ensure you do this just as I say

And its wick-trimmers and their trays
Shall be of pure gold, for beauty and for praise

It shall be made of a talent of pure gold
With all these utensils, so shall you do
And see to it that you make them according
To the pattern which on the mountain was shown to you

Such marvelous detail for these implements of gold
Each carrying a picture of our Lord Jesus
Just as everything which in the Bible You have told
Shows something far greater to us

What marvel and beauty is found in this precious word
And all of it is centered on Jesus Christ our Lord

And so we praise You, Lord God Almighty
So be pleased to live in our praises for all eternity

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 26:1-14 **(THE TABERNACLE AND THE TENT)**

The details for the creation of all things took a tad bit more than a single chapter of the book of Genesis. The instructions for the tabernacle and its associated rites take six chapters, most of which are longer than that first chapter of Genesis.

Because of this, it is apparently something which is *most* important to the Lord. As we have seen from Chapter 25, every detail thus far has pointed to Christ and His work. Today's 14 verses will be no different. And unfortunately, there are a thousand different directions I could have gone with these details.

There is so much information stored up in what we are being told that we could literally spend weeks trying to figure it all out and to sort it all out. This is especially so because there are so many varied opinions and commentaries on what each item symbolizes. Some are wonderful in their insight; some of them stretch meanings far beyond what can be considered believable.

In the end, if we just keep thinking of Jesus and how the details point to Him, we will be on safe grounds. When we stand before Him, all the mysteries that we miss will be revealed to us. For now, we have enough to fill up our morning with absolute delight.

Text Verse: *"For in the time of trouble
He shall hide me in His pavilion;
In the secret place of His tabernacle
He shall hide me;
He shall set me high upon a rock."* Psalm 27:5

The design of the tabernacle and the tent are to be viewed from two perspectives, just as any dwelling is. There is that which is inside, and there is that which is outside. Those on the inside receive the benefits of being on the inside, those outside are excluded from them.

The gates around a house keep miscreants out and at the same time they keep those inside safe. David understood this and he said that he would be kept safe in the secret place of His tabernacle. Believe it or not, that is where you are right now, if you belong to Christ. And if you don't then you are far from safe.

This is a truth which is to be realized in today's verses. Yes, it's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Details for the Tabernacle (verses 1-6)

Today we will begin to look at the construction of what is known as the tabernacle. This edifice is actually comprised of three main parts. The first is the tabernacle itself, the dwelling place of the Lord. This is found in Exodus 26:1-6. After that is what is more appropriately called "the tent." It is detailed in verses 7-13, and its covering is then detailed in verse 14.

In the Hebrew, the parts are more readily distinguished than in most English translations.

¹"Moreover you shall make the tabernacle

The *mishkan* or "tabernacle" was introduced into the Bible in Exodus 25:9. After that, some of the furniture was described in detail. We now return to the *mishkan* itself and the details of its construction. *Mishkan* comes from the verb *shakan* which means "to dwell." That word was used in Exodus 25:8 –

"And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them."

Therefore, *ha'mishkan* is "the dwelling place" of the Lord; His tabernacle. Although this is a bit out of order, it is important to understand that the tabernacle first pictures Christ in His Person. This is seen in Hebrews 8 –

"Now *this is* the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, ² a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man." Hebrews 8:1, 2

But, it also details more. It pictures the church, the place where the Spirit of God dwells in man. This is seen in Ephesians 2 –

"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief

cornerstone,²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” Ephesians 2:19-22

It is also seen in 2 Corinthians 6 –

“As God has said:
‘I will dwell in them
And walk among them.
I will be their God,
And they shall be My people.’” 2 Corinthians 6:16

But even more generally, it is also a picture inclusive of each individual Christian –

“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷ If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which *temple* you are.” 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17

This is seen in other passages of the New Testament as well. The tabernacle is also a representation of the dispensation of grace and of the millennium as will be seen, in detail, when we get to the pertinent verses which reflect this. It is also reflective of the plan of salvation itself. This is seen in Hebrews 9 –

“But Christ came *as* High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” Hebrews 9:11, 12

Hebrews 9 continues to explain this aspect of Jesus’ work in relation to this ancient picture given in the construction of the tabernacle.

And in its final sense, it is a representation of the heavenly state. As it pictures Christ Jesus, and as He will dwell among His redeemed for all eternity, then in the details of the tabernacle and its furniture are the details of the One we will dwell with for all time. We see shadows of this in the Old Testament, such as in Isaiah, but we see it fully realized in the book of Revelation –

“And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God.” Revelation 21:3

¹ (con’t) **with ten curtains of fine woven linen**

The first part to be described is “ten curtains.” The number ten is explained by Bullinger as signifying *the perfection of Divine order*. As he says, “Completeness of order, marking the entire round of anything, is, therefore, the ever-present signification of the number *ten*. It implies that nothing is wanting; that the number and order are perfect; that the whole cycle is complete.

Therefore, there is completeness to these individual curtains which, when combined together, will form a whole. Concerning these “curtains,” it brings in a new word to the Bible. The *yeriah*, or curtains, comes from the word *yara* which means to quiver or tremble. As curtains hang and blow in the wind, they give the impression of trembling. These ten curtains are to be specifically made with “fine woven linen.” This is another new word which will only be found in the book of Exodus, *shazar*. It comes from a root meaning “to twist” as in the twisting of straw to make a cord. This fine linen has its own signification in Scripture and is explicitly explained in the book of Revelation verse 19:8 – “And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright [and] pure; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.” (Darby)

Most versions say something like the “righteous acts of the saints.” However, this is incorrect. This is not speaking about what we do, but about what Christ has done. He is the righteousness of the saints, and we are given a picture of it here in the Old Testament. His righteousness is what the tabernacle is based on.

It is intricately intertwined into the very fabric of His being, thus the use of this word *shazar*. The righteous act of a saint which is credited as worthy of note is that of calling on Christ and being imputed His righteousness. This is seen in the fine linen of the tabernacle.

¹ (con’t) **and blue, purple, and scarlet thread;**

Likewise, the colors are specific as well – blue, purple, and scarlet. These were all specified in Exodus 25:4 and are renamed here. Without giving all the detail from that verse, I’ll remind you of the symbolism of the colors.

Blue is associated with the law, especially the keeping of the law.

Purple or blue/red is one of royalty or that which pertains to or belongs to a king. As it is a mixture of blue and red, in meaning it thus is a combination of what those two colors mean – the law for blue; and war, blood, and/or judgment for red.

Lastly, two words are used to describe the scarlet – *towlaat shani*. Taken together, they are translated as “scarlet,” but implying the scarlet which comes from the *towla* or grub worm. Scarlet, or red, in the Bible pictures and symbolizes war, blood, and/or judgment. These were all to be used for weaving directly into the fine woven linen, and all of the colors beautifully picture the future work of Christ. He is the embodiment of the law, indicated by the blue. He is the royal King who dispenses judgment in regard to His law, indicated by the purple.

And His shed blood is the judgment on sin, or that which testifies against the sin of the unregenerate, indicated by the scarlet. All of this is woven into the pure white linen, indicating His perfect righteousness.

^{1 (con't)} **with artistic designs of cherubim you shall weave them.**

These curtains, like some other portions of the tabernacle and its furnishings, are to be designed with cherubim woven into them. Cherubim are a select class of angels which, among other things, are near to God, they have great power, and they act as guards. As they are guards of the tree of life, they are the ones who can point man to *the way* of accessing the right to that tree.

This is an immediate hint that what is being constructed is a place which is symbolically guarded for a specific purpose. In Genesis 3, after the fall of man and their exile from Eden, cherubim were placed strategically and with purpose –

“So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.” Genesis 3:24

The tabernacle’s symbolic guarding by these cherubim is intended to show us several things. First, that what is inside is guarded and access is therefore restricted. What is implied, but unstated, is that it is that which will provide access back to the Garden of Eden, the Tree of Life, and direct fellowship with God.

Each of these was lost at the fall of man, and all are guarded and unattainable because of these powerful cherubim whose job it is to keep access limited. This is implied because the purpose of the account in Genesis was to show us what was lost. From there, we are learning how it will be reclaimed.

Everything thus far in Genesis and Exodus is progressively revealing God's plan of redemption and man's return to intimate fellowship with Him. Secondly, if something is guarded, it means that access is possible. If there is a lock on a safe, it is meant to guard access to the safe, but the safe can be opened and access can be obtained with the right key or combination.

The safe hasn't been welded shut permanently. Instead, it merely requires the proper validation for access. And so thirdly, the guarding of the cherubim implies that what is inside being guarded *is* that proper validation, if you will. It is what provides access. As we saw in chapter 25 in the details of the mercy seat, the Lord said that He would meet there, above the mercy seat between the cherubim with Moses. It is the spot where access is restored. This is why the details for the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat were given first. As they picture Christ – His life, work, and death, then we can see that He is that marvelous access point back to restored fellowship with God.

The details of that furniture were an anticipatory look into a picture of that which will now be concealed from the sight of man for approximately 1500 years. Only the high priest, and only once a year, was allowed to view these marvelous objects which prefigure the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

However, there is more to consider concerning these cherubim. As the tabernacle pictures not only Christ and His work, but His church and also His individual people, then these cherubim symbolize the angels who protect His people. This is seen for example in Psalm 34 –

“The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him,
And delivers them.” Psalm 34:7

They also symbolize the heavenly beings that minister to the Lord on behalf of His people. This is seen in the 103rd Psalm –

“Bless the Lord, you His angels,
Who excel in strength, who do His word,
Heeding the voice of His word.

²¹ Bless the Lord, all *you* His hosts,
You ministers of His, who do His pleasure.” Psalm 103:20, 21

And finally, they picture those angels who minister for those who will inherit salvation –

“Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?” Hebrews 1:14

As the tabernacle is the place where God meets with man, picturing Christ, then each of these other meanings is tied up in that main picture. Christ is the Subject of the tabernacle. The redemption of man is the object which is anticipated.

And thus, when we are in Christ, we become united to the Subject. It is a marvelous thing to consider as we look at the individual pieces being drawn together into a united whole.

² **The length of each curtain *shall be* twenty-eight cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits.**

In the dimensions given, when the curtains are united together, it will cover the entire frame of the tabernacle with there being one cubit short of the ground on either side. The height will be ten cubits and the width ten cubits. Therefore, the height on each side combined with the width across the top is a total of thirty cubits.

As these curtains will go across the width of the tabernacle, and as they are twenty-eight cubits long, then they will leave one cubit from the ground on each side. In total, each curtain is 28×4 cubits or 112 square cubits. This number is a multiple of 7 – 7×16 =112.

The number four is the predominate number in this though. The length, 28, is a multiple of 4×7 and the width is 4. Bullinger notes that “four denotes and marks that which follows the revelation of God in the Trinity, namely, *His creative works*. He is known by the things that are seen. Hence the written revelation commences with the words, ‘In-the-beginning God CREATED.’ Creation is therefore the next thing—the *fourth* thing, and the number *four* always has reference to all that is *created*. It is emphatically the *number of Creation*; of man in his relation to the world as created.”
There is exacting purpose in the dimensions of this edifice.

^{2 (con’t)} **And every one of the curtains shall have the same measurements.**

Ten curtains are to be made just the same as the first. Therefore, there will be 1120 square cubits of curtains. This is a multiple of both seven (7×160) and four (4×280). In this there is then FOUR – creation; SEVEN – spiritual perfection; and TEN – perfection of divine order.

³ Five curtains shall be coupled to one another, and *the other* five curtains shall be coupled to one another.

Two sets of five curtains each were to be sewn together along the long side. Therefore, each main section was to have five panels each which were 28 cubits by 4 cubits. When they were sewn together, they were each to be 28×20 cubits or 560 square cubits.

⁴ And you shall make loops of blue *yarn* on the edge of the curtain on the selvedge of *one* set, and likewise you shall do on the outer edge of *the other* curtain of the second set.

In this verse, the word *lulaah*, or loops, is introduced into the Bible. It will be seen 13 times and only in Exodus concerning the construction of the tabernacle. Another new word is *khoberet*, or “set.” It is seen only four times, only in Exodus, and *only* in regards to the curtain sets which form the tabernacle and tent.

And finally, the word *qitson*, or “outer” is introduced. This will be used four times, only in Exodus, and only regarding these coverings. The reason for using these words is to ensure specificity in construction. There are two identical curtains of size and design. They are to be joined together.

In order to ensure that the right edge of the curtains is used in the joining process, one side is chosen from the first and then the opposite edge of the other curtain will be chosen. That way, when they are coupled together, they will continue in the same direction.

In other words, all ten panels will flow in the same way instead of five running in one direction and then the other five being turned around and running in the opposite direction. The loops were to be blue in color. Blue, as I said earlier, is given in association with the law; specifically in the keeping of it.

⁵ Fifty loops you shall make in the one curtain, and fifty loops you shall make on the edge of the curtain that *is* on the end of the second set, that the loops may be clasped to one another.

The loops that are being sewn on one panel should exactly meet up with the loops on the other panel. The word “clasped” is what tells us this. It is the word *qabal*, which is introduced here. It means “to take” or “to accept.” Each of the fifty loops was to meet up with each of the other fifty, accepting one another in a union where they would be clasped together.

The KJV gives a very poor rendering of this by saying, “that the loops may take hold one of another.” It is not the loops which will take hold of one another. It is that the loops will allow one another to be united by the use of golden clasps. Specificity is important here and their translation is lacking in this case.

⁶And you shall make fifty clasps of gold, and couple the curtains together with the clasps, so that it may be one tabernacle.

The clasp is now introduced into the Bible. It is the word *qeres* and it will be used just 10 times, all in Exodus, and all in the construction of tabernacle and tent. It comes from the word *qaras* which means to stoop over. And so you get the idea of a clasp which is bent like a stooped-over person.

Fifty of these were to be made to unite the 100 loops into a single unit which would cover the entire tabernacle. Together, they would be 40 cubits long, 28 cubits wide, and a total of 1120 square cubits. As the tabernacle is only 30 cubits long, then there will be 10 extra cubits which will go over the back of the tabernacle, behind the Most Holy Place.

We know this because in verse 36 it will note that there is a screen door which will cover the front of the tabernacle at the entrance to the Holy Place. Therefore, and this is not without importance, the gold clasps will be right along the place where the veil hangs between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.

However, because of the gold loops, it says here that “it may be one tabernacle.” It is getting ahead of ourselves, but before going on, the symbolism of what is going on here must be explained. The Holy Place is 10x10x20 cubits, or 2000 square cubits. The Most Holy place is 10x10x10 cubits, or 1000 square cubits.

This then points to the work of Christ. The 2000 cubits symbolize the 2000 years of the church age. The 1000 cubits are symbolic of the millennium. The entire tabernacle then is a picture of the time of God dwelling with man because of the work of Christ.

Those *in the church form the church* which is the body of Christ. Though the two dispensations are distinct, they are united as one by the fifty gold clasps. The gold points to the divine nature of Christ who *joins* the dispensations together.

Bullinger defines the number fifty as “the number of jubilee or deliverance. It is the *issue* of 7 x 7 (7²), and points to deliverance and rest following on as the result of the perfect consummation of time.”

The two dispensations after Christ’s work are united by these fifty clasps which signify the deliverance and rest of those who have come to Christ in either dispensation after the completion of His work. This unity of the body, symbolized by the unity of the two parts of the tabernacle, is exactly what Christ prayed for –

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. ²² And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: ²³ I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” John 17:20-23

It is as if His words come alive in the mind when reading the details for the construction of the tabernacle and what it ultimately signifies. The blue loops, which the clasps are united to, picture the law, fulfilled in Christ’s work. It is the point where all of the redeemed of both the Church Age and the Millennium are united.

*A place for My people to dwell
A place for those who have come to Me
Pictures of it are seen in the tabernacle, O so well
Pictures hidden in plain sight for any to come and see*

*A plan for the redeemed of the Lord
Is seen in each and every detail
And they are recorded carefully in My word
For those who will take a walk on the inquisitive trail*

*There they will find Me in the Holy of Holies
All is accomplished for those who find their way in*

*I will show them wonderful, eternal glories
If through My blood the victory they do win*

II. Details for the Tent (verses 7-14)

⁷“You shall also make curtains of goats’ hair, to be a tent over the tabernacle.

This verse begins the instructions for the *ohel* or tent which will cover the tabernacle. Some versions say “a covering” over the tabernacle, but this is more than a covering, it is an entire tent. The word *ohel* is much better rendered as “a tent.”

The tent was to be made out of goat’s hair. There is importance in this for several reasons. First, it would be an actual protection for the tabernacle itself. The sun would bleach out the linen. The rain would destroy it and cause its colors to run, and the other elements in general would cause it to degrade.

Secondly, the goat is an animal used as an offering. In fact, the book of Leviticus begins with the burnt offering, of which the goat was acceptable. The sin offering of Leviticus 9, and the sin offering for the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16, are goat offerings. Thus, the covering signifies that of atonement. In other words, that which is inside is what is atoned for.

And as an interesting connection to this for the people outside looking at this tent, they would see it woven with goat’s hair. Hair in the Bible points to awareness and consciousness. This tent, when seen, was to be a reminder of the sinful state of man and that we are to have a conscience concerning it.

In the tent is a picture of Christ who appeared among us, but without sin. His earthly body was the means of our atonement and within Him is embodied everything we have seen thus far, the Ark, the Mercy Seat, the Table of Showbread, the Menorah, and the Tabernacle. The external we see in the goat tent is to direct us to the internal which is provided by His body and His atonement.

^{7 (con’t)} You shall make eleven curtains.

The word *ashte* is introduced here. It means “the eleventh.” It comes from the word *ashath* which means “to think.” Thus, there is even in the number 11 the idea of conscience and awareness. We are being asked to *think* when we look at this part of the tent.

Bullinger details the meaning of the number 11 – “...it is the number which marks, *disorder, disorganization, imperfection, and disintegration*.”

As we move outward from the tabernacle, there is a disintegration of that which is perfect. In the need for atonement, there is the understanding that sin exists. The imperfection is not in God or in Christ, but in who they are dealing with.

This is why those inside the tabernacle are considered perfect. Not because of their own righteousness, but because of the One to whom they have moved to positionally. And so those outside are, by default, imperfect and in need of atonement.

⁸The length of each curtain *shall be* thirty cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits; and the eleven curtains shall all have the same measurements.

Unlike the curtains of the tabernacle, these cannot be evenly divided by seven. Thus again there is the hint of imperfection. They are 30×4, or 120 square cubits. Bullinger describes the number thirty. It “...denotes in a higher degree the perfection of Divine order, as marking the right moment.”

If four is that which is created, and 30 is the right moment, then this follows naturally with Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 6:2 –

“In an acceptable time I have heard you,
And in the day of salvation I have helped you.’

Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.”

Those outside are alive and in need of atonement. If they are in sight of the tent, then it is the right moment.

⁹And you shall couple five curtains by themselves and six curtains by themselves,

In the case of these curtains, there is a lack of symmetry which existed in that of the tabernacle, eleven curtains instead of 10. For this reason, they are united into sections of five and six. The two sets would then equal 600 square cubits and 720 square cubits, or a total of 1320 square cubits.

In surface area, it would be 30 cubits wide, to cover the entire tabernacle down to the ground on each side, and 44 cubits long to cover to the ground on the back and seemingly hang over the front. Thus the tabernacle would be completely obscured from

view. Man's eyes would not see the place where the Lord dwelt without first receiving atonement. But there is more...

⁹ (con't) **and you shall double over the sixth curtain at the forefront of the tent.**

The sixth curtain of the larger set was to be folded back on itself to presumably give it a finished look. However, this would then make a covering of 32×40 or 1260 square cubits in total. This number corresponds to an interval of judgment. A biblical year is 360 days. Three and one half years would be 1260 days.

This is the amount of time rain was withheld from the land during the time of Elijah (Luke 4:25). It also comprises the two divisions of the tribulation period in Revelation – 42 months and 1260 days. Again, the tent over the tabernacle speaks of *judgment*. Either sin will be atoned for, and one may move into the edifice, or sin will not be atoned for and judgment outside of it will be the result.

Again as is often the case, the KJV unfortunately translates the last word as “tabernacle” and not “tent.” The word is *ohel* and it is completely different than the *mishkan*, or tabernacle, which it covers.

¹⁰ **You shall make fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in *one* set, and fifty loops on the edge of the curtain of the second set.**

The directions here correspond to those of verse 5 in how the pieces are to be laid out and then have their loops attached.

¹¹ **And you shall make fifty bronze clasps, put the clasps into the loops, and couple the tent together, that it may be one.**

It is important to note at this point that the further one moves from the Holy of Holies, the materials used become less valuable. They also, as you have seen, carry different meaning. In the Holy of Holies there is perfection, holiness, purity, and fellowship with God. Each step away from there, one finds another aspect of being removed from that perfection.

Bronze, or *nekhosheth*, as a metal in the Bible signifies *judgment*. In the uniting together of these curtains, there is a sense of judgment. For those inside, their judgment is past. For those outside, their judgment lies ahead.

One is either in Christ and has been justified *through* His *judgment on sin*, or one is not in Christ and *will be condemned* by His *judgment of sin*. Every detail continuously points us to the work of Christ for, or against, humanity.

As a side note, older translations are incorrect in this verse. They say “brass” instead of “bronze.” It was either copper or bronze at this point in history. Brass was not yet used.

¹² The remnant that remains of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remains, shall hang over the back of the tabernacle.

The word for “remnant,” *serakh*, is used only here in the Bible. It comes from the verb, *sarakh*, which means “excess.” The tabernacle was 40 cubits long. This covering is 44, but two are folded over at the front, and so there are still two cubits left over. This was to hang all the way over the tabernacle and completely cover it, just as the extra cubit on each side was to do. Nothing of the tabernacle was to be seen.

¹³ And a cubit on one side and a cubit on the other side, of what remains of the length of the curtains of the tent, shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle, on this side and on that side, to cover it.

The translation is lacking. The Hebrew says, “And the cubit.” This is specifically speaking of the cubit of the goat’s hair covering, which was thirty cubits across. It was to exceed the linen covering of verse 2, which was twenty-eight cubits.

This extra cubit was to be on either side of the tabernacle, and it was to be allowed to hang down, like a valance, in order to completely hide the golden boards of the tabernacle. Thus, only a picture of awareness of sin and judgment was to be seen in this.

¹⁴ “You shall also make a covering of ram skins dyed red for the tent,

After the covering of goat’s hair, the entire structure was to next be covered with ram skins dyed red. The word “covering” is *mikseh*. It is used 14 times in the Bible and all but one are in regards to this tabernacle. The other time it was used was in Genesis 8:13 –

“And it came to pass in the six hundred and first year, in the first *month*, the first *day* of the month, that the waters were dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the **covering** of the ark and looked, and indeed the surface of the ground was dry.” Genesis 8:13

Thus this is a weather covering. These *orot elim me'addamim*, or “skin rams dyed red” form their own picture. The ram is the leader of the flock and its protector. The protection is seen in its power to butt with its horns which are a symbol of strength. The symbolism we are to see then is that of Christ, the Protector of His people.

The verb for “dyed red,” or *adom*, is found 10 times in the Bible. It comes from the idea of being made red, or to show blood in the face. The use of these ram skins dyed red will picture Christ’s covering of our sins. It is explained by the use of *adom* in Isaiah –

“Come now, and let us reason together,
Says the Lord,
‘Though your sins are like scarlet,
They shall be as white as snow;
Though they are **red** like crimson,
They shall be as wool.’” Isaiah 1:18

After this, Paul shows how this points to Christ in 2 Corinthians –

“For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

Thus, what we see pictured here is atonement for those inside, and a lack of atonement for those outside. With each covering there is a dualism to be seen. And it is seen just as well in the final covering...

^{14 (fin)} **and a covering of badger skins above that.**

u-mikseh orot tekhashim milmaelah – literally, “...and a covering skins of porpoise above.” To review from a couple sermons ago, the word is *takhash*, and it is always governed by the word *oroth*, or “skins.” Therefore it is the hide of an animal. The translation of the KJV and the NKJV of “badgers” is dubious at best.

The badger is rarely, if ever seen in Sinai and it lacks any cognate language support. Rather, this word is cognate to the Arabic word *tukhas*, or porpoise. Therefore, in modern translations it is normally called the porpoise, the dolphin, or the dugong, which is like a manatee. Thus it would be a light gray to sky-blue covering.

This word is always used in connection with the covering for the tabernacle, with but one exception in Ezekiel 16 where it is used to describe figurative sandals worn by Jerusalem. As Bedouins still use the dugong for such sandals even to modern times, such a sea animal is the most likely translation. As this skin will be used as the outermost covering of the tabernacle, “the skin of a marine animal like the dolphin would have been eminently suitable, both for its toughness and for its waterproofing properties” (HAW).

As the sea is representative of the world of chaos and confusion and rebellion, this then makes a beautiful picture of Christ’s covering of us from that. This would fit well also with the one non-tabernacle use of this word in Ezekiel concerning the sandals made of this skin. Having such skin for shoes would then infer that the chaos of the sea was under-foot and subdued.

Each of the coverings over the furniture of the tabernacle has a dual purpose. The woven material with the cherubim signifies protection for those within by the angels, and yet guarding against intrusion for those outside.

The goat’s hair and bronze clasps signify atonement and accomplished judgment for sin on those inside, but pending judgment and no atonement for those outside. The ram skins signify both atonement and protection for those inside, and a lack of atonement and a warring against those outside.

And finally, the skin of sea animals signifies order, harmony, and peace with God for those inside, and chaos, confusion, and enmity for those outside. In the end, every single verse has brought us insights into the work of Christ, the nature of the church, and the status of the redeemed. It is a marvel and a wonder to see the beauty of what is represented in these 14 verses.

So now, it is time to ask yourself whether you are on the inside, or on the out? The things we have seen today show intelligence, even wisdom. They show purpose and intent. And they show us the truth that one is either in Christ and safe, or he is not in Christ and is heading to a bad eternity. If you have never taken stock of yourself and where you are going, today is the day to do it. Call on Christ and enter into His tabernacle. Let me tell you how to do it...

Closing Verse: *“For You have been a shelter for me,
A strong tower from the enemy.*

*⁴I will abide in Your tabernacle forever;
I will trust in the shelter of Your wings. Selah” Psalm 61:3, 4*

Next Week: Exodus 26:15-30 *In Christ we have something we can claim...* (A Sure Foundation and a Steady Frame) (72nd Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Tabernacle and the Tent

Moreover you shall make the tabernacle; yes, as I have said
With ten curtains of fine woven linen
And blue, purple, and scarlet thread
With artistic designs of cherubim you shall weave them

The length of each curtain
Shall be twenty-eight cubits, these its contents
And the width of each curtain four cubits for certain
And every one of the curtains shall have the same measurements

Five curtains shall be coupled to one another, you see
And the other five curtains to one another coupled shall be

And you shall make loops of blue yarn
On the edge of the curtain on the selvedge of one set
And likewise you shall do on the outer edge
Of the other curtain of the second set; do not forget

Fifty loops you shall make in the one curtain
And fifty loops you shall make on the edge too
Of the curtain that is on the end of the second set
That the loops may be clasped to one another, so shall you do

And you shall make fifty clasps of gold
And couple the curtains together with the clasps
So that it may be one tabernacle, just as you have been told

You shall also make curtains of goats' hair
To be a tent over the tabernacle
You shall make eleven curtains for the tabernacle there

The length of each curtain
Shall be thirty cubits, these its contents
And the width of each curtain four cubits, for certain
And the eleven curtains shall all have the same measurements

And you shall couple five curtains by themselves
And six curtains by themselves too
And you shall double over the sixth curtain
At the forefront of the tent, so shall you do

You shall make fifty loops on the edge
Of the curtain that is outermost in one set
And fifty loops on the edge of the curtain
Of the second set; do not forget

And you shall make fifty bronze clasps
Put the clasps into the loops, so shall you do
And couple the tent together
That it may be one, just as I instruct you

The remnant that remains of the curtains
Of the tent, so I now instruct to you
The half curtain that remains
Shall hang over the back of the tabernacle, so shall you do

And a cubit on one side and a cubit on the other side
Of what remains of the length of the curtains of the tent
Shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle
On this side and on that side, to cover it; to that extent

You shall also make a covering
Of ram skins dyed red for the tent
And a covering of badger skins above that
No detail shall you circumvent

A tabernacle You have asked to be made
A place where You will dwell among us
You have selected how it is to be arrayed
To give us hints of the coming Messiah, Jesus

And how marvelous is it for us to see
The wonderful things You have in this tabernacle displayed
A place for You to dwell among us eternally
For in Christ Jesus, a body You have made

Thank You, O God for this wonderful redemption story
It is filled with marvelous details which show us of Your glory

And so to You we sing, and to You we give all of our praise
And it will continue on forever and ever
Yes, for eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 26:15-30 (A SURE FOUNDATION AND A STEADY FRAME)

If you like numbers and their biblical meanings, you will probably love today's sermon. If not, I have spare pillows under the pulpit for you to feel free to use. Personally, the details of this sermon nearly broke my brain. I honestly struggled, hour after hour, trying to understand each word and verse which even the finest biblical scholars throughout the ages have struggled with.

Some of the Hebrew is obscure and no one can be dogmatic on what the items we will examine actually looked like when they were fashioned and put together. In other words, we can only speculate as to what the finished product looked like in some areas.

However, the details are sufficient for us to know what is being pictured, even if we can't know what the edifice actually looked like in a back corner or on a side board. And what is being pictured is exactly what has been seen in countless other passages so far in the Bible – Jesus Christ and His work.

Every detail points to Him, something amazing in and of itself. But what is fascinating to me is that this tabernacle *was really built* and it was used for hundreds of years. And yet, the people had no idea what each detail signified. Only in the coming of Christ can we know these things.

The tabernacle has wooden bars... "Benjamin, bring me the next bar." The tabernacle has a menorah.... "That goes over there Eldad." The tabernacle has silver sockets under the side boards... "Line them up this way, men!"

They erected the thing, disassembled it and moved it to another location, and then re-erected it. And yet, none thought, "This socket of silver pictures the process of my redemption." How blessed we are to see these things and to know what they actually picture!

Text Verse: *These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; ¹⁵ but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. ¹⁶ And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:*

*God was manifested in the flesh,
Justified in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,*

*Preached among the Gentiles,
Believed on in the world,
Received up in glory.” 1 Timothy 3:14-16*

Jesus Christ was manifested in the flesh. He came and dwelt among us and He fulfilled every type, shadow, and picture which the Old Testament details. Numerous such types are found in today’s 16 verses. As I said before, if you like numbers, you should enjoy this sermon, but even if you don’t, there should be plenty to keep you fascinated until we are through, so put your pillows away. Marvelous things lie ahead.

It’s all to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Upright Boards and Silver Sockets (verses 15-21)

¹⁵ “And for the tabernacle you shall make the boards of acacia wood,

After the instructions for the tent, the instructions for the tabernacle now begin again. These details are given to show the support structure of the tabernacle. The first items of note are the “boards of acacia wood.” The word “boards” or *qeresh* is first used here, and it will be used 51 times.

It is from an unused root meaning to split off. It thus indicates a slab or plank, and by implication a bench or a board, or even the deck of a ship. Of the 51 uses in Scripture, all of them but one are in Exodus and Numbers and refer to the boards for the tabernacle. The only other time, in Ezekiel 27:6, will it be used when speaking of the planks on a ship.

There are plenty of theories as to their nature. Some see them as solid planks; some see them as frames made of two long boards which were then joined together like a frame. If this were so, it would then allow the inner curtain to be seen from outside.

There is nothing to substantiate this view, but it is suggested because the size of the boards otherwise would be of wood from trees of a size not found in the region of Sinai. However, there is nothing to suggest that the boards themselves weren’t solid, but rather fitted together from smaller pieces.

One scholar sees this as probable based on the one use of the word which is found in Ezekiel 27, surmising that it means they are made of two planks of wood joined together. Or, it could be that trees of this size actually existed in Sinai 3500 years ago, and so the boards were solid wood of one piece. No matter what, it is the measurements and number of boards on which is the focus, not these speculative matters.

¹⁵ (con't) **standing upright.**

The boards were to stand as they grew when trees, thus they are as pillars. How they will stand upright will be explained in the verses to come. The tabernacle is a structure which was comprised of walls which supported it.

All in all, one might wonder where the tools and workmanship necessary to make such boards would come from, but this is not a problem at all. The Israelites were workmen in Egypt. Many would have had tools for stone or wood work that they would have carried with them, anticipating the same type of labors when they arrived in Canaan. There would be more than enough people skilled in these tasks and with the tools able to accomplish them.

¹⁶ **Ten cubits *shall be* the length of a board, and a cubit and a half *shall be* the width of each board.**

If a cubit is approximately 1.5 feet, then these boards would be about 15 feet tall and about 27 inches wide. The thickness of them is, surprisingly, not specified. Josephus however says they were four fingers thick.

¹⁷ **Two tenons *shall be* in each board for binding one to another.**

shete yadowt la'qeresh ha'echad meshulavot isshah el akhota – the literal Hebrew here is completely different than the translation. It says, “Two hands to the boards each one fitted woman to sister.” From this, the words of our English translations have to be deduced.

The “tenons” or literally “hands,” were most probably pieces of the board which would extend from the bottom of it and would fit into the silver sockets to be mentioned in verse 19. Whether they were round dowels or whether they were square or rectangular pegs isn't stated.

The word for “binding” is *shalav* and it is only used two times in the Bible, here and Exodus 36:22. It comes from a root word which means to space off. Thus we get the idea of equally distant pegs which are set in order. These would be “one to another” or literally “woman to sister.” Each would be arranged as if they were twins. If we think of the rungs on a ladder, being equally spaced, we’d get a close mental picture.

¹⁷ (con’t) **Thus you shall make for all the boards of the tabernacle.**

Every board of the wall was to be made in identical fashion so that they could be used in any spot along the wall.

¹⁸ **And you shall make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards for the south side.**

If twenty boards which are 1.5 cubits wide are placed side by side, then the length would be 30 cubits. Thus it would be about 40 feet long. The term for “south side” is *negbah temanah* – south, to the right; thus “south, southward.”

The word “southward” is *teman* and it is introduced into the Bible here. It comes from the same source as the word *yamiyn*, or “right hand.” The southward side is the one which is on the *right* when a person is facing east. This is the direction the tabernacle will be facing when it is finally constructed, facing the rising sun.

As Josephus notes, it was the standard when speaking of the temple to identify the south side with the right hand and the north side with the left hand. The entrance was regarded as the face of the structure and the west side would be the far end. Why is this important? Because of what it pictures.

As a point of contention with the crummy scholars at Cambridge, I’d like to highlight their commentary on the words *negbah temanah*, or south, southward. They say – “The ‘Negeb’ ... is a geographical term denoting the arid district in the S. of Judah. As this district was on the S. of Canaan, it became the most usual word in Heb. for ‘south.’ Its use in the Pent. is an indication that this was written after Israel had lived long enough in Canaan for ‘négeb’ to have acquired this sense.” (Dolts at Cambridge)

In other words, these dolts claim that because the word “south” is the Hebrew word Negev, which is the desert region in the south of Israel, the books of Moses, the Pentateuch, were written not by Moses, but by someone much later who lived in the land of Israel.

Never mind the fact that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all lived in Israel and the term Negev is used 7 times in Genesis. Thus, it would have become a word adapted by them, hundreds of years earlier, and incorporated into their Hebrew lexicon. Cambridge can shut up and sit down.

¹⁹ You shall make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards:

Another new word comes into the Bible now, *eden*, or “sockets.” It comes from the same root as *adon* which means “lord,” and so it gives the idea of strength, and thus a basis of a building, column, foundation, etc. In this case, it is silver socket’s which are the wall’s foundation. If there are twenty boards and forty sockets, then each board is supported by two sockets. This is seen as we continue...

¹⁹ (con’t) two sockets under each of the boards for its two tenons.

The original is more detailed than this translation. Some translations give a word for word rendering by saying, “...two sockets under one board for its two tenons and two sockets under another board for its two tenons;” (NASB). The NKJV simply paraphrases it for brevity.

Either way, the idea is understood. There were to be two sockets of silver under each board which corresponded to the tenons, or “hands,” which protruded from the boards. In Exodus 30, we will see that each socket is made from a talent of silver and thus each would be of an unknown weight somewhere between 75 and 130 pounds.

²⁰ And for the second side of the tabernacle, the north side, *there shall be twenty boards*

The Hebrew reads, *ha’shenit liphat tsaphon* – “The second side, north (side).” The word for north also gives the idea of “hidden” or “dark.” As the northern quarter of the compass, it is gloomy and unknown. It is regarded as the less honorable side than the south, just as the left is considered less honorable than the right.

This probably is because in the northern hemisphere, the sun illuminates the south more than the north. When the menorah is placed in the tabernacle, it is set in the south and thus against the north, illuminating that direction. The number of boards for this side will also be twenty.

²¹ and their forty sockets of silver: two sockets under each of the boards.

Just as on the south, each of the twenty boards is to have two sockets of silver; totaling forty in all. Again as before in verse 19, the NKJV paraphrases this instead of translating out the entire thought. However, their paraphrase is perfectly understandable.

*A pillar in the house of God, standing upright
Redeemed by the Lord, who died for me
I will stand in this house forever and behold the sight
Of the One who shines forth in resplendent glory*

*How can it be that He did everything and yet
I am given access into this heavenly home?
What a marvelous God, on Him my face is set
I will stand in this house forever, never shall I roam*

*What a marvel, what a delight to know Jesus my Lord!
Who by His grace has redeemed one such as me
Yes on me mercy was granted and abundant grace was poured
I will stand in this house forever, here by the glassy sea*

II. The West End (verses 22-25)

²² For the far side of the tabernacle, westward, you shall make six boards.

On the “far side,” which is to the west, there were to be six boards. The total length would then be 9 cubits, or about 12 feet wide. The word for “westward” is *yammah*, from *yam* or “sea.” This comes from an unused root meaning “to roar.” In this, we get the idea of a sea roaring in noisy surf.

Again, it is a direction which finds its home in the land of Canaan. The west of Canaan is the Mediterranean Sea. This doesn’t mean that this was penned by some unknown person ages later as the dolts at Cambridge again suggest. Instead it shows that the term came from an earlier time period and was retained in the language as is the case with countless words in our own language.

²³ And you shall also make two boards for the two back corners of the tabernacle.

So far, we have been instructed to make 46 boards. Now two final boards are requested. These will go in the two back corners of the tabernacle. Here is another

uncommon word is introduced into the Bible, *mequtsah* or “corner.” It will be used just twice, here and in Exodus 36 at the construction of the tabernacle.

It comes from the word *qatsa* which means “to scrape” and thus it indicates an angle, or a corner. In these two back corners, the final two boards, totaling 48 in all, will be placed. One scholar suggests that these boards are not the same as the other 46. Instead he says they are two planks joined together to form a V for each corner. Others think these two boards will overlap the others. Either way, the boards serve a purpose by bringing the back wall to a length of ten cubits. This is so because the Holy of Holies is to be a perfect cube of 10X10x10 cubits.

This is not explicitly stated, but it is the pattern later for the temple and for the New Jerusalem, both of which are cubed. It is a logical deduction. It is also implicitly stated in later details that will be seen in the tabernacle’s construction.

²⁴ They shall be coupled together at the bottom and they shall be coupled together at the top by one ring.

A few new words come in here. The word here for “coupled” is *taam*. It means “twins.” The idea is that they are to be as perfectly joined together as if they were twins. The “bottom” is *mattah*, which signifies “beneath,” or “towards the bottom.”

The words in Hebrew here are so obscure that several possible meanings have been suggested. In the end, what *is* certain is that these two boards will complete the width of the tabernacle, making it ten cubits, and that the corners will be strong and make a perfect connection to the two side walls and the back wall.

²⁴ (con’t) Thus it shall be for both of them. They shall be for the two corners.

Both of the corners will be identical so that the inside of the Holy of Holies will be perfectly finished and perfectly cubed.

²⁵ So there shall be eight boards with their sockets of silver—sixteen sockets—two sockets under each of the boards.

What is clear from this is that the two final boards were to be considered as a part of the back wall, not the side walls. The total back wall consists of 8 boards with sixteen sockets of silver. In total, there are 48 boards and 96 sockets of silver for the structure.

Concerning this back wall, the numbers are important. It is first described as having six boards. The number six is explained by Bullinger –

“Six is either 4 *plus* 2, i.e., man’s world (4) with man’s enmity to God (2) brought in: or it is 5 *plus* 1, the grace of God made of none effect by man’s addition to it, or perversion, or corruption of it: or it is 7 *minus* 1, i.e., man’s coming short of spiritual perfection. In any case, therefore, it has to do with *man*; it is the number of imperfection; the human number; the number of MAN as destitute of God, without God, without Christ.”
However, two boards are added to the six to make eight. Again, Bullinger describes the number –

In Hebrew the number eight is (*Sh’moneh*), from the root (*Shah’meyn*), “to make fat,” “cover with fat,” “to super-abound.” As a participle it means “one who abounds in strength,” etc. As a noun it is “superabundant fertility,” “oil,” etc. So that as a numeral it is the superabundant number. As *seven* was so called because the seventh day was the day of completion and rest, so *eight*, as the eighth day, was over and above this perfect completion, and was indeed the *first* of a new series, as well as being the *eighth*.

The precise giving of the numbers is not without significance. Each thing presented is to show us a portion of redemptive history as it is brought to us through the work of Christ.

*My travel is to the west, to find a new home
My father before me was sent out to the east
But my face is set on this, no other way shall I roam
I’m looking for fellowship, and a glorious place to feast*

*But I know that my travels are not dependent on me
Instead my walk is one of faith in what Another has done
I’m heading to the east because Another set me free
And through His shed blood, my safe passage is won*

*What kind of God is this! To favor one such as me?
I was heading east like my fathers all had done
But He called out my name in a manner soft, so tenderly
And said, “Come back home My son, in Me the victory is won”*

III. From Beginning to End (verses 26-30)

²⁶ “And you shall make bars of acacia wood: five for the boards on one side of the tabernacle,

Now a new implement is instructed for us to make, the *beriakh* or “bar.” This word comes from the verb *barach* which means “to go through.” They will be used to hold the walls firmly together and are made of the same wood as the rest of the tabernacle and its furniture, *shittim*. Five are required for the first side.

²⁷ five bars for the boards on the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the far side westward.

Like the first side, the other two sides will also have five bars each. It is probable that these bars were placed on the outside of the boards. In total, there are to be 15 bars. Bullinger tells us the meaning of the number –

“Five is, as we have seen, the number of grace, and three is the number of divine perfection. Fifteen, therefore, specially refers to acts wrought by the energy of Divine grace.” EW Bullinger

²⁸ The middle bar shall pass through the midst of the boards from end to end.

The middle bar is to be one solid bar. Therefore, the one on each side was to be 30 cubits long and the one on the back was to be ten cubits long. This bar was to be passed through rings at the mid point of the boards.

The length of the other four on each side is surprisingly not given. It can be assumed that there were three rows of bars on each side. The bars on the top row and the bottom row would each run half way and together they would then span the entire distance. However, this is only speculation.

²⁹ You shall overlay the boards with gold, make their rings of gold as holders for the bars, and overlay the bars with gold.

Like all of the wooden furniture, these boards and bars were to be completely covered with an overlay of gold. The rings themselves were to be solid gold. The bars would go through the rings to hold the entire tabernacle together as one solid structure.

³⁰ And you shall raise up the tabernacle according to its pattern which you were shown on the mountain.

This is the third time that Moses has been told that he is to complete the thing prescribed according to the pattern he is shown on the mountain. Nothing is being left to chance and every detail is to be precisely completed. Therefore, none of this is according to human wisdom or design, but rather it is divinely inspired.

Further the repetition in these words implies that there are many details which are not recorded, but of which Moses was aware of. Because of this, that which *is* recorded is given for our benefit and to understand what is on the mind of God in what is presented. And so let's evaluate the verses in hopes of finding out what He wants us to see.

We were first told of the boards for the tabernacle. Each is 10×1.5 cubits or 15 square cubits. As we saw, fifteen is defined this way –

“Five is ... is the number of grace, and three is the number of divine perfection. Fifteen, therefore, specially refers to acts wrought by the energy of Divine grace.” EW Bullinger Each board is a picture of the Divine grace of God in Christ. The boards are of shittim wood and gold, just as the rest of the furniture we have seen. This then points to Jesus' human and divine natures. The wood is His humanity which is incorruptible, just as *shittim* is an incorruptible wood. The gold reflects His divinity, purity, holiness, etc. The overlay, or *tsaphah*, is identical to another word which means to look out or about, spy, keep watch. Thus His divine nature is what watches over His subjects, keeping an eye on them. The gold therefore not only pictures His divine nature, but it is also a picture of His royal, kingly status. One who has subjects is the ruler of those subjects. And finally, the gold is the standard by which the value of all other things is set. Therefore, He is the standard by which all others are compared to.

The instruction for these boards is that they are to be standing upright. The picture we are to get here is one of life. Just as the trees grew up in life, so this *life* is to be pictured in the way the boards are to be positioned. It is reminiscent of the tree of life and access to it, this is what the work of Christ provides through His life.

In total, there are 48 boards. However on each side, there are 20 boards and on the back there are eight. The number 20 in Scripture points to “expectancy,” and the number eight, as I already explained, is the superabundant number and points to “new beginnings.” The twenty boards on the sides lead in expectation to the new beginnings where there is super-abundance.

In picture, as one moves from the east to the west, this is what is expected. It perfectly pictures the work of Christ on our behalf, from its beginning until the end. However, there is more. Each side points to expectation, but the sides together form forty boards. Forty points to “a period of *probation, trial, and chastisement,*” but “not *judgment.*” Forty “is the product of 5 and 8, and points to the action of *grace,* leading to and ending in *revival and renewal.*”

And isn't this exactly what we see in the process of redemptive history? Christ moved through a period of probation, trial, and chastisement, but not judgment – at least not for His own sins, for He had none. At the end of His work, which was a work of grace, came revival and renewal. The symbolism is perfect.

Next, these forty boards lead directly to the eight in the rear and again, they perfectly follow through in a representation of the work of Christ. The boards are eight, but they are noted separately as six and then two.

Six is the number of man, and two is the number of difference or division. In the six boards and two boards which are coupled together, we see the work of Christ the Man who has come to replace the work of Adam. Adam was cast out of Eden to the east; Christ is the One to restore man to God's paradise as we travel once again to the west. G. Soltau notes this –

“The boards and bars have the same relation to the Tabernacle itself, as the truth contained in the first two chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews has to the rest of the Epistle. In the first two chapters, the great foundations of faith are laid. The Lord Jesus Christ is presented to us as the Son; the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person; God, the Creator—the Sustainer of all things. He is also presented to us as the Son of Man, partaker of flesh and blood in order to die; the Firstborn from the dead; all things put under Him; anointed above His fellows; not ashamed to call them brethren. On these great truths respecting Christ, depend all the other great verities connected with the value of His sacrifice; the glory and power of His priesthood; the eternal salvation, the eternal redemption, and the eternal inheritance which are obtained for us by His blood.” G. Soltau

After the boards, there are noted two “tenons” or “hands” on each board. Thus, the boards, each picturing Christ are have hands as their support. Hands are what keep them secure and immovable and divine hands upheld Him as well. He was upheld by the Father throughout His life and ministry. This is seen, for example, in the 80th Psalm –

“Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand,
Upon the son of man *whom* You made strong for Yourself.” Psalm 80:17

Again, in the 31st Psalm, a messianic psalm, we read this –

“My times *are* in Your hand;
Deliver me from the hand of my enemies,
And from those who persecute me.” Psalm 31:15

And of course, on the cross, we read these words of the Lord –

“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” Luke 23:45

And as the tabernacle is only a shadow of that which is in heaven, we have a heavenly fulfillment of Christ’s work when He “...sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3).

The next things that are detailed are the sockets of silver. Silver, or *keseeph*, in the Bible signifies redemption. In fact, the silver for these sockets actually comes from the redemption money for the lives of the people of Israel. This is seen first in Exodus 30 –

“When you take the census of the children of Israel for their number, then every man shall give a ransom for himself to the Lord, when you number them, that there may be no plague among them when *you* number them. ¹³ This is what everyone among those who are numbered shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (a shekel *is* twenty gerahs). The half-shekel *shall be* an offering to the Lord.” Exodus 30:12, 13

This very money, which was used for their ransom, was then instructed to be used for the silver sockets of the tabernacle –

And the silver from those who were numbered of the congregation *was* one hundred talents and one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary: ²⁶ a bekah for each man (*that is*, half a shekel, according to the shekel of the sanctuary), for everyone included in the numbering from twenty years old and above, for six hundred and three thousand, five hundred and fifty *men*. ²⁷ And from the hundred talents of silver were cast the sockets of the sanctuary and the bases of the veil: one hundred sockets from the hundred talents, one talent for each socket.” Exodus 38:25-27

Silver, or *kespeh*, comes from another word *kasaph* which means to “be eager” or to “long for.” Thus we have a hidden pun from Paul’s hand concerning redemption and our longing for it –

“Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, **eagerly** waiting for the adoption, the **redemption** of our body.” Romans 8:23

Our redemption is something we eagerly await, as we long to be filled with the resplendent glory of the Lord. From the fall of man onward, the expectancy of the work of Christ is pictured in the redemption of man, and that redemptive process is the foundation of the work of Christ. Paul explicitly says in 1 Corinthians 3 that Christ *is* the foundation of the gospel.

The bars of the tabernacle are noted next. They are *shittim* wood covered in gold and they carry the same signification as the other times these materials are seen – the two natures of Christ. There are five on each side, five being the number of grace. Thus the tabernacle is surrounded on all sides by grace. It is that which alone can provide a return to the spot where man may once again fellowship with God. As there are three sides with five bars, they total fifteen. Again, as before, the number fifteen becomes significant –

“*Five* is, as we have seen, the number of *grace*, and *three* is the number of *divine perfection*. *Fifteen*, therefore, specially refers to acts wrought by the energy of Divine grace.” EW Bullinger

In other words, it is exactly what the New Testament speaks of concerning Christ. His works for us are wrought by the energy of Divine grace. It is what binds the entire tabernacle together. But what is just as exceptional is that we can deduce that there are three rows of bars.

“*Three* ... stands for that which is *solid, real, substantial, complete, and entire*.” In these three rows, the one bar in the middle of the boards runs the entire length of the tabernacle, from one end to the other.

As the tabernacle is a picture of what makes our return to God’s paradise possible, then the five bars picture Divine grace, the three sets picture that which is complete, and the one bar pictures the unbroken nature of the work of Christ, from beginning to end in

this process of redemption. It is God in Christ working from the start to finish without change or interruption.

That there are two identical bars, one on each side that spans the entire length of the tabernacle, it pictures the full redemption by Christ of both Jew and Gentile. From beginning to end, His works are sufficient for all.

Also seen in this passage are the rings. For the bars, they were to be of gold, but no number of them is given. They, as in previous passages, carry the idea of authority. Both instances of rings being mentioned, in verse 24 and verse 29, are given to show us Christ's authority which binds the tabernacle together as one.

As the tabernacle pictures the entire process of redemption, the rings show His absolute authority in the entire redemptive process.

Having now evaluated all of the items, we should take one more moment to look at the overall significance of the structure as outlined in this passage. Everything concerning the tabernacle is related to the edifice which has been described.

Without these boards, rods, sockets, and rings, there would be no tent to keep the magnificent furniture in. Thus there would be no place for the priests to minister. Likewise, without this structural support, there would be no way for the curtains and the several layers of coverings to be held up.

The weight of them could not be supported otherwise. Everything about the tabernacle is dependent upon this structure which is comprised of 48 boards, 96 sockets, and 15 bars to house, support, and uphold the work of Christ. In Isaiah 22, a person named Eliakim was given as a picture of Christ to come. All of the glory of the house of David was said to rest on Him –

“Then it shall be in that day,
That I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah;
²¹ I will clothe him with your robe
And strengthen him with your belt;
I will commit your responsibility into his hand.
He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem
And to the house of Judah.
²² The key of the house of David
I will lay on his shoulder;
So he shall open, and no one shall shut;

And he shall shut, and no one shall open.

²³ I will fasten him *as* a peg in a secure place,

And he will become a glorious throne to his father's house.

²⁴ 'They will hang on him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the posterity, all vessels of small quantity, from the cups to all the pitchers.'

-Isaiah 22:20-24

Like Eliakim bearing the weight of the government of the house of David, Jesus – as pictured in the tabernacle – bears all the weight and glory of His Father's house. This is pictured in the structure here.

Forty-eight is the products of both 6×8 and 4×12. Ninety-six is the product of 12×8. And fifteen is the product of 3×5. Six is man, eight is new beginnings, four is the number of the created order, twelve is perfection of government, three is divine perfection, and five is grace.

Thus this passage can be summed up as "Christ, the second Man who replaces Adam. He is the One who provides a new beginning through His superabundance and whose claims on the government of the earth are realized in His divine perfection and through His grace."

All of this together may seem overwhelming, but the message of the tabernacle is that man was cast to the east of Eden where cherubim were place to restrict access to that marvelous place where man once fellowshiped with God. The tabernacle is a picture of Jesus Christ allowing us, once again, to have restored access.

The wood, gold, and silver structure simply points to Christ in the process of the redemption of fallen man and the granting of that access through Him. This has been seen and it will continue to be seen as the details for the tabernacle continue to be laid out before us. It is all about Jesus Christ who reveals to us God's love.

In the giving of Christ, we can once again go to the place where our heavenly Father awaits us. If you would like to have a guarantee of that access today, let me tell you a few more words to guide you home to Him...

Closing Verse: *"How lovely is Your tabernacle,*

O Lord of hosts!

² *My soul longs, yes, even faints*

For the courts of the Lord;

My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.” Psalm 84:1, 2

Next Week: Exodus 26:31-37 (The Veil and the Screen – Points of Access)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

A Sure Foundation and a Steady Frame

And for the tabernacle you shall make the boards
Of acacia wood, standing upright, according to my words

Ten cubits shall the length of a board be
And a cubit and a half shall be the width of each board, you see

Two tenons shall be in each board
For binding one to another, a challenge to tackle
Thus you shall make
For all the boards of the tabernacle

And you shall for the tabernacle the boards make
Twenty boards for the south side; this you shall undertake

You shall make forty sockets of silver according to my words
Under the twenty boards:

Two sockets for its two tenons under each of the boards

And for the second side of the tabernacle, the north side
There shall be twenty boards, you see

And their forty sockets of silver:

Two sockets under each of the boards; thus shall it be

For the far side of the tabernacle, westward
You shall make six boards according to my word

And you shall make two boards also
For the two back corners of the tabernacle
This is where they are to go

They shall be coupled together at the bottom
And they shall be coupled together at the top by one ring
Thus it shall be for both of them
They shall be for the two corners, so you shall complete this thing

So there shall be eight boards
With their sockets of silver—sockets numbering sixteen—
Two sockets under each of the boards
Do this according to the pattern you have seen

And you shall make bars of acacia wood:
Five for the boards on one side of the tabernacle
Let this be understood

Five bars for the boards on the other side of the tabernacle too
And five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle
For the far side westward; so shall you do

The middle bar shall pass through as I intend
The midst of the boards from end to end

You shall overlay the boards with gold
Make their rings of gold as holders for the bars
And overlay the bars with gold as to you I have told

And you shall raise up the tabernacle as is now known
According to its pattern
Which on the mountain you were shown

O God, how marvelous are Your ways!
How wonderful is the great plan You have revealed to us
We shall exalt You forever, even for eternal days
For what You have done through Your Son Jesus

Hallelujah to Christ our Lord!
Hallelujah to the One who has been there all along

Revealed to us in Your precious word
To the One who fills our hearts with song

Yes, we praise You O God our King
And to You forever our praises we shall sing

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 26:31-37

(THE VEIL AND THE SCREEN - POINTS OF ACCESS)

There are several points of separation between the outside of the White House and the spot where the president sits. If one wants to get in there, they have to get through a guarded fence. After that, there are security checks. Continuing along, there are monitoring systems, guarded halls, and secured doors.

For one to actually get to him, there are many barriers to go through, and each is designed specifically for the purpose of only allowing a very limited few to gain that access. I'm not sure why anyone would want to gain it with the president we have today, but that is beside the point. If you did want to, it wouldn't be easy.

If this is so for an earthly president in charge of a single country in a fallen world, how much more secure do you think the passage to the heavenly throne room must be? Think about it... And yet, this is the place that every human soul desires most. And it is the place that is open to any and all, if only the proper access is received.

Today's passage gives us details into the veil which separates the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, and the details for the screen covering for the tent itself. Each of these is a separation of some sort, and a separation implies that there is a difference between what is on the inside and what is on the outside.

Further, as there are two separations noted in sequence, it implies that the separation between the two is one of degrees. The instructions for the tabernacle and the tent go from the inner-most section to the outermost section.

What was detailed for the Most Holy Place preceded that which was detailed for the Holy Place. The curtains for the tabernacle were detailed before the covering of the tent which went over it. And the details for the veil come prior to the details for the screen.

The separations, and how they are detailed, are given to teach us lessons about the holiness of God as well as the process of redemption which He has laid out for us. People at a funeral always talk about the guy in the box going to heaven, but when they mention the things that person did to merit such an honor, how often do they not square up with what the Bible speaks of!

It is so common for people to overlook what the Bible teaches about the process. Our verses today will shed light on that process and they confirm the words of Jesus quite well...

Text Verse: *“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴And where I go you know, and the way you know.’*

⁵ *Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?’*

⁶ *Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” John 14:3-6*

There is a lot of marvelous new information in today’s verses, but there will also be repetition in them as well, things seen and explained in previous sermons. However, a theme is being developed and so repeating the symbolism of the things we come across is intended to have us again contemplate the prophetic meaning behind each thing.

Don’t worry if you feel you’ve heard some of this before, you have. But it is a good reminder of all that God is trying to show us. The Lord is instructing Moses and a place where He will dwell is to be the final result. And so the details are meticulously given.

Nothing is left to chance because all of it points in picture to what He will later do in and through Jesus. Yes, it’s all to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Veil (verses 31-35)

³¹ “You shall make a veil

We now come to the veil which will hang before the Ark of the Testimony and which will divide the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. The veil in Hebrew is *paroketh*. This is the first of 25 times it will be mentioned in the Bible. With but one exception, every instance will be in Exodus through Numbers and will be speaking of the veil of the tabernacle. However, it will be seen one more time in 2 Chronicles 3:14 when speaking of the veil that Solomon had made for the Temple in Jerusalem. The word *paroketh* means “veil.” It comes from the word *perek* which means “cruelty” or “rigor.” That then comes from an unused root meaning to “break apart” or “fracture.” In this, we can see where cruelty or rigor then comes into play.

There is an implied division which is made explicit in the hanging of the veil. On one side there is one state of existence, and on the other is another state. If you stretch your mind now as we evaluate the symbolism of what the veil is made of, then you might grasp what this *paroketh* pictures and is picturing.

31 (con't) woven of blue,

tekeleth – literally, “blue.” The word *tekeleth* is believed to come from the word *shekheleth*, the cerulean mussel. In other words the color obtained from it or that is dyed with it. Blue in the Bible is associated with the law, especially the keeping of the law. This is seen explicitly in Numbers 15 –

“Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners.³⁹ And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them, and that you *may* not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined,⁴⁰ and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God.” Numbers 15:38-40

31 (con't) purple,

v'argaman – literally, “and purple.” It is purple or blue/red. The color in the Bible, like in many other cultures, is one of royalty or that which pertains to or belongs to a king. As it is a mixture of blue and red, in meaning it thus is a combination of what those two colors mean – the law for blue; and war, blood, and/or judgment for red. Hence, a royal color because these things pertain to the dominion of a king.

31 (con't) and scarlet thread,

v'towlaat shani – literally, “and from worms red.” Two words here are used to describe the color. The first is *towla*. This is actually a worm known as the crimson-grub. However, it is used only in this manner concerning the color from it and cloths dyed with it. The second word is *shani* which means scarlet.

Taken together, they are translated as “scarlet,” but implying the scarlet which comes from the *towla* or grub worm. The double words “implies that to strike this color the

wool or cloth was twice dipped” (Clarke). The scarlet, or red, in the Bible pictures and symbolizes war, blood, and/or judgment. About this particular type of worm – in Hebrew *towla*, Henry Morris writes –

“When the female of the scarlet worm species was ready to give birth to her young, she would attach her body to the trunk of a tree, fixing herself so firmly and permanently that she would never leave again. The eggs deposited beneath her body were thus protected until the larvae were hatched and able to enter their own life cycle. As the mother died, the crimson fluid stained her body and the surrounding wood. From the dead bodies of such female scarlet worms, the commercial scarlet dyes of antiquity were extracted. What a picture this gives of Christ, dying on the tree, shedding his precious blood that he might ‘bring many sons unto glory.’ He died for us, that we might live through him!” Henry Morris

In one way or another, it is all about Christ... every word points to the majesty of a bruised and crushed Servant; a glorious Savior. As you can see, each of these colors amazingly pictures His work.

31 (con’t) **and fine woven linen.**

v’shesh mashezar – literally, “and linen finely twisted.” The *shesh* is fine linen. It was first mentioned when Joseph, who himself was a marvelous picture of Christ, was clothed in fine linen after interpreting Pharaoh’s dreams and being elevated to his high position in the land. The symbolism of the *shesh*, or fine linen, is explicitly explained in the book of Revelation –

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give glory to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his bride has made herself ready. ⁸And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.” Revelation 19:7, 8 (Jubilee Bible)

Most versions say something like the “righteous acts of the saints.” However, this is incorrect. This is not speaking about what we do, but about what Christ has done. He is the righteousness of the saints and we are given a picture of it here in the veil. His righteousness, based on His purity, is what the veil is composed of.

The *shazar*, or twisting of the linen, is a picture of each of the previous attributes being woven into the very fabric of Christ – He embodies the law, justice, righteousness, and the right to judge and make war, to shed blood – both that of others and His own. These things are all finely woven into His very nature, just as they were finely twisted into the linen. Also, the twisting can be further explained in His strength, courage, and steadfastness. As it says in Ecclesiastes –

“Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him.
And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” Ecclesiastes 3:12

³¹ (con’t) **It shall be woven with an artistic design of cherubim.**

On the veil, and into the linen itself, are to be woven *keruvim*, or cherubs. The word for “artistic design” is *khashav*. This means to “think about” or “consider.” In other words, there is to be care and careful consideration in the making of the cherubs. Thus the NKJV uses a word which describes that quite well – artistic.

As noted in a previous sermon, the KJV incorrectly translates the cherubim as cherubims. The “im” at the end of cherub is the Hebrew plural marker. Therefore, it is either cherubs or cherubim, but not cherubims.

Cherubim are a select class of angels which, among other things, are near to God, they have great power, and they act as guards. As they are guards of the Tree of Life, they are the ones who can point man to the way of accessing the right to that tree.

This veil then is being constructed and placed for a reason. It symbolically guards access to that Tree of Life. In Genesis 3, after the fall of man and their exile from Eden, cherubs were placed strategically and with purpose –

“So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.” Genesis 3:24

As the tabernacle faces east, the symbolic guarding by these cherubs is intended to show us several things. First, it is a picture of the way to access paradise-lost once again. Secondly, that what is inside is guarded and access is therefore restricted.

Thirdly, if something is guarded, it means that access is possible. If there is a lock on a safe, it is meant to guard access to the safe, but the safe can be opened and access can be obtained with the right key or combination.

The safe hasn't been welded shut permanently. Instead, it merely requires the proper validation for access. And so fourth, the guarding of the cherubs implies that what is inside being guarded *is* that proper validation, if you will. It is what provides access.

³² You shall hang it upon the four pillars of acacia *wood* overlaid with gold.

Like the rest of the furniture and structure of the tabernacle and tent, the wood was to be of acacia, or *shittim*. As before, it symbolized Christ's human nature. These pillars were to be overlaid with gold. And like before, this symbolizes His divine nature. There were to be four pillars for the hanging of the veil.

Again, the meaning of the number four is important to recall –

“Now the number *four* is made up of three and one (3+1=4), and it denotes, therefore, and marks that which follows the revelation of God in the Trinity, namely, *His creative works*. He is known by the things that are seen. Hence the written revelation commences with the words, “In-the-beginning God CREATED.” Creation is therefore the next thing, the *fourth* thing, and the number *four* always has reference to all that is *created*. It is emphatically the *number of Creation*; of man in his relation to the world as created... It is the number of things that have a beginning, of things that are made, of material things, and matter itself. It is the number of *material completeness*. Hence it is the *world number*, and especially the ‘city’ number.” EW Bullinger

These four pillars, holding up the veil, are then representative of the final point between the things of the world and the heavenly things behind it. This is explicitly stated in the book of Hebrews as picturing the work of Christ. First, we are told that this veil was a picture for the time when access to God was not yet available –

“...the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.” Hebrews 9:8

Next we are told that in His work, Christ went from the earthly to the heavenly in order to complete the process of redemption –

“For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us...”

-Hebrews 9:24

The four pillars thus represent the transition from the sphere of *creation* to the sphere of the *heavenly*. This transition is made possible by the God/Man – Jesus Christ – who is that point of transition between the two spheres. He is the infinite united to the finite; He is the divine united to the creation.

³² **Their hooks *shall be gold*,**

A new word is now introduced for “hooks.” It is *vav*. It will only be used 13 times in the Bible and all are in Exodus and all are referring to the hooks for hanging on pillars. As these are the only times they are mentioned, and they are all in the same context, it is not entirely sure what they are.

The Greek translation of the OT calls them “capitals.” One translation calls them “heads,” one “pegs,” and the rest all say “hooks.” To get a clue as to what they are, we can look at what *vav* is. It is the sixth letter of the Hebrew aleph-bet and it has the meanings of “add,” “secure,” and “hook.”

A *vav*, whether in ancient writing or modern, has the appearance of a peg or a hook of some sort. The *vav* as a letter is used in Hebrew to serve as a connector to words and members within a sentence, and even the sentences of a discourse. Thus it draws them together. Therefore, hook or peg is the obvious and preferred meaning.

These would probably have been attached to the poles and the veil would have been hung from them. As the *vav* is also the sixth letter of the aleph-bet, there must be symbolic meaning attached to these as well. The number six is the number of man. Thus, these gold hooks are a picture of the divine Man.

It pictures Christ, the divine Man who is the hook or *transition* between the two realms – the finite and the infinite. Just as the *vav* is the connector of words and members within a sentence, Christ is the connector between the divine and the earthly. Thus it is a reference to His incarnation. He is the God/Man.

As there are four of them, we can see the connection to the four gospels which speak of the Man who is divine. The gospels are what speak of Him and His work and they are what testify to His fulfillment of the law which alone can again allow access *through the veil*. The gold hooks thus again speak of the work of Christ.

The gospels are what *connect* the Old Testament to the New, hooking them together into a unified whole. However, there is another point to consider. The four hooks, each a *vav* or a “six,” taken together thus equal twenty-four. And there is, according to Bullinger, a set meaning for the number twenty-four –

“It is the number associated with the heavenly government and worship, of which the earthly form in Israel was only a copy.” EW Bullinger

Again, this is a perfect matching to what Hebrews 8:5 tells us concerning the tabernacle being a copy and a shadow of the heavenly things.

³² (con’t) **upon four sockets of silver.**

Like the sockets for the tabernacle boards, there are four sockets for these four pillars and they are likewise silver. Silver, as explained before, pictures redemption. Thus, in the work of Christ as the Redeemer of creation, the number four is what is pictured. Combined with the previous 96 silver sockets, we now have 100.

³³ **And you shall hang the veil from the clasps.**

This translation is incorrect. The word is *takhat*, “under,” not “from.” The veil is not hanging *from* the clasps. Rather it is hung *upon* the *vavihem*, or hooks, of the previous verse. But its placement is *under* the clasps mentioned in Exodus 26:6 which united the curtains into one whole.

This is the point where the two chambers were to be divided. It was a distance of 5×4, or 20 cubits from the front, and 10 cubits from its back. By hanging the veil at this point, it thus makes the back room, the Most Holy Place, a perfect cube of 10x10x10 cubits. There is intent and purpose here.

The number 10 signifies “the perfection of Divine order. It implies that nothing is wanting; that the number and order are perfect; that the whole cycle is complete” (Bullinger). Thus, the cubed back room has been divinely ordered in all ways. In this room is found a picture of the complete cycle of the redemption of man. This is realized in the following words...

³³ (con’t) **Then you shall bring the ark of the Testimony in there,**

The veil, at this specific point in the tabernacle and under the curtains, is the partition behind which the Ark of the Testimony is to be brought. It is into this spot, marking out the perfection of Divine order, which is...

³³ (con't) **behind the veil.**

The veil, of which every detail points to Christ, is to be the dividing marker for the Ark of the Testimony. Upon it are the cherubs which are pointing east. Behind the veil there is Paradise restored. Before the veil is guarded access. The implication is that there is a fracture between the two. There is cruelty and rigor anticipating entry into a place of delight.

³³ (con't) **The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy *place* and the Most Holy.**

The first time that the word *qodesh* or “holy” was used was in Exodus 3:5 when Moses was told to take off his sandals as he was standing on holy ground. Since then, it has been used six more times in various ways. Now the eighth time it is used is when speaking of the “Holy Place” or *ha’qodesh*.

The number eight is that of superabundance and new beginnings. The implements in the Holy Place are those which point to the new beginnings in Christ. After that, the ninth and tenth uses of this word are found in this verse as well when speaking of *qodesh ha’qodeshim*, or the Holy of Holies.

Thus, there is another stamp of the perfection of Divine order in the tenth use of *qodesh*, or Most Holy, in the Bible. In this place “nothing is wanting; that the number and order are perfect; that the whole cycle is complete” (Bullinger). It is the most marvelous thing to consider how God has structured even the cycle of the use of words in the Bible to show us spiritual truths.

The symbolism of this Veil, its meaning, is explicitly given in the book of Hebrews –

“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, *through the veil, that is, His flesh*, ²¹ and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” Hebrews 10:19-22

The veil is said to be a picture of the flesh of Christ, His body. Only through that can access to God be restored. And this is exactly what the Bible says occurred on a Friday, 11 April 32AD. The record of Luke will suffice for our edification and to stir up our gratitude to God who gave the life of His Son for us –

“Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. ⁴⁵ Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’” Having said this, He breathed His last.”

-Luke 23:44-46

The barrier to Eden was removed; the Paradise which was lost was restored, and intimate fellowship between God and man which had ended with the coming of our sin was again made possible through the tearing of the Veil, which is the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. The debt was paid, the anger was poured out, and propitiation was realized through His death. Behold, He makes all things new.

³⁴ You shall put the mercy seat upon the ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy.

If Christ’s body is the Veil, then the Mercy Seat is a picture of where Christ’s body was lain. The Mercy Seat is where the blood evidenced the death of the animal in the Old Testament; it is where the blood evidenced the death of Christ in the New. There between the cherubs on the mercy seat, propitiation was found. This is seen in John’s gospel –

“But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down *and looked* into the tomb. ¹² And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.”

-John 20:11, 12

Just as the animal’s blood was given as a temporary propitiation for the sins of Israel, year by year on the Day of Atonement, so Christ’s blood was given as a one-time, permanent propitiation for our sins on what the Day of Atonement only looked forward to. This is again explained in Hebrews –

“But Christ came *as* High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of

bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ¹⁵ And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” Hebrews 9:11-15

The placing of the Mercy Seat upon the Ark of the Testimony is to show that Christ had fulfilled the law. Under His blood, meaning His death, the law was thus annulled. It is the shedding of His blood which sealed the fulfillment of the Old Covenant, and it is what brought in the New Covenant.

Access for those who believe is unconditionally granted. For those who don't, they remain outside the veil and cut off from the promises which are found in Christ, and in Him alone. However, there is still something calling to them...

³⁵ You shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand across from the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south; and you shall put the table on the north side.

Outside the Holy of Holies is where the table, meaning the Table of Showbread, was to be placed. The table was explained previously, but in short, the bread pictures Christ, the Bread of life. However, that life can only be imparted through His death. Thus, the Table of Showbread is placed outside of the Holy of Holies, on the east side of the veil.

Until He died, we could not obtain access to God through Him. The Lampstand is also outside of the veil. It was also explained in great detail, but in short, it is what illuminates the work of Christ for us. It is what shows us the way in to what would otherwise be a darkened place.

It is placed *nokakh*, or opposite, the Table of Showbread, on the south side of the tabernacle. In placing it to the south, it would thus illuminate the north, where the table was placed. The work of Christ the Lord, our Bread of Life, is highlighted and illuminated for us to know that He is the One who alone can gain access for us, once again, into Paradise.

Only through partaking of His life can we again become partakers of what His life offers. And in partaking of it, we must also partake of His death. It is all pictured in these implements which are being so meticulously described, one by one, and in logical order.

*All things new, this is how it shall be
One step at a time and it will come out as I have planned
A return to paradise will happen, just you wait and see
Yes, I am leading You back to that delightful land*

*All things new, it is a promise I made long ago
And the journey has been progressing steadily through the years
As the plan has unfolded, there has been tribulation, trial, and woe
And yes, through it all, there have been many shed tears*

*But these things had to come about; you will someday understand
Without the trials, heaven could never seem so sweet
All things new, marvelous things are coming from My open hand
When once again and forevermore, in a loving bond we shall meet*

II. The Screen (verses 36 & 37)

³⁶ **“You shall make a screen for the door of the tabernacle,**

The translation is incorrect. This is not a door for the tabernacle, or *mishkan*. Rather, it is a door for the tent, or *ohel*. This is the access point to the tent which covers the tabernacle, here a screen.

It is now a new item which is directed to be fashioned. It is a *masakh*. This word is used 25 times, mostly in Exodus and Numbers to describe this item. However, it is used three other times in 2 Samuel, Psalm 105, and Isaiah 22. It is variously translated as a screen, hanging, covering, etc.

In Isaiah, the word is translated as “defense.” Thus, we can get the idea that this is what keeps something out. It covers and therefore impedes access. This screen is said to be made specifically for the door of the tent. Just as access was restricted to the Holy of Holies, so it is also restricted to the tabernacle and the Holy Place itself. Nobody outside would be able to look in beyond the door.

It pictures the life of Christ, hidden from the eyes of those before His coming. He was veiled in the Old Testament Scriptures. They knew a Messiah was coming, but they could not gaze upon what He would be like.

All they would see would be the dull looking coverings of the tent and this veil of separation with its colors and designs. Beyond that, they couldn't imagine the majestic beauty which lay just behind and under them. Likewise, the people of Israel could never have imagined the majesty which lay ahead of them as they awaited the One who would restore all things.

The light was already shining; the bread was already laid out; the veil was already hanging in anticipation, and the ark lay resting in its perfect cube. But none of this was known to them except in words which failed to describe the marvel they were separated from. The span of time yet future, and even the dullness of the eyes of those who beheld the Person who finally arrived, obscured their perception of the infinite value of Jesus Christ.

Only if the coverings were removed could the people clearly see what was hidden. And only when the veil is lifted in Christ can someone look at the words of the Old Testament and understand what they are actually saying. Otherwise, only darkness and shadows are what is seen.

^{36 (con't)} **woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen,**

Like the curtains and the veil, the colors are chosen to picture Christ in all ways. These carry the same signification as they did in both of the other weavings. However, there is a difference to be noted in the making of this one...

^{36 (con't)} **made by a weaver.**

maaseh roqem – worked embroider. The word *raqam* is a verb which means “to variegate color.” Thus it is translated variously as “an embroiderer,” “a weaver,” or “with needlework.” It is used only 9 times in the Bible and eight of them are in Exodus and referring to this work on the tabernacle.

The other time it is used, which is in Psalm 139, it gives us a better hint as to how to interpret it –

“I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works,
And *that* my soul knows very well.
¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
And **skillfully wrought** in the lowest parts of the earth.” Psalm 139:14, 15

The weaver would skillfully and meticulously fashion this screen according to the instructions of God through Moses. It is, again, a picture of Christ. The colors signify His roles as outlined earlier, but as it comprises the one and only door of the tent leading to the tabernacle, it shows us that the means of coming further is exclusive.

No person could come in another way. As the inner chambers picture Christ’s life and work, the New Testament fulfillment of this door is found in the words of John 10 –

“I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.” John 10:9

Heaven’s pastures are available, but only through One access point. The Door is Christ. But the fact that Christ is there is a point of grace all by itself...

³⁷ And you shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold;

Unlike the veil which was hung from four pillars, for this door, there were to be five of them. They are of the same material as the others, acacia or *shittim* overlaid with gold. And the materials carry the same signification once again – the divine/human natures of Christ. But this time, there were five.

And so, once again, we need to go to Bullinger and determine the meaning of five –

“Five is four *plus* one (4+1). We have had hitherto the three persons of the Godhead, and their manifestation in creation. Now we have a further revelation of a People called out from mankind, redeemed and saved, to walk with God from earth to heaven. Hence, Redemption follows creation. Inasmuch as in consequence of the fall of man creation came under the curse and was “made subject to vanity,” therefore man and creation must be redeemed. Thus we have:

1. Father
2. Son

3. Spirit
4. Creation
5. Redemption

These are the five great mysteries, and *five* is therefore the number of GRACE.” As a testament to what lay inside behind the screen, five pillars, indicating Grace, held it up. Every single detail of the tent and the tabernacle, including all that is inside of it, is of *grace*. There were five bars on all three other sides – Grace. And there are five pillars on this side- Grace. It is all about God’s grace in Christ. The Lord could have destroyed Adam; he allowed him to live; Grace.

He could have wiped out the whole world, but Noah found *grace* in His sight. He could have left Abraham in Ur, worshipping gods of wood and of stone, but by *grace* He called him out. Each step of the way, *grace* was bestowed. The tabernacle is a picture. It was never intended to be a permanent residence, nor a permanent point of meeting.

Instead, it was simply a picture of the *grace* to come. The doorway is a testimony to the *grace* of God in Christ. Five pillars suspended the screen; *grace* established and upheld the work of Christ. They are, in essence, *the grace of God in Christ*.

37 (con’t) **their hooks *shall be gold,***

Like the hooks of the veil, these are to be of solid gold as well. In these five *vavehem* or “hooks” is a picture similar to the four which held the veil. Those four represented the four gospels; however these five would represent all five of the New Testament books of history – the gospels plus Acts.

As the four gospels are a witness to the work of Christ in connecting the Old Testament with the New, adding Acts to them gives a picture of the new life to be found in Christ once inside the screen. They are what tie together the work of Christ and the understanding of that work.

The tabernacle and the tent are working outwards from the Ark, not the other way around. Each step outward means a greater need is realized in order to gain access. And again, there is a picture in the numbers. There are five hooks or *vav*’s. Each *vav* represents the number six. Therefore $5 \times 6 = 30$. Bullinger explains the number–

“Thirty being 3 x 10, denotes in a higher degree the perfection of Divine order, as marking the right moment.” EW Bullinger

In other words, the moment of *grace* is the right moment. Paul explains it in 2 Corinthians –

“We then, *as workers together with Him* also plead with *you* not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For He says:

‘In an acceptable time I have heard you,
And in the day of salvation I have helped you.’

Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.”

-2 Corinthians 6:1, 2

Each item that is described by God for Moses to construct is simply filled with information relevant to the redemptive process of man.

^{37 (fin)} **and you shall cast five sockets of bronze for them.**

Unlike the sockets for the pillars which held up the veil, these are not silver. Instead, they are bronze. The difference is that these sockets do not signify redemption, as it were. Rather, they signify *judgment*. The word for “bronze” is *nekhosheth*.

This word refers to copper and its alloys. The metals, whether copper, bronze, or brass, get their color from the copper which along with gold is a metal which possesses a natural color other than silver. The color of bronze symbolizes judgment.

This judgment can be negative, such as in the case of bronze fetters being worn by those who have been sentenced for a crime, or in a pictorial judgment such as in Deuteronomy, where the punishment for disobeying the Lord is described as the heavens being bronze. It is a picture of rainless skies, heat, and anguish.

However, the judgment can also be one of purification and justification. This is seen throughout the Bible as well. In this bronze, there would be both significations. The first is for those who remain outside of the tent. They can only anticipate negative divine judgment in return *for* their sins.

However, for those who receive the grace of God in Christ, they can expect God’s positive divine judgment *of* their sins through Christ’s work. The picture is there, and it

calls out from the pillars, awaiting any who would receive God's mercy and find His grace.

And so, as we close today, having looked into the astonishing pictures of Christ to come in tangible, actual implements constructed by Moses at the instruction of the Lord, we need to evaluate our own position in relation to Him. Have we received the judgment on our sins pictured here?

Have we passed through the door, which is Christ? Have we come to the veil and received the gift of His torn body, passing through it into the heavenly realm and restored access to God? If you haven't, then only sorrowful judgment remains. Please, please receive the work of Jesus Christ.

His body was torn just for you. The veil was rent asunder in order to restore you once again to full and complete fellowship with God. Call on Jesus; be reconciled to God through His shed blood; and you too will be returned to the land of delight that was lost so long ago. Call on Christ today...

Closing Verse: *"This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, ²⁰ where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." Hebrews 6:19, 20*

Next Week: Exodus 27:1-8 *A place for propitiation when we falter...* (The Brazen Altar) (74th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Veil and the Screen

You shall make a veil
Of blue, purple, and scarlet thread you will entwine
And fine woven linen
It shall be woven with cherubim of an artistic design

You shall hang it upon the four pillars
Of acacia wood overlaid with gold
Their hooks shall be gold, upon four sockets of silver
It shall be constructed just as to you I have told

And you shall hang the veil from the clasps
Then you shall bring the ark of the Testimony too
In there, behind the veil
The veil shall be a divider for you

Between the holy place and the Most Holy
This is where the veil is intended to be

You shall put the mercy seat, so shall it be
Upon the ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy

You shall set the table outside the veil
And the lampstand across from the table, you see
On the side of the tabernacle toward the south
And you shall put the table on the north side; so shall it be

You shall make a screen for the door of the tabernacle
Woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, these three
And fine woven linen
Made by a weaver is how it is intended to be

And you shall make for the screen
Five pillars of acacia wood
And overlay them with gold
Let these instructions be clearly understood

Their hooks shall be gold
And you shall cast five sockets of bronze for them
Now these instructions to you have been told

The details are so fine, each tells a marvelous story
Of the coming of Christ and the things that He will do
Every bit of it tells us of His splendid glory
He the Holy One who is ever faithful and true

Found in Him is grace and life; found in Him is God's mercy too
The heavy burdens we have carried are lifted off through the Lord
Great and marvelous things He had done for me and you
And a record of them is kept for us to read in His sacred word

Oh God, how You are so very good to us!
How we rejoice in the things that You have done!
Through Your marvelous grace, You have sent Jesus!
And through His shed blood, our victory is won!

For this, O God, we shall ever sing Your praise
For ages upon ages... Yes! Even for eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 27:1-8 (THE BRAZEN ALTAR)

You've heard our eight verses today which deal with the Brazen altar, also known as the Altar of Burnt Offering. Having heard them, are you seeing pictures of Christ and His work in them? When the Israelites came into the courtyard of the tabernacle, this would be the first thing they would see.

It was situated in this way to teach them a lesson. They were unable to come near to God without first sacrificing to atone for their sins. In other words, blood shedding *is required* for access to God. Without it, there is no access.

If nothing else, this should alert us to our need for a sacrifice before approaching God, or being accepted by Him. And yet, very few people and cultures today offer any type of sacrifice to Him, and those that do are doing it wrong. If this is so, then how can we expect that God will hear our prayers and allow us restored access to Him? The placement of the altar is given for a reason. Can we just ignore it?

The answer is that we do have a Sacrifice, and it is a suitable One indeed. If we have come to the foot of Calvary and placed our sins there, then we have done exactly what this ancient altar only pictured. We have had our sins removed in order to be acceptable, once again, to God.

In Isaiah 1-5, the prophet proclaims woe on the people 9 times. Woe to you for this and woe to you for that. However, in Isaiah 6, the prophet had a vision of the Lord in divine splendor. In his anguish at his own sin in comparison to God's glory, he cried out –

“Woe *is* me, for I am undone!
Because I *am* a man of unclean lips,
And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;
For my eyes have seen the King,
The Lord of hosts.” Isaiah 6:5

He understood then and there that he was doomed because of his fallen state. The sins of the others had been forgotten and all he could see was his own deplorable condition. But then something happened which forever changed his view on salvation –

Text Verse: *“Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth with*

it, and said:
'Behold, this has touched your lips;
Your iniquity is taken away,
And your sin purged.'" Isaiah 6:6, 7

As we will see today, the altar of sacrifice is Christ. The sacrifice which was consumed on the coals of the altar merely portrays His work for the poor sinners of the world. The burning coal reflects the holiness of God which consumes all that offends Him.

An exchange was made in Christ to take away our offense. It is this marvelous piece of furniture, made of wood and bronze, which depicts Him. Everything about it will reveal some aspect of His work for us. And how much I have missed in preparing this sermon I can only guess. But what I have gleaned, I now present to you. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Grace, Strength, and Judgment (verses 1 & 2)

¹"You shall make an altar

The instructions for the altar of sacrifice are now given. This is a specific altar which is specific for the tabernacle. Thus, there is an article in front of "altar." It is *ha'mizbeakh* – "**the** altar." Unfortunately many translations don't highlight this.

Like the description of the tabernacle itself, the things inside the tabernacle were detailed first. Only then were the hangings and structure around that furniture then noted. The same is true here with the details of the altar coming before the details of the court which surrounds it.

The *mizbeakh* comes from the word *zabakh* which means "to slaughter for sacrifice." This type of altar was first seen in Genesis 8:20 when Noah built an altar to the Lord after the flood.

¹ (con't) of acacia wood,

Again acacia wood is selected for this altar and so I will again remind you of its properties. It is a very slow growing tree that would be readily available in the area of

Sinai. Its heart wood is dark reddish-brown and it is beautiful when sanded and polished.

It is like cypress in Florida which is resistant to decay because it deposits in its heartwood waste substances which turn into preservatives. This renders it unpalatable to insects. It is also dense and difficult to be penetrated by water and other decaying agents. Thus it is considered an incorruptible wood.

The acacia wood pictures the incorruptible nature of Christ's humanity. As it is an altar for sacrifice, it will picture Christ in a way that any of us will be able to grasp.

^{1 (con't)} **five cubits long and five cubits wide**

The dimensions are specific and have not been seen in any of the other furniture yet constructed. The number five needs to again be explained. Bullinger says that...

"Five is four plus one (4+1). We have had hitherto the three persons of the Godhead, and their manifestation in creation. Now we have a further revelation of a People called out from mankind, redeemed and saved, to walk with God from earth to heaven. Hence, Redemption follows creation. Inasmuch as in consequence of the fall of man creation came under the curse and was "made subject to vanity," therefore man and creation must be redeemed. Thus we have:

Father
Son
Spirit
Creation
Redemption

These are the five great mysteries, and *five* is therefore the number of GRACE." EW Bullinger

The altar of sacrifice is then a point of grace for the people of Israel. It further then points to the grace of God in Christ. This altar of sacrifice is a point of grace in the process (and pictures) of redemption. The width and the length are both five cubits, thus it is grace multiplied. In our modern measurements, this altar would have been almost three yards wide. It's not a teeny little altar, but one which would be big enough for the animals which would be sacrificed and burnt on it.

^{1 (con't)} **—the altar shall be square—**

Surprisingly, the idea of something square has never been mentioned in Scripture until now. It is the word *raba* and comes from the word *arba* which simply means, “four.” As the sides are equal distance and there are four sides, then it is *raba*; square.

¹ (con't) **and its height *shall be* three cubits.**

Rather than being another multiple of five, the height is but three cubits. The number three in Scripture identifies “that which is *solid, real, substantial, complete, and entire.*” The altar is a total of 75 cubed cubits and the idea is that the sacrifice to be made here is that of substantial or complete grace. This is where the atonement sacrifices, and other sacrifices, for the people will be made.

Scholars, both ancient and modern, are perplexed about the altar because it doesn't square with instructions for the earthen altar which was detailed in Exodus 20. However, as we discovered then, those altars were used wherever the people were for slaughtering their animals. They could be in a town or in the country.

This is an entirely different altar, unique to the tabernacle, and which is used in connection with the rites of the tabernacle service. It serves an entirely different purpose than the earthen altars. In the tabernacle, God would dwell among His people, manifesting Himself to them and speaking to them through the high priest.

As He so dwelt among them, so they were to honor Him with their devotions. But, this wasn't in the tabernacle itself. It was within the surrounding courts. It was to this point that they would come, bring their sacrifices, and have their gifts sanctified to the Lord. Upon entering the courts, this was the first piece of furniture to be encountered. In this was a lesson for the people that they could not approach God except through a sacrifice.

This altar will generally be known as the altar of burnt offering. It stands in the open air of the court so that the smoke of the sacrifices would then rise and scatter. In this manner, they would be considered as an aromatic offering to God, and as a sweet smelling sacrifice.

² **You shall make its horns on its four corners;**

This altar, and others which will be noted later, were to have horns constructed on the four corners. The *qeren*, or horn, has only been seen so far in Genesis 22:13, where Abraham lifted his eyes and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket.

This word, *qeren*, comes from the verb *qaran* which means “to send out rays” or “to shine.” The idea is that rays shine out and appear like horns. Likewise horns protrude out like rays of light.

In the Bible, the horn is a picture of physical strength and power. And so, “Subsequently, horns were put on the altars to focus the symbolic presence and power of God” (HAW). The horns going out in all four directions are symbolic of the power of God going out to the four corners of the earth.

The tabernacle was situated facing east and this altar would be squared up with that. Therefore, one horn would point northeast, one northwest, one southwest, and one southeast. Thus, the omnipotence of the Lord is seen in the horns.

Before moving on, one more new word is brought into Scripture here. It is *pinnah*, or corner. It means “an angle” and so the word is also figuratively used to signify a chief, a bulwark, a stay, or even a tower. It is something which provides, as it were, stability.

² (con’t) **its horns shall be of one piece with it.**

These horns were to come up from out of the altar. They were not to be removable, but as if one piece with it and protruding out, just as a horn would protrude from an animal itself. These horns would serve one purpose of binding the sacrificial animal to them so that they wouldn’t thrash about. This is seen in the 118th Psalm –

“Save now, I pray, O Lord;
O Lord, I pray, send now prosperity.
²⁶ Blessed *is* he who comes in the name of the Lord!
We have blessed you from the house of the Lord.
²⁷ God *is* the Lord,
And He has given us light;
Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.
²⁸ You *are* my God, and I will praise You;
You *are* my God, I will exalt You.” Psalm 118:25-28

What is certain is that the blood of the sin-offering was smeared on them. This is seen several times in Leviticus 4, such as this –

“The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, put *it* on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour its blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering.” Leviticus 4:25

This blood of the sacrificial animal was smeared on them to prove the death of the animal and to petition the all-powerful God to show mercy through the substitutionary sacrifice; one life being traded for the sins of another. These would be for both original sin and the unwitting sins of the people, committed in ignorance.

Because of this, these horns on this altar were considered a place for requesting mercy. Two examples of exactly this are found in the book of 1 Kings. The first is concerning Solomon’s brother who had committed an offense in trying to illegally assume the kingship from his father –

“Now Adonijah was afraid of Solomon; so he arose, and went and took hold of the horns of the altar. ⁵¹ And it was told Solomon, saying, “Indeed Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon; for look, he has taken hold of the horns of the altar, saying, ‘Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.’”

⁵² Then Solomon said, ‘If he proves himself a worthy man, not one hair of him shall fall to the earth; but if wickedness is found in him, he shall die.’ ⁵³ So King Solomon sent them to bring him down from the altar. And he came and fell down before King Solomon; and Solomon said to him, ‘Go to your house.’”

-1 Kings 1:50-53

The second example is found in King David’s general, Joab –

Then news came to Joab, for Joab had defected to Adonijah, though he had not defected to Absalom. So Joab fled to the tabernacle of the Lord, and took hold of the horns of the altar. ²⁹ And King Solomon was told, “Joab has fled to the tabernacle of the Lord; there *he is*, by the altar.” Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, “Go, strike him down.” ³⁰ So Benaiah went to the tabernacle of the Lord, and said to him, “Thus says the king, ‘Come out!’” And he said, “No, but I will die here.” And Benaiah brought back word to the king, saying, “Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me.”

³¹ Then the king said to him, “Do as he has said, and strike him down and bury him, that you may take away from me and from the house of my father the innocent blood which Joab shed. ³² So the Lord will return his blood on his head,

because he struck down two men more righteous and better than he, and killed them with the sword—Abner the son of Ner, the commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, the commander of the army of Judah—though my father David did not know *it*.³³ Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab and upon the head of his descendants forever. But upon David and his descendants, upon his house and his throne, there shall be peace forever from the Lord.”

³⁴ So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up and struck and killed him; and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness. 1 Kings 2:28-34

In the first instance, mercy was granted because Adonijah’s sin was considered at that time unwitting. However, Joab had continued in his sin and was unrepentant in his murders. Therefore, mercy was granted to the former, and none was to be found for the latter.

² (con’t) **And you shall overlay it with bronze.**

Like the other furniture thus far, this wood was to be overlaid, but instead of gold, bronze was to be used. As we have already noted, bronze symbolizes judgment. This judgment can be positive or negative. If positive, it results in purification and justification. If negative, it results in punishment or even death.

However, there is the truth that in order for there to be positive judgment for a sinful person, then there must be death of an innocent in his place. Therefore, the positive judgment still carries with it a negative aspect.

The overlaying of this altar is said by many scholars to be done in order to keep the wood below it from burning, or to make it light enough to carry. But neither of these ideas is correct. If the Lord was concerned about its structure being compromised, he would have just had the thing made out of solid bronze.

And if He was concerned about its weight, he could have instructed it to be made in pieces, like portions of the tabernacle itself. Rather, He is using these materials to make a picture of Christ and His work for us. Each detail is given for this reason.

*An altar for sacrifice, so you shall make
It will be of wood; covered in bronze it shall be
To it your sacrifices and offerings you shall take
And they shall be brought there and presented to Me*

*So shall you make the altar, as I instruct you
And so it shall be made according to the words I say
Each detail you shall make, thus you shall do
Here on the mountain, I will show you the way*

*An Altar of sacrifice, so I shall make
He will be a Man, of Adam's seed
To Him, shall you all of your faith take
For in Him there is forgiveness for every misdeed*

II. Precise Details (verses 3-8)

³ Also you shall make its pans to receive its ashes,

Two words of note here are *siyr* or “pans,” and *dashen* or “to receive its ashes.” The word *siyr* has only been used once so far, when the people complained about not having the pots full of meat that they had left behind in Egypt. The word *siyr* means both “pot” and “thorn.” The idea is that a pot is used to boil something up, and a thorn is something that rapidly springs up. So you can see the connection between the two words. In this instance, the *siyr* or “pans” are used to receive the ashes.

However, *dashen*, or “to receive its ashes,” is a rare verb which means to be fat or to grow fat. It doesn't seem to fit unless we see that this comes from the word *deshen* which means “ashes” but specifically the ashes from fat. Therefore, it is the residue from the animal fat which is collected by these pans. This would literally be rendered, “to cleanse it from fat.”

^{3 (con't)} and its shovels and its basins and its forks and its firepans;

Other than the firepans, none of these have been seen yet in Scripture. The *ya*, or shovel, comes from the word *ya'ah*, or “away.” One gets the idea directly. The shovel is used to move something away from where it is at. In this case, the shovels would be for shoveling out the ashes from the altar.

The *mizraq*, or basins, comes from *zaraq*, which means “to scatter.” These bowls will be used for receiving and then dispensing the blood. The *mazleg*, or fork, indicates a flesh-hook. These would be large bronze implements for handling the flesh of the sacrificial

animals and arranging their parts on the altar. From 1 Samuel 2:13, we see that these were three-pronged forks.

And finally, the *makhtah*, or fire-pan, were first seen in Exodus 25:38 concerning the snuff dishes of the menorah. The word comes from *khathah*, “to take.” Thus they would be the implements used for the ashes of the sacrifice that needed to be removed from time to time. Each thing has a specific purpose in the sacrificial process.

^{3 (con't)} you shall make all its utensils of bronze.

Like everything associated with this altar, these implements were to be made of bronze. Thus, all of what occurs is given to symbolize judgment. In the case of the altar, it is for judgment on sin in order to restore a propitious relationship with God.

⁴ You shall make a grate for it,

The grate, or *makber*, is introduced here. It is a rare word, found only six times, all in Exodus, and all referring to this item. It means “a grating” as can be deduced from the word. It comes from, *kabir*, which means quilt or something that is plaited or intertwined. That comes from another word which gives the idea of abundance.

^{4 (con't)} a network of bronze;

The grating is further described using the term *ma'aseh resheth*, “a working of net.” This new word, *resheth*, means just that, a net, as is used for catching something.

^{4 (con't)} and on the network you shall make four bronze rings at its four corners.

Like the other furniture so far described, this one also has rings which are attached to it. In this case, they are attached directly to the grating and in the four corners of the altar.

⁵ You shall put it under the rim of the altar beneath,

The word translated here as “rim” is *karkov*. It is only used twice and both times is it used for this same altar. It is a word which is spoken to Moses as if it would be immediately understood what it was, but there is no other word for us to adequately connect it to. Etymologically, it means “ledge” or “compass,” and so it is generally believed to be a rim which went around the entire top of the altar. But, there is no

reason to assume that it couldn't go all the way around the bottom of the altar as a rim for holding the boards together. Further, we read this in Leviticus 9 –

“Then Aaron lifted his hand toward the people, blessed them, and came down from offering the sin offering, the burnt offering, and peace offerings.”

-Leviticus 9:22

After making his sacrifices, Aaron “came down” from where he was making them. And so it appears that this *karkov* is a framework around the bottom upon which one could step. If this is so, it may help us see why it is instructed that the network should be “under the rim of the altar beneath.”

⁵ (con't) **that the network may be midway up the altar.**

The grating is to be “midway up the altar.” With all of this information now in place, it is completely unknown what this grating was for or what it looked like, or even where it was. Some say it is the hearth of the altar. In other words, it is the grate for the fire, or where the parts of the sacrificial animals were for burning, just as we would use a grating in our modern barbecue grills.

If so, this is on the inside and one-half ways up. This would allow for the fire to breathe. Others describe this as a grating that is affixed to the outside of the altar, going from the bottom to the middle. Others say it is a network on the outside going from the middle to the top, just below the rim. Doing an image search on the altar will show every possible variation.

What seems likely to me is that this network is an entirely separate piece from the altar itself. It is a meshwork upon which the wood of the altar is actually placed, thus forming a whole unit. The rings then are on the outside, having gone under the ledge and up the side. Thus, by carrying the bronze net at its rings, the entire altar can be carried.

If this is so, then in order to clean the residue which fell through the net, the entire altar would simply need to be picked up, everything shoveled out, and then set back down in its place. It would be a simple job to perform. In this, the grate is the hearth, and it would also be the support for carrying the altar.

⁶ **And you shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood,**

Like all of the other furniture within the tabernacle, this piece also is to be carried on poles. And like the others, the poles are of *shittim*, or acacia wood. They carry the same connotation as of the other times they are mentioned. But there is a difference...

⁶ (con't) **and overlay them with bronze.**

The metal for the altar and rings is the same as the metal for covering the poles. Everything about this altar, including its poles, signifies judgment.

⁷ **The poles shall be put in the rings,**

Depending on how one perceives the design of the altar and of the grating, these may be the same rings described in verse 4 or different rings. If the grating is on the inside, but not as I suggest, then they are either different rings, of which the instructions say nothing, or they are connected through holes in the wall of the altar – again, of which the instructions say nothing.

If the gratings are outside, then they would be the same rings. However, there is then no explanation as to how the sacrifices were burned, because there would still need to be gratings for the wood and offerings. But the details for these gratings would have been surprisingly left out. This is unlikely.

No matter what, the poles are intended for rings. I am of the opinion that they are the same rings mentioned in verse 4 and which are one with the grating which is inside the altar and which goes under the altar and up the side at the corners to accommodate the poles. If this is so, it then explains the next words...

⁷ (con't) **and the poles shall be on the two sides of the altar to bear it.**

The altar, the grating, the rings, and the poles become one unit to be carried. The altar was easily transported and was light enough for it to be done so by men as they walked.

⁸ **You shall make it hollow with boards;**

The word “hollow,” or *navav*, is brought in here. It is seen just four times. It comes from a root which means “to pierce.” Therefore, one gets the idea of “hollow.” It is also used to mean “an idiot” one time in Job. Such is the man with a hollow head! His thinking is vain and there is nothing substantial about him or his character.

The “boards” here are not the same word used to describe the boards of the tabernacle. These are known as *lukhot*. It is the same word used to describe the tablets on which the Ten Commandments were engraved. These then would be slabs and they imply strength and solidity.

As the entire altar was to be hollow, it supports the idea of it being supported from below and yet carried on rings from its midpoint. The boards would be joined together and then overlaid with bronze, but something of this size would need additional framework to keep it together unless it was supported from below while being carried. If it had additional framework, it would then become very heavy to carry.

^{8 (fin)} **as it was shown you on the mountain, so shall they make *it*.**

This is now the third time that Moses has been told that he is to complete the work according to the pattern he is shown on the mountain. Nothing is being left to chance and every detail is to be precisely completed. Therefore, none of this is according to human wisdom or design. Instead, it is divinely inspired.

This repetition implies that there are other details which are not recorded, but of which Moses was aware of. Because of this, everything that is recorded is given for our benefit and to understand what is on the mind of God.

And as these words are given on Sinai, which means The Bush of the Thorn, we can know that the work of Jesus, culminating in His cross and crown of thorns is being described for us in one way or another. Understanding this, let’s evaluate the verses in hopes of finding out what God wants us to see.

*Where can I go to be freed from my sin?
What place can I go where I can stand without guilt?
| Without atonement, for sure I am done in
But for this reason, I hear that Christ’s blood was spilt*

*He went to the cross to die for sin; how could it be?
There on Calvary an exchange was made
He died in my place, yes, He died even for me
What a marvelous God; what an unbalanced trade*

*All of my wrongs for His righteousness!
Through Him I am freed from all of my guilt*

*Forever to God my soul will praise and bless
For the day when on Calvary, Christ's blood was spilt*

III. Wonderful Pictures

First and foremost, this altar is a type of Christ. In the New Testament, the book of Hebrews directly equates Christ with the altar, meaning the altar of sacrifice. And more specifically, it refers to the sacrifice upon the altar –

“We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.” Hebrews 13:10

The wood, as has already been noted, pictures Christ's human nature. The word in Hebrew for the altar describes a place in which a slaughter for a sacrifice is made. This is what occurred in the giving of Christ for us. He is that place of sacrifice in the grand plan of God's redemption of man.

The dimensions seen were those of grace multiplied – 5×5. This is actually referred to twice by Peter in the New Testament. In his letters, he says –

“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord...” 2 Peter 1:2

This is what is received through the sacrificial offering of Christ. We received his grace, and we receive His peace through the giving of His life. Christ, the Altar of sacrifice, is God's point of grace in the process of redemption.

The coequal measurement of all four sides points to the redemption of creation, four being the number of that which is created. Paul speaks in detail concerning the redemption of all creation in Romans 8. This is wrought through the work of Christ's sacrifice.

The three cubits in height point to the complete sufficiency of what Christ will do in His sacrifice. Nothing is wanting. Instead all that is necessary to complete the forgiveness of sins is entirely realized in Him. As it can be said, Christ, the true Altar had to be capable of dying while at the same time being “One upon whom death had no claim” (S. Ridout).

The horns of the altar denote the power of God in Christ which is realized throughout the four corners of the earth. His sacrifice is sufficient to redeem any and all people who

come to Him for forgiveness of their sins. His omni-presence and His omnipotence are thus symbolized in these horns.

That the horns are in the corner, and not on the sides, indicates stability and permanence. There is assurance in the sacrifice which is found in Christ.

That the horns are of one piece with the altar shows that though Christ is Human, His power is unlimited. It thus implies His deity. The power of God is tied into the Man, Jesus.

The bronze of the altar points to judgment. As Christ is the Altar, then it points to the judgment of sin in Christ. Paul explains this exactly in 2 Corinthians 5 –

“Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

²⁰ Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:18-21

The bronze of the judgment, covering the burnable wood, shows that Christ’s humanity could not have borne all of God’s wrath unless it was supported and covered by God’s divine power. Again, it is a hint at the divine/human nature of Christ. He is fully human and capable of dying, and yet fully God and thus able to endure the judgment of the cross. Wood and bronze – Man yet God.

The implements which are associated with the altar all point to the sufficiency of Christ’s work. Everything that is necessary to accomplish the forgiveness of sins and to completely remove every vestige of our fallen lives is pictured in these various items.

The blood, the fat, in fact the entire sacrifice is completely cleansed through the use of these bronze implements. Through Christ, the sacrifice is complete in every detail and the judgment on sin is absolute. Nothing of our former selves is left. Instead it is all carried away through the judgment He suffered on our behalf.

These implements, and what they signify, reflect the words of Christ on the cross – “It is finished” (John 19:30). The sacrifice is complete and the forgiveness is provided. The death of the Substitute has realized that for which it was intended.

The grating, which is a network of bronze, pictures the ability of Christ to completely capture and remove the sins of His people. The word for net is used 22 times in the Old Testament and it is generally in a negative sense of capturing something. It comes from a root which means “to possess.”

The net then pictures the capturing of sin through the sacrifice of Christ. From there it is burnt up and entirely removed. As this grating is at the midpoint within the altar, it thus signifies the inward sufferings of Christ as He received God’s judgment for our sins. For those who understand this, it is a terrible reminder of what He endured for us.

Surprisingly, it is to this grating that the rings are attached. The rings carry the same connotation as they previously did with the other furniture. They picture the four gospels which depict the sacrificial work of Christ. They are what tie us to the true Altar of sacrifice, which is Christ. They are permanently tied into His work which is sufficient to redeem all of creation, thus again the number four – as in four rings – is given. The details are specific, because the details point to Christ.

That the grating and network is explicitly said to be under the rim of the altar shows that the judgment for our sins is under Christ, who is the Altar. The sin is removed in Him and it forever remains so. It is completely taken away.

The poles, or *bad*, of the altar carry the same meaning as they did before concerning the Ark of the Covenant. The number two in the Bible indicates that there is a difference in things – they contrast, and yet they confirm. There is male and there is female. They contrast, and yet they confirm the scope of humanity.

There are two poles which together support the one altar. The altar pictures Christ and thus the poles represent the two testaments which present the work of Christ. They are what makes Christ mobile to the world as their word carries the work of His sacrifice. Each contrasts – the law and grace, but each support the whole and confirms the message.

Isaiah speaks of His sacrifice *to come*; Hebrews explains the Sacrifice *which came*. These two testaments are bound by the four gospels, all of which reveal the marvelous work He fulfilled.

Finally, the last verse concerning the altar is specific – “You shall make it hollow with boards.” The word for “boards” is unusual in that it almost always refers to the tablets of the Ten Commandments. It indicates a slab and thus it implies solidity.

This pictures Christ's unwavering and steady work for His people, steadfastly and resolutely accomplishing the fulfilling of the Ten Commandments for us, even though it meant that He would die in the process. Through this solid and unwavering determination, He brought man's sin into judgment once for all time.

Finally, that the altar is explicitly said to be hollow is not without significance. This pictures Christ, in His humanity, emptying himself in order to become our atoning sacrifice for sins. This is explicitly referred to by Paul in Philippians 2 –

“Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

-Philippians 2:4-8 (ESV)

As you can see, every detail is selected to give us hints into the Person and work of Christ. Without His sacrifice, we would be utterly cut off from God. This is what the Bible teaches. We cannot approach Him without first coming to Him through a sacrifice. Even the Old Testament shows us this numerous times and in numerous ways.

In the tabernacle, the veil shows us of our separation from God because of sin. In the altar we see that death is the consequence of sin. However, in the altar we also see that which speaks of sin forgiven. Arthur Pink gives his thoughts on this –

“Nature knows nothing of this: break her laws, and you must suffer the consequences; repent, but she knows no mercy and shows no pity. Science is equally powerless: it endeavors to relieve the effects entailed, but has no remedy for the disease itself. Divine revelation alone makes known an adequate provision—the Cross of Christ. There the uncompromising judgment of God dealt with sin; not by punishing the sinner, but by smiting the sinner's Substitute...” A.W. Pink

Before we finish, I'll give you one example from the time of Solomon. He had assumed the kingship of Israel and He sought the Lord. The Ark of the Testimony where the Lord said that He would meet with Moses was already in Jerusalem, but Solomon didn't go there to seek the Lord.

Instead, he went to Gibeon where the tabernacle was. It was there that the bronze altar which is being described now still was. Solomon understood that to seek the Lord, he had to first go through a sacrifice. Here is that account –

Now Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and the Lord his God *was* with him and exalted him exceedingly.

² And Solomon spoke to all Israel, to the captains of thousands and of hundreds, to the judges, and to every leader in all Israel, the heads of the fathers' *houses*. ³ Then Solomon, and all the assembly with him, went to the high place that *was* at Gibeon; for the tabernacle of meeting with God was there, which Moses the servant of the Lord had made in the wilderness. ⁴ But David had brought up the ark of God from Kirjath Jearim to *the place* David had prepared for it, for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem. ⁵ Now the bronze altar that Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made, he put before the tabernacle of the Lord; Solomon and the assembly sought Him *there*. ⁶ And Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before the Lord, which *was* at the tabernacle of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it.

⁷ On that night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, "Ask! What shall I give you?" 2 Chronicles 1:1-7

It is stories like these that show us that we must come to God, not directly, but through a sacrifice. As Christ is the end of the law, the entire Old Testament sacrificial system is ended. Therefore, it is only through Christ, whom these ancient things picture, that we can approach God. Without Him, God will neither hear nor respond.

But through Christ, we have full and complete access to the throne of grace. Let us take this to heart. If you have never come to God through the offering which He made – the offering of His Son, then your prayers will not be heard. Your sin has caused a wall between you and Him which must first be broken down.

Let me tell you how to get that fixed so that you can have full and complete access to God through Christ the Lord...

Closing Verse: *"Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."* Ephesians 5:1, 2

Next Week: Exodus 27:9-21 *It is a lot of detail to tackle...* (The Court of the Tabernacle) (75th Exodus sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Christ, Our Altar

You shall make an altar of acacia wood
Five cubits long and five cubits wide
The altar shall be square, as is understood
And its height shall be three cubits, so I decide

You shall make its horns on its four corners
Its horns shall be of one piece with it
And you shall overlay it with bronze
So shall you do; so I to you submit

Also you shall make its pans to receive its ashes
And its shovels and its basins and its forks, and its firepans too
You shall make all its utensils of bronze
Such as I now instruct to you

You shall make a grate for it
A network of bronze; so shall it be
And on the network you shall make four bronze rings
At its four corners, as instructed by Me

You shall put it under the rim
Of the altar beneath, so you shall do
That the network may be midway up the altar
This is the design as I am instructing you

And you shall make poles for the altar
Poles of acacia wood
And overlay them with bronze
So shall it be; so it is understood

The poles shall be put in the rings
The poles shall on the two sides be

Of the altar to bear it
Stick closely to these instructions from Me

You shall make it hollow with boards
As it was to you on the mountain shown
So shall they make it, according to My words
To them shall these instructions be made known

In the altar God's wisdom in Christ is revealed
Each detail selected to show us of Jesus
And through His offering, a joyous destiny is sealed
Surely God in Christ has done marvelous things for us

And so we praise You, O King of the ages
Our hearts are filled with Your beauty and Your glory
Marvelous things You have revealed in the Bible's pages
Marvelous things in this wonderful redemption story

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 27:9-21 (THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE)

The altar of burnt offering was the last piece of furniture that we looked at. It is the place where the people would come to make their offerings to the Lord. But this wasn't just arbitrarily set outside of the tabernacle. Instead, it was to be located within a courtyard which would surround the tabernacle.

The courtyard itself isn't very ostentatious. It is simple in its form and that is how it would appear to anyone, both inside and outside. And yet, every detail has purpose and reflects order and harmony. But isn't that how Jesus appeared to the world?

He didn't come and live an ostentatious life. Viewing Him from a distance, all you would see is a regular Person. But as you got to know Him more intimately, the more perfect He would seem. One could never say, "This part, or that part, of His life is out of order."

Instead, you would consider every thing He did, and you would marvel at the perfection you witnessed. The same is true with the courts of the tabernacle. Walking around the courtyard, carefully evaluating each thing would reveal wisdom. There was nothing arbitrary or superfluous. Every detail served a particular purpose.

And this is true with the words of the Bible. The more we read them, the more perfect we realize they are. With each new commentary we read, or each new sermon we listen to, we find new insights, even in to old familiar passages. We see that everything that God does simply proclaims His glory.

Text Verse: *"Give to the Lord, O families of the peoples,
Give to the Lord glory and strength.*

*⁸ Give to the Lord the glory due His name;
Bring an offering, and come into His courts.*

*⁹ Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!
Tremble before Him, all the earth." Psalm 96:7-9*

The people of Israel were admonished to bring an offering and to come into the courts of the Lord. There they could worship Him in the beauty of holiness. If the courts were haphazardly constructed, they would detract from such a notion. But they were precisely made and they were beautiful in their simplicity.

And so, standing in those courts on the unpaved ground, they could look towards the tabernacle and worship the Lord with their hearts directed to Him. Today we'll see what those courts looked like and we will see a small portion of the countless pictures that each detail makes. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Courtyard of the Tabernacle (verses 9-19)

⁹“You shall also make the court of the tabernacle.

Moses is now instructed to make a *khatsar*, or “court” for the tabernacle. This word is not new to Scripture, but it is the first time it is used for the sanctuary. It simply means “a yard, as if enclosed by a fence.” In a broader sense, it can mean a small town enclosed by walls, and so on.

The detail for the construction of the brazen altar was given first and only now is the construction of the court described, of which the brazen altar will be the prominent piece of furniture. This is the same general idea as the giving of the description of the Ark, the Table of Showbread, and the Menorah before the description for construction of the tabernacle. Each step is logical and orderly.

We should be reminded now of the various terms which are used to describe what is being erected. The first is *miqdash*. This is the sanctuary itself. After that is the “tabernacle” or *mishkan*. This is the inner part of the sanctuary where the holy place and the most holy place are located. These were both noted in Exodus 25 –

“And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. ⁹ According to all that I show you, *that is*, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make *it*.” Exodus 25:8, 9

On top of the *mishkan*, or tabernacle, would be a covering called the *ohel*, or “tent.” Surrounding all of this would be the *khatsar*, or “court.” It is this which is being described and which is a part of the overall *miqdash*, or “sanctuary.” It would be good to refer to an image of the entire structure so that one can see the various parts. In so doing, the description then makes much more sense.

This court, as will be described, will be formed as a parallelogram, meaning a double square where the length is twice that of its width. In modern measurements, it will be about 150 feet long and about 75 feet wide. In other words, it will be about half as long and half as wide as a football field.

It is into this courtyard that the people of Israel will be admitted for the purpose of bringing their sacrifices and offerings, and for bringing in their praise and worship of the Lord. The entire court area would be open to the skies excepting the tabernacle itself. This had its own coverings and then was covered by the tent.

The placing of the brazen altar in this area is for obvious reasons. When the sacrifices were burnt, they could rise into the open atmosphere. However, this isn't the only reason for its placement where it is as will be seen later when the placement of the other courtyard furniture is described.

⁹ (con't) **For the south side**

liphat negev temanah, literally "The south side upon the right." The tabernacle faced east and so it was regarded as if looking from the west to the east from the Lord's vantage point, not from man's which would be entering with the south on the left. And as is the same with the description of the tabernacle, the instructions for the south side are mentioned first, then the north side, then the west side, and finally the east is described last.

⁹ (con't) ***there shall be hangings for the court made of fine woven linen,***

An unusual word, different from the curtains previously described is introduced here. It is *qela* which means "a hanging" or "a sling" for slinging stones. It comes from the verb *qala* which means "to carve" or "to sling a stone." The Greek translation of the OT uses the word *istia*, or "sails" to describe it.

Charles Ellicott says that it "seems to designate a coarse sail-cloth, woven with interstices, through which what went on inside the court might be seen." Like the tabernacle, the construction of these hangings was to be of fine woven linen.

As this entire sanctuary pictures both the work of Christ and the process of redemption, the picture this is making should be obvious. The fine linen, just like before, represents righteousness. That is stated explicitly in Revelation 19:8 –

“And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.” Jubilee Bible

The fact that it could be seen through, and yet keep people from entering in is to show that even though Christ’s work is separate from the world, it is visible to all who are outside in the world. The process of redemption, leading to righteousness, and our inclusion in the body of Christ, is not to be hidden away, but to be transparent to all who are looking.

⁹ (con’t) **one hundred cubits long for one side.**

The number one hundred can be obtained in several ways. The most obvious is 10×10. Ten is the perfection of Divine order, and so the length is simply that thought squared. The first ten is given as a first type of the whole. The length in feet, as I said a while ago, would be about 50 yards long. The hangings were to go all the way down the length of the court on the south side.

¹⁰ **And its twenty pillars and their twenty sockets *shall be* bronze.**

As has been seen, *nekhoshet*, or bronze, pictures judgment. The hangings of the court were to be supported by bronze. This indicates that what is outside requires judgment in order to become righteous and what is inside is righteous because of the judgment which has allowed one to come inside.

This is why the brazen altar was first described. It is also why the brazen altar is located where it is in the courtyard. Just so you know, some translations don’t specify that the pillars are bronze, only the bases, but the Hebrew in the next clause follows the same pattern for the silver hooks and bands, both of which are silver. Therefore, the pillars are probably all bronze. However, verse 17, which is a summary verse, does not specifically say this.

¹⁰ (con’t) **The hooks of the pillars and their bands *shall be* silver.**

The hooks, or *vavim*, are the same things which were first described in verse 26:32. It is believed that they are hooks by which the hangings could then be attached onto the pillars. It is just a guess and no one is entirely sure what they are. *Vav* is also the sixth letter of the Hebrew aleph-bet and it has the meanings of “add,” “secure,” and “hook.” Whether in ancient writing or modern, it has the appearance of a peg or a hook of some sort.

The *vav* as a letter is used in Hebrew to serve as a connector to words and members within a sentence, and even the sentences of a discourse. Thus it draws them together. Therefore, hook or peg is the obvious and preferred meaning.

The word translated here as “bands” is *khashuk*. This is the first mention of them and again, it is not clear exactly what they are. Some see them, as connecting rods between the poles. Others as some second implement to connect the hangings to the poles. The word *khashuk* comes from the verb *khashak* which indicates to have a delight, have a desire, long for, or set in love. That in turn comes from a primitive root which figuratively means to join in love or delight in. For this reason, I would suggest that they were either silver connecting rods, or silver eyelets which would be woven into the hangings and upon which the hangings would then be connected to the silver hooks.

As has been seen, silver pictures redemption. This then makes the obvious picture. The bronze is for judgment upon which redemption is secured and from which righteousness hangs. It is a logical progression of the process of right-standing with God. As Arthur Pink says –

“There is an inseparable connection between Christ our Righteousness and Christ our Redeemer: these two must never be separated. Righteousness could never have been imputed to us unless the Lord Jesus had ransomed us by His blood.” A.W. Pink

¹¹ Likewise along the length of the north side *there shall be* hangings one hundred *cubits* long, with its twenty pillars and their twenty sockets of bronze, and the hooks of the pillars and their bands of silver.

The instructions for the north side match those of the south side. Therefore, there are now a total of 40 pillars and 40 sockets.

¹² “And along the width of the court on the west side *shall be* hangings of fifty cubits, with their ten pillars and their ten sockets.

The west side was to be one half the length of the south and north sides. Therefore, there are only 10 pillars and 10 sockets. What is noticeable here is that there is no mention of either the materials to be used for them, and there is no mention of silver hooks or bands. But, we will see in verse 17 that they are of the same materials.

And what should be highlighted is that almost all depictions of the courtyard show one pole in each corner of the hangings. Because of this, there are only 48 poles displayed.

Or some show a total of 21 poles on the north and south in order to have 20 hangings. Thus, there would be 51 poles for these three sides.

Both are incorrect. It says there are ten pillars and sockets on the west and so there are a total of 50 sockets so far. The distance is reckoned not by the hangings, but by the pillars and sockets.

¹³ The width of the court on the east side *shall be fifty cubits.*

liphat qedemah mitsrakhah – “The side front eastward.” The front side of the tabernacle faces east, towards the rising sun. Unlike Egypt which worshipped the sun as it arose, the people of Israel would worship towards the Lord with their back to the sun. This was to prevent the idolatry of sun worship, something actually seen as a reason for the destruction of Jerusalem in Ezekiel 8 –

Then He said to me, “Have you seen *this*, O son of man? Turn again, you will see greater abominations than these.” ¹⁶ So He brought me into the inner court of the Lord’s house; and there, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, *were* about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, and they were worshiping the sun toward the east.

¹⁷ And He said to me, “Have you seen *this*, O son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence; then they have returned to provoke Me to anger. Indeed they put the branch to their nose. ¹⁸ Therefore I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them.” Ezekiel 8:15-18

Like the west, the width of the courtyard is fifty cubits total. The number “50 is the number of jubilee or deliverance. It is the *issue* of 7 x 7 (7²), and points to deliverance and rest following on as the result of the perfect consummation of time” (Bullinger). The depth of the courtyard looks to the perfection of Divine order while the width of it points to deliverance and rest as of the perfect consummation of time. Together, the courtyard would be 5000 square cubits in size.

¹⁴ The hangings on *one side of the gate shall be fifteen cubits, with their three pillars and their three sockets.*

What we have being described here is the means of access into the courtyard. From one corner, there would be hangings like those on the other three sides. These would be fifteen cubits in length and would stand on three pillars in three sockets. The word translated here as “side” is *katheph*. It is a new word in the Bible and it means “shoulder” or “shoulder blade,” and hence, a “side.”

Again, the materials for the sockets are surprisingly not named here, nor are any hooks or bands. However, they will be specified in verse 17. Also, almost every depiction shows three hangings being represented. This is incorrect. There would be two hangings on three pillars and sockets. We are now to 53 pillars and sockets.

¹⁵ And on the other side *shall be* hangings of fifteen *cubits*, with their three pillars and their three sockets.

Like the first side of verse 14, the opposite side will be the same. There would be three pillars and their sockets which were connected by two hangings of linen. The fifteen cubits of each side means that the opening for the gate will be twenty cubits. In all, we now have 56 pillars and sockets.

Before looking at the next verse, we can deduce that the total length of the linen hangings is 280 cubits. This is a multiple of 7x4x10. This then would be a picture of *spiritual perfection in creation* which is *according to Divine order*. This is something that the tabernacle actually claims to be. It is the place where the Lord dwelt on earth. Interestingly, it is the same length as the curtains which overspread the tabernacle. Those presented Christ in a way that the world couldn't see, being covered over. However, the white curtains are evident to any and all in view. Thus, they picture Christ whose purity of nature was apparent to any who saw Him.

This is evident throughout the gospels, but a few examples are that Jesus asked, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” in John 8:46, None could. Pilate likewise confessed that he found no fault in Him. The exterior of the sanctuary is that which is seen realized in the eyes of those who beheld Christ. As E. Dennett says –

“Not a single speck could be detected upon the fine twined linen of His holy life, His life of practical righteousness which flowed from the purity of His being” E. Dennett

¹⁶ “For the gate of the court *there shall be* a screen twenty cubits long,

The opening to the courtyard is 20 cubits in length. However, there is a screen which is at the opening which is 20 cubits long. Most depictions of this screen have it evenly lined up with the other hangings and then some type of opening in it by which people could enter.

The KJV confuses the wording here, and for the screen in Exodus 26 for entry into the holy place, by calling them the same term as the rest of the tabernacle, “hangings.” However, it then calls this a “curtain” in Numbers 3:26. It is not precise or consistent in the translation, thus making it difficult to know what is what. It is not a great translation here.

¹⁶ (con’t) **woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen,**

The same colors previously used for the colors of the tabernacle are prescribed for this screen. It is to be of blue, representing the law, of purple representing royalty and the prerogatives of royalty – upholding the law, executing war, and judging; and also of scarlet which is the result of war and shedding blood. With these, it is to be woven with fine linen. All of these picture the work of Christ.

¹⁶ (con’t) **made by a weaver.**

maaseh roqem – “worked embroider.” The word *raqam* is a verb which means “to variegate color,” and so it is translated variously as “an embroiderer,” “a weaver,” or “with needlework.” It is used only one time other than in the building of the tabernacle where it says this in Psalm 139 –

“I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made;

Marvelous are Your works,

And *that* my soul knows very well.

¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from You,

When I was made in secret,

And **skillfully wrought** in the lowest parts of the earth.” Psalm 139:14, 15

Therefore, the screen is something the weaver would skillfully and meticulously fashion according to Moses’ instructions. As there is only one entry point to the courtyard, and because the materials and colors picture Christ, it is an indication that there is but one way to approach the Lord and that is through the work of Christ.

What is seen here in the *shaar*, or gate, is reflective of what was proclaimed by Jacob after his night of sleeping on the stone outside of Luz. Using the same word after his vision in the night, we read –

“Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, ‘Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know *it*.’¹⁷ And he was afraid and said, ‘How awesome *is* this place! This *is* none other than the house of God, and this *is* the **gate** of heaven!’”

-Genesis 28:16, 17

As John later reveals, the ladder which ascended to heaven in his dream was a picture of Christ. The gate, or door (it is the same word in Greek and Hebrew), is also a picture of Him as He proclaimed –

“I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.” John 10:9

The courts of heaven are available, but only through one access point. The Door is Christ. But the fact that Christ is there is a point of grace all by itself. This screen is 20 cubits in length. According to Bullinger, the number 20 signifies *expectancy*. And this is exactly what one would have as they approached the beautiful weavings, expectancy. Every detail, in one way or another, points to Christ and everything about this marvelous edifice fits perfectly into what all other numbers of the Bible clearly show. The wisdom behind each item, in size, color, or material is set to the tune of perfection.

¹⁶ (con’t) **It shall have four pillars and four sockets.**

The woven screen is to be twenty cubits long and it will stand on four sockets. Nothing is stated about how one gains access into the courtyard. Sometimes depictions show the screens fully displayed but people walking around inside, as if they had to continuously lift or pull back the screen in order to get in.

Other depictions show the screen furled up or back at the center for people to walk in. This may be the case, but it also might be that the screen is one continuous piece on the four pillars which is then offset from the rest of the hangings. The reason why I say this is because of what it says in Ezekiel 46:9 –

“But when the people of the land come before the Lord on the appointed feast days, whoever enters by way of the north gate to worship shall go out by way of the south gate; and whoever enters by way of the south gate shall go out by way

of the north gate. He shall not return by way of the gate through which he came, but shall go out through the opposite gate.”

It would seem logical that people would enter the gate at one side and exit at the other by walking between the openings at either side. There is still only one entry, but the screen would remain free standing and the weavings would never be hidden from view.

This is only me speculating, but it would alleviate unnecessary handling of the screens and maintain their overall beauty. No matter what, the screen is to be supported on four pillars in four sockets. This now makes 60 pillars and sockets for the courtyard.

It is obvious that a pillar is a picture of support and of strength. There are sixty pillars standing in sixty sockets to support and sustain the walls of the court of the tabernacle. A particular verse comes to mind concerning this –

“Who *is* this coming out of the wilderness
Like pillars of smoke,
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,
With all the merchant’s fragrant powders?
⁷ Behold, it *is* Solomon’s couch,
With sixty valiant men around it,
Of the valiant of Israel.
⁸ They all hold swords,
Being expert in war.
Every man *has* his sword on his thigh
Because of fear in the night.” Song of Solomon 3:6, 7

Surprisingly the couch of Solomon, meaning the king of Israel, is said to be coming out of the wilderness, just as the tabernacle came forth out of the wilderness. A palanquin which is used for carrying a king is actually a curtained litter. The symbolism is the same as the tabernacle which was a curtained edifice carried throughout the wilderness.

There is the King of Israel, being carried about on the shoulders of the Levites, and when stationed, He is surrounded by sixty mighty pillars. Such is the nature of the tabernacle in which He dwelt. However, there is more.

It is also assumed that these sixty pillars are a picture of the sixty Hebrew letters of the *birkat kohanim*, or the high priestly blessing, found in Numbers 6. It would be from within these courts that this blessing would come from –

בְּרַכָּךָ יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ :
יְאֵר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחֲנֶנֶךָ :
יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ
וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם :

“The LORD bless you and keep you;
²⁵ The LORD make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
²⁶ The LORD lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.” Numbers 6:24-26

Further the number sixty points to grace and government (5) x (12). Thus it is again a picture of the grace of Christ who reigns in righteousness. He is the wall which surrounds us.

¹⁷ All the pillars around the court shall have bands of silver; their hooks *shall be* of silver and their sockets of bronze.

For whatever reason, the materials for the sockets, bands, and hooks were left off of the west and east end details. Now, this clarifies what they all are made of. However, the material for the pillars is not mentioned. It is for this reason that one can only speculate that they are made of brass. The wording of verses 10 & 11 in Hebrew leave the possibility open that they are not made of brass at all.

¹⁸ The length of the court *shall be* one hundred cubits, the width fifty throughout, and the height five cubits, *made of* fine woven linen, and its sockets of bronze.

The total area of the court is 5000 cubits square. With the additional 5 cubits in height due to the height which is now mentioned, it would equal a total of 25,000 cubed cubits. Interestingly, the total district which surrounds the place of the Lord as recorded in Ezekiel 48 says –

“The entire district *shall be* twenty-five thousand *cubits* by twenty-five thousand *cubits*, foursquare. You shall set apart the holy district with the property of the city.” Ezekiel 48:20

Therefore, the number 25,000 is not without significance to the Lord. The number 5000 squared cubits, as we saw earlier, pointed to the perfection of Divine order and deliverance and rest as of the perfect consummation of time. If we add in grace, represented by the number five, we see that the total area of the courtyard speaks of Divine order, deliverance and rest, through a process of grace.

With the exception of the tent curtains of the tabernacle from Exodus 26:2, all of the measurements of both the tabernacle and court area are either five cubits or a multiple of five. Thus, the entire pattern speaks of grace in one form or another.

As the height of the outer court hangings is only five cubits, and the tabernacle boards were 10 cubits, the tent would be easily visible from outside of the court hangings.

¹⁹ All the utensils of the tabernacle for all its service, all its pegs, and all the pegs of the court, *shall be of bronze.*

Everything made of metal which is associated with the workings of the tabernacle was to be bronze. These utensils wouldn't be the things for ceremonial use, but for the care and stability of the tabernacle itself. They would certainly include things like knives, hammers, shovels, picks, and axes that would be needed for repairing, setting up, and taking down the tabernacle.

The peg, or *yathed*, is introduced here. It signifies a nail, shovel, pin, or stake. It comes from a word which means to pin through, and so it means especially a "peg." Even these were of bronze.

The word is mentioned twice, signifying two different things. First it says "of the tabernacle" when mentioning pegs. Then it says "and all the pegs of the court." What it implies is that the pegs which were staked in the ground would be bronze, even for the ropes connected to the tabernacle itself, as well as all of the pillars of the courtyard.

There is nothing wrong with this view. Even though all of the things associated with the tabernacle were of either gold or silver, the pegs being bronze would not in any way diminish the picture of the holiness of the Lord.

As in all cases, the bronze symbolizes judgment. As the pegs which touched the earth are bronze, so it is a picture of the feet of Christ in judgment. This is seen in Revelation 2:18 –

“These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:” Revelation 2:18

Before we go on to the second section, we should take the time to note that the entire court, including the tabernacle, was simply set on bare ground. It is thus an indication that no matter where one is within the compound, there is nothing on earth which can satisfy us. Instead, we are to see and look to Christ.

In Isaiah 53:2, he is called “a Root out of dry ground.” The tabernacle standing, as it were, out of dry ground, pictures Christ. Standing in the courts on that arid ground one would realize that only when looking toward the Lord, there behind the veil and dwelling in the gold-lined room where He rested, is there anything of true value.

The entranceway to the compound was adorned with the colors of His kingship and authority, but once inside, each step is given to tantalize the soul to go a step further... paradise awaits up ahead; there behind the veil! This is why the psalmist said –

“How lovely *is* Your tabernacle,
O Lord of hosts!
² My soul longs, yes, even faints
For the courts of the Lord;
My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.
³ Even the sparrow has found a home,
And the swallow a nest for herself,
Where she may lay her young—
Even Your altars, O Lord of hosts,
My King and my God.
⁴ Blessed *are* those who dwell in Your house;
They will still be praising You. Selah” Psalm 84:1-4

*How lovely is Your dwelling place, O Lord
How marvelous are Your courts which do surround
And how beautiful is Your gate, it pulls my heart toward
The marvelous place, there on the dry ground
I long to enter into the place where You dwell
And to smell the burning of the sacrifice
Accept my offering O Lord, and be pleased to tell
That we are again in fellowship, so sweet and so nice*

*How lovely is Your dwelling place, my God
I long to stay here with You for eternal days
And to gaze upon the beauty of my Lord
And with my soul, forever to sing Your praise*

II. The Maintenance of the Lamp (verses 20 & 21)

²⁰ “And you shall command the children of Israel that they bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light,

Suddenly, and even with surprising abruptness, the maintenance of the Menorah comes back into focus. Just as chapter 25 closed out with the requirements for the construction of the Menorah, the requirements for its maintenance will close out this chapter.

The words are given as a command to the people. They are expected to bring “pure oil of pressed olives for the light.” The word “pure” is the adjective *zak*. The word “pressed” is not a good translation. Rather, it should say “beaten.” It is the adjective *kathith*. Both are introduced into the Bible in this verse.

Zak will be used just 11 times and it indicates something clean, clear, or pure. This would be the finest oil possible. Rather than being pressed under heavy stones, it would probably be gently beaten in a pounding mortar, just enough to break the skin.

From there the full olives would be placed in a strainer of some sort, like a wicker basket in order to allow their juice to drip through. The pure liquid would simply run through that and into a bowl. From there, the purest oil would float to the top and be skimmed off. From this, the anticipated result would be oil with no impurities at all.

Kathith – will be used just five times and it indicates something beaten. It is only used in connection with the olives that have been made into oil. The process of beating the olives is what the adjective implies. The oil which is expected would usually come from unripe fruit. It would come out clear and without color and it would give a pure, bright light and have very little smoke.

²⁰ (con’t) **to cause the lamp to burn continually.**

There is debate as to whether the lamp was to burn continually, day and night, or if it was to burn every night continually. It appears from the next verse, and from Exodus 30:8 and Leviticus 24:3 that the Menorah only burnt throughout the night.

Later writers such as Josephus said that three of the lamps burned during the day and all of them at night, but this is not to be found in Scripture. It may have been a later tradition added into the rituals.

The word for burn here means “to ascend up.” It doesn’t mean to burn as if to consume. Instead it is a word which is normally used to express an action, such as the burning of a sacrifice which is offered to the Lord. It could thus be paraphrased to say, “...to cause the lamp to *ascend* to the Lord continually.”

²¹ In the tabernacle of meeting, outside the veil which *is* before the Testimony,

These words are given after mentioning the obtaining of oil that it is for the lamp which is in the tabernacle of meeting. In other words, the Lord is being specific that this is the lamp He is referring to. Because of the abrupt change in the subject, this is being made clear to Moses now. It is the lamp which was already described and which is in the tabernacle, outside the veil, and before the Testimony. As John Lange says –

“In speaking now exclusively of the features of the ritual worship, it is to be observed that we must distinguish the general worship of the house of God from the specific, Levitical worship, the sacrificial ritual described in Leviticus.” John Lange

Further, the term *ohel mowed*, or “tent of meeting” is used for the first time in Scripture. After this, it will become a common term. The KJV and NKJV get a demerit in their translation for saying “tabernacle of meeting.” The word *ohel* means “tent.”

²¹ (con’t) Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening until morning

The reason for the sudden jump to the oil for the lamp is now seen in these words. They are a preemptory look into what will next be detailed by the Lord to Moses. Although it has not yet been stated, Aaron and his sons will be selected to have the priesthood.

Beginning in the next chapter, the garments and ornaments for that priesthood will be detailed. Because of this, the special duty which highlights their priesthood and which illuminates the Holy Place, is mentioned first in preparation for that commission. This selection will be noted with the first words of Chapter 28, which say –

“Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest, Aaron *and* Aaron’s sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.” Exodus 28:1

Each step is methodically placed and structured to show intent, and each passage demonstrates immense wisdom.

21 (con’t) **before the Lord.**

This is now the first time that name Yehovah, or the LORD, has been mentioned since 25:1. The burning of the lamp is of particular interest to the Lord. Again, John Lange provides an excellent insight into why the oil, lamp, and Lord have all been brought into the narrative at this time, which is just before the naming of the selection of Aaron and his sons –

“The first condition of life, in the house of the Lord as well as elsewhere, is light; and the prerequisite of that is oil. Light is the spirit in action, symbolized by oil, which is a symbol of the spiritual life itself. The first business of the priest was to be to prepare and produce light—even in the Old Testament. How is it in this respect with the sacrificial priesthood of the present time? The text says that this is to be a perpetual statute.”
John Lange

The first command that was given after the creation of the universe is found in Genesis 1:3 –

“Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.” Genesis 1:3

Now, the first command for the care of the Most Holy things, even prior to the naming of the high priest, was to have there be light. About 1500 years later, we will see what this light pictures as it flows from the pen of John concerning Jesus –

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” John 1:4, 5

And then on the last page of the Bible, we will see that the same light, which this pictures, will shine forevermore –

“There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.” Revelation 22:5

As I said, there is design, intent, and wisdom seen in this seemingly misplaced passage of Scripture.

^{21 (fin)} ***It shall be a statute forever to their generations on behalf of the children of Israel.***

The lighting and maintenance of the lamp was to be *olam*, or forever to their generations. The word *olam* indicates that which is concealed. It is an indeterminate amount of time which simply extends on without knowing when it will end. Hence, the term “forever” is used.

In this case, forever is to be taken in the sense of the duration of the covenant which comprises the words we are looking at. As the covenant is annulled in Christ, then it is no longer a requirement. But for as long as the generations of the law were to remain, the statute was in force for the children of Israel.

Christ is the true Lamp, the Bible is the record of who He is, and the Holy Spirit is one who illuminates Scripture which points us to Him. He is the light of the world, and He is the fulfillment of all that these shadows only picture. Every detail displays to us hints of Him – His coming, His work, and His glory. It is all there for those who are willing to just look. He is there.

If you have never reached out and received Christ, please don't wait another day. All the head knowledge in the world, and all of the good deeds you could ever do, will never get you one step closer to God. Only Christ can do that. So reach out to Him today...

Closing Verse: *“Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,*

And into His courts with praise.

Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

⁵ *For the Lord is good;*

His mercy is everlasting,

And His truth endures to all generations.” Psalm 100:4, 5

Next Week: Exodus 28:1-14 *Intricate stuff we will be showed...* (Garments for the Priesthood – the Ephod) (76th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it

on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Court and the Lamp

You shall also make the court of the tabernacle
For the south side there shall hangings for the court be
Made of fine woven linen
One hundred cubits long for one side, as instructed by Me
And its twenty pillars
And their twenty sockets bronze shall be
The hooks of the pillars
And their bands shall be silver, you see

Likewise along the length
Of the north side there shall be, just as I instruct you
Hangings one hundred cubits long
With its twenty pillars and their twenty sockets of bronze too

And the hooks of the pillars and their bands of silver also
These accompany them, as you now know

And along the width of the court
On the west side shall hangings of fifty cubits be
With their ten pillars and their ten sockets
Heed these instructions carefully

The width of the court, as you can see
On the east side shall fifty cubits be

The hangings on one side of the gate
Shall be fifteen cubits, as I now instruct you
With their three pillars and their three sockets
This is what you are to do

And on the other side shall be
Hangings of fifteen cubits also
With their three pillars and their three sockets
Follow each step carefully as you go

For the gate of the court there shall be a screen twenty cubits long
Woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread
And fine woven linen, made by a weaver
It shall have four pillars and four sockets, just as I have said

All the pillars around the court
Shall have bands of silver, such shall it be
Their hooks shall be of silver
And their sockets of bronze; thus you shall do certainly
The length of the court shall be one hundred cubits
The width fifty throughout, this is its size
And the height five cubits, made of fine woven linen
And its sockets of bronze, as to you I apprise

All the utensils of the tabernacle
For all its service, every thing as I say
All its pegs and all the pegs of the court
Shall be of bronze, as I now relay

And you shall command the children of Israel
That they bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light
To cause the lamp to burn continually
Yes, it is to burn throughout all the night

In the tabernacle of meeting
Outside the veil which is before the Testimony, hear My word
Aaron and his sons shall tend it
From evening until morning before the Lord
It shall be a statute forever, this I now to you tell
To their generations on behalf of the children of Israel

Thank You, Lord for the wonderful detail we see
Every word is precious for us to ponder
And all of it points to Jesus ever so marvelously
Thank You for sharing with us such splendid wonder

Hear our thanks as we praise you for all of our days
Forever and ever we shall sing to You with joyous praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 28:1-14 (THE EPHOD)

The first four of our verses today give orders for the ordination of the line of priests who will serve before God on behalf of Israel. They are somewhat like the first verses of Chapter 25 which detailed the request for an offering for the tabernacle and its furnishings. Immediately after those verses, the account jumped right into the details for the construction of the Ark.

Now we move from the tabernacle itself to the garments for those who will serve in the tabernacle. And again, there is a short introduction of sorts before the first garment is described. The Bible is being exceedingly methodical in how it presents each step of the process.

These words are included in the Law of Moses and these implements, the furniture, the house, the garments, etc. are especially important for the administration of that law. But even more, as we have seen a jillion times already, they are especially important because they ultimately picture Christ and His work.

There is beauty and harmony each step of the way because there is beauty and harmony in Christ. He is the epitome of all perfection and therefore we would do well to consider each word as a joyous taste of a heavenly meal which is served by Him.

Concerning the priesthood of Israel, it only anticipates the eternal priesthood of Jesus. That priesthood is most notably recorded in the book of Hebrews. The term “priest” is used numerous times there to describe Him as our High Priest. The first time it is used is to show that He is a High Priest not unlike us, and thus not unlike the high priest of Israel.

Text Verse: *“Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.” Hebrews 2:17, 18*

Where in Scripture could we go to find more comforting words! The high priest of Israel was just a guy with a specific job. He was fallible and he was prone to any given weakness that any other person was prone to. He could sympathize, therefore, with those he interceded for.

And so to be like us who are fallen and in need of empathy, Christ came and dwelt among us as a human being. He suffered and He was tempted. He can understand what we are going through because of this and He is able to aid us in our weakness. But because He never succumbed to the temptations He faced, we have a far greater High Priest than Israel of Old.

If we are His, He will never get short tempered with us; He will never be too weak to carry out His duties; and He will never let our names be dropped from the rolls of heaven. Once we are His, we are that way for ever. This, and many, other pictures of His work for us are seen in today's verses. Yes, it's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Priesthood for Israel (verses 1-4)

1“Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel,

Here Moses is instructed to “take” Aaron and his sons. The word used means “to cause to draw near.” There is elegance and a formality concerning the coming ordination of the priestly line. They are being drawn out of the entire congregation of the children of Israel in order to serve before the Lord.

Up until this point, Moses was the sole person to act on behalf of the Lord in all such matters. However, with the enactment of the covenant, a line of priests would be necessary to mediate between the Lord and the people for the duration of the covenant. This honor is now to be bestowed upon the line of Aaron.

1 (con't) that he may minister to Me as priest,

The word for “minister as a priest” is a single word, *kahan*. It is a verb which is introduced into the Bible here which means “to serve as priest.” It comes from the word *kohen* which is a noun first used to describe Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18. Since then it has been used to describe other priests in both Egypt and in Midian.

It is where the somewhat common Jewish name Cohen comes from today. They descend from this priestly line of Aaron as evidenced by modern DNA analysis. This line is now being prepared for ordination, but before that occurs, which is described in the next chapter, the implements of their priesthood will first be detailed.

This is the same type of process as has already been seen in the description of the implements for the tabernacle before the description of the tabernacle itself. Everything is following an exacting and precise pattern.

As Aaron is being drawn near to Moses, who is the Lord's prophet, it is showing that, "The prophetic order is therefore perpetually the medium through which, and the condition on which, the priestly order officiates" (Lange). Moses was also the mediator of the covenant. Because of this, it is he to whom the priests must draw near.

¹ (con't) **Aaron and Aaron's sons:**

Though there is a succession of priests from Aaron, it is still only one priestly line. In contradistinction to this, the prophetic office is not determined by a single line. The Lord chose His prophets not by line of succession, but by His spoken word through them.

This is why in the case of the priesthood, it is not just Aaron who is called, but also his sons who are to be his legal successors to him. Until he leaves the office, they will assist him in his duties. The actual ordination of the priests won't occur until the tabernacle is completed. It will be detailed in Leviticus 8. It should be noted that Aaron is called for what is coming. He did not take the task upon himself, as is noted in Hebrews 5:4 –

"And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was."

¹ (con't) **Nadab, Abihu,**

The sons of Aaron have already been mentioned, but there will be a marked difference in their futures. These two will not serve long. During the time of their ordination, they will be destroyed by the Lord for not following the proper procedures laid out for the priesthood. That is seen in Leviticus 10 –

Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. ² So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. ³ And Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord spoke, saying:

'By those who come near Me
I must be regarded as holy;
And before all the people

I must be glorified.”

So Aaron held his peace. Leviticus 10:1-3

¹ (con't) Eleazar, and Ithamar.

Due to the death of the two elder sons of Aaron, the priestly line will continue only through these two sons. The high priestly line will follow directly through Eleazar, but at a later time it will pass to the line of Ithamar, to which it appears Eli the last judge of Israel belonged.

² And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother,

The garments are not holy in and of themselves, but they are deemed holy by the purpose for which they will be used, which is ministering in the holy places of the tabernacle, and for conducting the sacred rites of the priesthood.

These garments would not have been worn at just any time, but only during the times when they performed their official functions. This is seen, for example, in Ezekiel 44:19 where it is explicitly stated. It should be noted that like all other aspects of the worship of Israel, no such mandates are given to the church.

These things of the law were given as pictures of Christ to come. In Him all of the details are realized in their fullness. Now, in the church, we can worship at any time, in any place, and without the legal constraints of certain attire or performing certain functions. The New Testament gives very few guidelines concerning the way in which a church is to be conducted. Those that are given are generally prohibitions rather than mandates.

² (con't) for glory and for beauty.

l'kavod u-letipharet – There is a real sense of honor and dignity in these words. Glory or *kavod*, comes from *kavad*, meaning “heaviness” or “weight.” But this is in the sense of something that is splendid. Thus we use the term “glory.” The second word, *tipharah*, is introduced into the Bible here. It means “beauty.” It comes from the verb *pa'ar*, to glorify.

The clothes were intended to exalt the position of the priest so that they would maintain the respect of the people. They would be offset and thus deemed holy rather than common. They were also given to make the entire system of their duties more beautiful.

The sacrificing of animals might seem like a task which would necessitate the wearing of some type of common or even purposely harsh garments. But it was a sacred duty and one which was to be held in high esteem by the people. In requiring such beautiful garments, the tasks would be elevated to their proper weight in the eyes of the people.

This type of sentiment is repeated several times in the Psalms and in this verse from 1 Chronicles 16 –

“Give to the Lord the glory *due* His name;
Bring an offering, and come before Him.
Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!” 1 Chronicles 16:9

John Gill notes that these garments “were typical of the glory and beauty of Christ’s human nature, which was as a garment put on, and put off, and on again, and in which he officiated as a priest, and still does; and which is now very glorious, and in which he is fairer than any of the children of men; and of the garments of salvation, and robe of righteousness, in which all his people, his priests, appear exceeding glorious and beautiful, even in a perfection of beauty.”

³ So you shall speak to all *who are* gifted artisans,

kal khakme lev – all the wise of heart. In the Bible, it is the heart which is considered as the well-spring of wisdom and understanding. And biblical wisdom is that which governs and refines practical intelligence. A man can have high intelligence and yet not have practical intelligence. Despite all of his knowledge then, he is a man lacking wisdom. Therefore, when one uses an artistic skill in an inventive or intricate way, they are considered as wise of heart and thus a “gifted artisan.” One can make a plain old square basket out of wicker work, or they can make an intricate and marvelously designed basket out of the same materials.

Fine, precise, and beautiful work is what is notable and enduring. One can admire someone’s work from thousands of years earlier if it was done with care and wisdom. Those things which are simply mechanical and without true refinement may have utilitarian value, but they lack any sense of that which is glorious.

This is why the heart is considered the seat of wisdom. Today, we look at the brain as the seat of intelligence and the heart as the seat of emotion, but if we are truly emotional about what we are doing, we will do it to the utmost of our ability. As this is

the case, we are attempting to put into the use of our intelligence and skills that which conveys a sense of wisdom.

In the case of what is to be made for the priestly garments, they were to go beyond mere utility and enter into the realm of true beauty and glory.

^{3 (con't)} **whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom,**

This verse leaves open an immense question which is not directly answered anywhere else. Were the artisans filled with a spirit of wisdom for this particular task at this particular time, or were they simply people who had a gift because of their makeup as individual humans.

Exodus 31:1-5 seems to state that one man, Bezalel, was especially infused with the Spirit of God for his duties. And yet, there are others in the world that can do the same things he has done. Should I wish to speculate, which I do and so I will, we all have gifts which are unique. Our makeup, and indeed all things, originally stem from God.

In the case of the workmen, they were simply people who had special abilities because of who they were as individuals. Can we say that those who built the atom bomb did it apart from the purposes of God? Can we say that those who designed the precision parts for the transmission in a car didn't serve a purpose in the march of time and human achievement that God foreknew would occur?

God has filled us all with wisdom according to His purposes. What we do with it will either glorify Him or not, but the intelligence and wisdom we have certainly came from Him. If He wants to supplement that directly through external inspiration such as in the case of Solomon, that is His prerogative, but we shouldn't assume that this is always the case.

Therefore, it is incumbent on us to use the wisdom that God has given us in the most effective way we can. If we feel we lack in that department, then we can petition for His hand to increase it –

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” James 1:5

^{3 (con't)} **that they may make Aaron's garments, to consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest.**

The making of the garments, beyond their regular use and purpose, is specifically said to be as a part of his consecration. In other words, the office of priest was not established for Aaron, nor is it defined by him. Rather, he is invested with the office according to the calling of God and in connection with the bestowal of these garments. This isn't just speculation, but it is explicitly seen at the time of Aaron's death –

“Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up to Mount Hor; ²⁶ and strip Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; for Aaron shall be gathered *to his people* and die there.” Numbers 20:25, 26

The calling was of the Lord, the consecration was of the Lord, and the time for Aaron's duties to end – followed by the consecration of the next high priest – was according to the Lord. This is why I cited Hebrews 5:4 earlier. No man takes this priestly honor upon himself. Rather it is according to the call of God.

⁴ And these *are* the garments which they shall make:

Six items will be described here. A seventh is added in verse 36. These six garments are to adorn the high priest, picturing Christ the Man. The seventh is a golden plate which will read “HOLINESS TO THE LORD.” Thus, it brings in the idea of spiritual perfection; that which defines the very holiness of the Lord.

^{4 (con't)} a breastplate, an ephod,

Both of these were introduced in chapter 25 in the initial instructions for the collection of materials for what would later be described. What is rather unusual is that almost no specifics were mentioned as to what the materials were for with but a few exceptions, two of them being the ephod and the breastplate. Here is that original mandate from chapter 25:1-9 –

“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ² “Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering. ³ And this *is* the offering which you shall take from them: gold, silver, and bronze; ⁴ blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, fine linen, and goats' *hair*; ⁵ ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood; ⁶ oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the 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 show you, *that*

is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.”

What is also unusual is that in chapter 25 it first mentions the ephod and then the breastplate. However, they are reversed here. But then they are reversed again when the directions for making them are given in this chapter.

4 (con't) a robe,

The robe, or *meil*, is introduced here. It is a long garment that went down to the feet which would be worn under the ephod.

4 (con't) a skillfully woven tunic,

u-kethonet tashbets, this would be a checkered or embroidered garment as indicated by the words *tashbets*, which is only used here in the whole Bible. Josephus says it is “a tunic circumscribing or closely encompassing the body, and having tight sleeves for the arms.”

4 (con't) a turban,

mitsnepheth – another new word in the Bible. It will be used a total of 12 times in Exodus, Leviticus, and once in Ezekiel. It is an official turban worn by a high priest or a king.

4 (con't) and a sash.

v'avnet. The *avnet*, or sash is found for the first of 9 times here. Again, it will only be seen in Exodus, Leviticus, and once in Isaiah 22. It is a belt or a sash that is worn at the waist.

4 (con't) So they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons, that he may minister to Me as priest.

It is for this reason that all of this work is to be accomplished. They were to take part in the most solemn duties granted to man until the coming of Christ Himself. They were to minister to the Lord as a priestly line for the chosen people of God.

*Beautiful garments, so rich and glorious
To adorn the high priest of Israel
But they only point to our Lord victorious
In every detail there is a story to tell*

*In them we see His beauty, His splendor and glory
In them we see His work accomplished on behalf of us
Yes, in every detail there is a marvelous story
About the coming Christ; our Lord Jesus*

*And they tell yet more; that of which He does even now
They tell of His work interceding to the Father for us
For to Him God did all high priestly duties endow
Yes, He stands before His Father, our great Lord Jesus*

II. The Ephod and the Memorial Stones (verses 5-14)

⁵“They shall take the gold, blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and the fine linen,

There is a definite article in front of each category here. “They shall take ‘the’ gold, ‘the’ blue, etc...” This is because *v’hem yiqhu* – “And they shall take.” It is for this reason that they are used. The artisans who have been requested are to be given their materials from out of the offering noted at the beginning of chapter 25. The same materials for the tabernacle are to be used for the garments.

⁶and they shall make the ephod of gold, blue, purple, *and* scarlet *thread*, and fine woven linen,

The ephod is a sleeveless garment, basically a jerkin or a waistcoat. It is to be made of the same colors as the veil, but with the addition of gold thread added into it. The colors follow the same meaning as they did as before – divinity/royalty for the gold, the law for the blue; royalty for the purple – which is a combination of blue and red; war, blood, and judgment for the red; and finally righteousness for the woven linen.

Before going on, I already noted that it first said the ephod and then the breastplate in chapter 25. Then it said the breastplate and then the ephod in verse 4. Now, the ephod

is being described first. The two are being linked together in a manner quite similar to the Ark and the Mercy Seat.

The ephod will bear the breastplate just as the Ark bore the Mercy Seat. Though the Ark was described first, it is the Mercy Seat which crowns the Ark. The Ark embodies the law, thus the Old Covenant, while the Mercy Seat signifies the satisfaction of the law and the granting of the New Covenant.

So it is with the ephod and the breastplate. On the ephod will be two stones with the names of the children of Israel engraved on them. Thus it signifies the high priest's role to bear the sufferings and labors of his people. On the breastplate will be twelve stones which will be engraved with the names of the children of Israel. This then signifies that the high priest sympathizes with his people as an intercessor before God.

In both, the work of Christ is seen. First He bore our burdens, and then He became our intercessor. This is the reason for the order of each description. Marvelous wisdom is seen even in the order of how each thing is described to Moses.

⁶ (con't) **artistically worked.**

These are the same words, *maaseh khoshev*, or skillfully worked, that were used in Exodus 26:31 to describe the artistic weaving of the cherubim on the veil of the tabernacle. Intricate care and fine detail is to be used in the weaving of this ephod. This would have probably been woven with hand looms brought by the people when they departed Egypt.

⁷ **It shall have two shoulder straps joined at its two edges, and so it shall be joined together.**

What is believed to be the case here is that the ephod was two separate pieces of material – one which covered the back and one which covered the front. They were joined at the shoulders so that it would be pulled over the head and rest on the shoulders. From there the two halves would then be united by a band which will next be described.

If you think of the two halves of a coat of armor strapped together at the shoulders and then joined together after being put over the head, you can get the idea of what this was like.

⁸ And the intricately woven band of the ephod, which *is* on it, shall be of the same workmanship, *made of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread*, and fine woven linen.

The *kheshev* or “band” is introduced here. It will only be used eight times and only in connection with this ephod. It is the band or belt which will keep the two lower parts of the ephod held close to the body. This particular band is to be wrought with the same materials as the ephod itself.

It is believed to have been sewn onto the ephod at one point and then it could be wrapped around the body and secured by strings, or a button or some other way. Its use is seen at the time of the ordination of Aaron in Leviticus 8 –

“And he put the tunic on him, girded him with the sash, clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod on him; and **he girded him with the intricately woven band of the ephod**, and with it tied *the ephod* on him.” Leviticus 8:7

The idea of this band or “girdle” pictures “readiness for service.” This is a theme seen throughout Scripture. In one such instance, the most moving of all accounts is given in John where Christ girded Himself, or made Himself ready to serve, with a towel –

“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, ⁴ rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. ⁵ After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which He was girded.” John 13:3-5

The gold woven into this belt of the ephod anticipates the divine intervention of Christ for us. This is seen in Revelation 1:13 –

“...and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.”

It needs to be noted that the band is made of the same materials as the ephod. It then symbolizes that the services Christ now renders to us reflect His human/divine nature. Though ascended to heaven, the book of Hebrews says that He is there in the presence of God making intercession for us.

⁹ “Then you shall take two onyx stones

It isn't known what the *avne shoham*, or stones onyx, really are. The Greek translation of the OT says emeralds. However, the emerald was too hard to engrave at this time in history. Some say beryl, some onyx, some sardonyx, or some other stone. It would be good to not be dogmatic here.

⁹ (con't) **and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel:**

Whatever the stones were, their use is not in question. They were to be used for engraving. On them would be the names of the sons of Israel. What is always difficult to precisely determine is when the term "children of Israel" and "sons of Israel" should be used. In Hebrew, it is the same word – *bene yisrael*.

However, the picture the people collectively make is that of a group who is bound by the law and thus under a tutor. Paul explains this in Galatians 3. As they are under the law, using the term "**children** of Israel" is best when describing them as a people. However, in this case, the term "**sons** of Israel" seems better. It is the names of the twelve sons which are being engraved. Though they represent all of the people collectively, it is their individual names which are being engraved. Thus, translations that say "sons of Israel" more accurately reflect the intent of what is being said.

That may seem like nitpicking, but Paul is clear about the purpose of the law and those who live under the law. They are children being led by a tutor. They are not yet sons with full rights.

¹⁰ **six of their names on one stone and six names on the other stone,**

The names and their placement is actually a source of uncertainty. Are these the actual twelve sons of Israel which includes the name of Joseph and not the two adopted sons Ephraim and Manasseh? Or are they listed in his place and is Levi then dropped out? What seems most natural is that it is the literal 12 sons who issued from Israel. As Ephraim and Manasseh issue from Joseph, then they are contained within his seed and thus are reflected in his name.

¹⁰ (con't) **in order of their birth.**

This is translated from a single word – *k'towldotam*. The word means "according to the generations," and so translators say "birth." But scholars question whether it is according to the birth order or the order of priority given in Exodus 1 where the sons of

Jacob's wives are named first and then the sons of his concubines. Josephus states that they are according to their actual births regardless of mother. This seems to be the most probable alignment of their names.

¹¹ With the work of an engraver in stone,

The *kharash*, or “engraver” is introduced into the Bible here. The word can mean a fabricator of any material such as stone, wood, metal, etc. As stone is identified and the purpose is for engraving, then the term “engraver” is appropriate.

¹¹ (con't) *like the engravings of a signet, you shall engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel.*

Two more interesting words are included here. The *pittuakh*, or “engravings” is a noun which indicates what an engraver makes. It comes from the verb *pathakh*, which means “to appear,” and so you get the idea of the work of the engraver's hands having “appeared” as engravings.

The other word, *khotham*, indicates a signet. It has only been seen in Genesis 38:18 when Tamar, the daughter of Judah asked for his “signet, cord, and staff.” The work here is to be exceptionally fine and detailed. The names of the sons of Israel are to be clearly and precisely engraved on these two stones.

¹¹ (con't) *You shall set them in settings of gold.*

It's a fun sounding clause – *musabboth mishbetsowt zahav taaseh otam*. The word *musabbah* indicates “a reversal.” In other words, the back side of the stone will be set in a *mishbetsah*, or a surrounding, probably of filigree work.

¹² *And you shall put the two stones on the shoulders of the ephod as memorial stones for the sons of Israel.*

The KJV says “of memorial unto the children of Israel.” This is not correct. The stones were considered a reminder *to God*, not a reminder to the children of Israel. So Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord on his two shoulders as a memorial. However, the term “children of Israel” here is probably better. Though the names of the sons of Israel are recorded, they are recorded on behalf of the people collectively.

Therefore, as they are under the tutor of the law, it would not be incorrect to say “children” here instead of “sons.” In the end, this can be considered niggling over minutiae, but sometimes it is needed to get the best sense of what we are being taught through the symbols and pictures of these ancient passages.

These stones, resting on the shoulders of the high priest, were considered a reminder to God. They were for a memorial that the high priest was before Him, bearing the burden of them on his shoulders just as Christ bore our burdens on His. It is a picture of His mediatorial work for us before God the Father.

As the shoulder is the place of strength, this then pictures our perfect security in Christ. It is not our perseverance which saves us, but His. He is the one who bore our burdens, and He is the one who will continue to bear them until we arrive in our heavenly home. We are secure because of Him. As the names of the twelve sons are recorded on these stones, and as they are placed on the shoulders, it then reflects the sentiment of Isaiah 9:6 –

“For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

The number twelve signifies “perfection of government.” Thus this signifies Christ’s ministry as our perfect governmental leader.

¹³ You shall also make settings of gold,

There are two theories on what these settings are. The first is that they are settings for the stones themselves which were first named in verse 11. The second is that these are two different settings which are used specifically for the chains of the next verse to attach to. The purpose of which is to hold the breastplate to the ephod which will be described next.

The second option seems likely. They are a connecting part of the ephod, just as the crown molding was a connecting part of the Ark of the Covenant. The Mercy Seat sat in the molding, and in a similar fashion, the breastplate is attached by this socket and

chain. In other words, in both instances, the two objects are not truly complete with out one another.

¹⁴ and you shall make two chains of pure gold like braided cords,

The *sharsherah*, or “chain” is now mentioned here for the first of seven times. It comes from a word which means “root.” Thus, these chains entwine as a root would.

The chains are described by the adjective *tahor*, or pure. This word has not been seen since Chapter 25 when describing the things in the Holy Place. Thus, they are intended to picture the perfect purity of Christ’s divinity.

In this clause is a very rare word, found only here in Scripture, *migbaloth*. It is actually unknown what it means. Here it is translated as “braided cords.” Thus, the translators consider it as defining the word “chain.” However, it comes from the word *gebul*, or border, and so it could mean “of equal length.”

Either way, the intent is that these chains will be used to hold the breastplate onto the ephod. Either translation would work concerning what the chains are used for.

¹⁴ (fin) and fasten the braided chains to the settings.

The chains are to be fastened to the settings. It won’t be until verse 22 that the purpose is defined. As I said though, this is not unusual considering the fact that the ephod and the breastplate are actually two implements and yet they are incomplete without each other.

In picture, and which I will try to remember to repeat later when we describe the breastplate, Christ’s work of bearing our burdens is not complete without Christ’s work of interceding for us. Without the first, the second would not take effect, but without the second, the first would have been pointless.

It would make no sense for Christ to die for our sins if He were not to then intercede for us after we receive His finished work. And, it wouldn’t make sense for Christ to be our Mediator before God if we were not acceptable to God because of His completed work.

It is marvelous to see how these seemingly obscure pieces of furniture and clothing come to life when viewed through the finished work of Christ’s first advent and His ongoing work on our behalf. It is great stuff from an even greater God.

The amazing thing about these verses today is that everything about them points to Jesus and yet for 1500 years they really had no idea that this was the case. The high priest wore his garments, did his work, and probably never stopped to consider that each detail of what he wore would actually find its fulfillment in Christ.

Who would think! But now, with Christ having come, we can see that this is the case. As with each set of details, it calls out to us that God wants us to look for Him, to fix our eyes on Him, and to follow Him every moment of our lives. I would pray that this would be your one burning desire... pursue Christ! He is there in every detail. Call on Him and you too can be a part of what God has shown, in advance, that He would do for us. It is all about Him.

Closing Verse: *"The Lord reigns, He is clothed with majesty;
The Lord is clothed,
He has girded Himself with strength.
Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved.
²Your throne is established from of old;
You are from everlasting." Psalm 93:1, 2*

Next Week: *Study up these verses, this is your assignment...* Exodus 28:15-30 (The Breastplate of Judgment) (77th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Garments of the Priesthood

Now take Aaron your brother, as I to you tell
And his sons with him, from the oldest to the least
From among the children of Israel
That he may minister to Me as priest

Aaron and Aaron's sons, listed as they are
Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar

And you shall make holy garments
This you shall do

For Aaron your brother
For glory and for beauty, as I instruct you

So you shall speak to all who are gifted artisans
Whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, you see
That they may make Aaron's garments
To consecrate him, that he may as a priest minister to Me

And these are the garments
Which they shall make: according to these words to you
A breastplate, an ephod, a robe
A skillfully woven tunic, a turban, and a sash too

So they shall make holy garments
For Aaron your brother and his sons, as well
That he may minister to Me as priest
They shall follow the instructions that I now tell

They shall take the gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread too
And the fine linen as they are instructed to do

And they shall make the ephod
Of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread
And fine woven linen, artistically worked
Following the details as I have said

It shall have two shoulder straps
Joined at its two edges, is how it is to be
And so it shall be joined together
It shall be made thus accordingly

And the intricately woven band of the ephod
Which is on it, shall be
Of the same workmanship, made of gold
Blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, you see

Then you shall take two onyx stones as I now do tell
And engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel

Six of their names on one stone
And six names on the other stone
In order of their birth as is known

With the work of an engraver in stone
Like the engravings of a signet as well
You shall engrave the two stones
With the names of the sons of Israel

You shall set them in settings of gold
Ensure they do according to how they have been told

And you shall put the two stones as well
On the shoulders of the ephod
As memorial stones for the sons of Israel

So Aaron shall bear their names, so shall he do
Before the Lord as a memorial on his shoulders two

You shall also make settings of gold
And you shall make two chains, so shall it be
Of pure gold like braided cords
And fasten the braided chains to the settings, you see

Such are the garments of the high priest of Israel
And how beautiful they must have been to see
But they have an even greater story of which to tell
As they only foreshadow the work of Christ for you and me

Every detail gives us precious insights to delight
Things that provide our souls with surety
That through His work, all things have been made right
And that our future is secure, a Divine guarantee

Thank You, O God for these marvelous hints of Jesus
Written so long ago, and yet as new as the day before our eyes
They are an anchor for the expectant souls of each of us
As we wait upon His return; He our splendid prize

And because of Him we shall for all eternity give You our praise
Yes, we shall hail You O God because of Jesus for eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 28:15-30 (THE BREASTPLATE OF JUDGMENT)

There is a truth in the Bible that needs to be restated often, but which often goes unstated. God is Just. When sin is committed, and all sin, judgment must be rendered upon that sin. If the God we worship does not judge our sin, then He is not just, and we are worshipping the wrong God.

However, there is a truth which takes away the scary part for us. Judgment can be rendered in a substitute. If someone steps forward and pays my speeding fine (thank you very much!) then the demands of the law are met.

This same truth works in our relationship with God. He has allowed that Another can take our place in judgment. But, if that person has sin, then that judgment is not acceptable. This is why sacrificing babies doesn't atone for sin.

Sin travels from father to child. A baby descended from Adam with a human father inherits his father's sin. Slaying a baby for atonement doesn't atone for sin, it simply commits another sin. But Jesus came, born of a woman, and yet His Father is God. Thus no sin was transferred to Him.

As He was born under the law, He still had to be obedient to the law. The record of His life shows that He was. And so in His death, He could be, and He in fact is, a suitable Substitute for the sons of Adam – you and I. He took the judgment we deserve.

Text Verse: *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*

-Romans 8:28-30

Could it be that Paul's words are seen pictured in today's passage? The answer is yes. There is wonder and there is marvel in what we will look at today. Christ did the work, we receive the forgiveness. But even more, we are brought into son-ship with our heavenly Father. We are counted as precious gems, reflecting His glory. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Breastplate of Judgment (verses 15-21)

¹⁵ **“You shall make the breastplate of judgment.**

The *khoshen*, or breastplate, was introduced into the Bible in verse 25:7, but no explanation of it was given then. Now, this most important part of the high priest’s garments is described in minute, even exacting, details. Here a second word is used to describe it – *khoshen mishpat*; “Breastplate of judgment.”

Charles Ellicott notes that, “It was called ‘the ornament *of judgment*’ on account of its containing the Urim and Thummim, whereby God’s ‘judgments’ were made known to His people.” However, we will see that more than just the stones within this breastplate point to judgment. Its very dimensions and other aspects of it point to this as well. It will be used by the high priest when he is asked to seek the counsel of the Lord, when he is to render a particular judgment in a case, and when he sits as a judge when teaching the law. When controversies would arise, he could consult the breastplate. James Strong says that the word *khoshen*, translated here as “breastplate,” comes “From an unused root probably meaning to contain or sparkle; perhaps a pocket (as holding the Urim and Thummim), or rich (as containing gems).” It is used only of this item.

Though the word “breastplate” is not an exact translation, it describes the place where it is located and so it is an acceptable explanation for us. The Greek translation of the Old Testament calls it the *logeion*, meaning “oracle” because it is by this pouch that the Lord would give answer to inquires made of Him. A form of this word is used four times in the New Testament when speaking of the “oracles” of God, meaning Scripture. The word of God will transmit from the breastplate’s contents when needed.

¹⁵ (con’t) **Artistically woven according to the workmanship of the ephod you shall make it:**

The same words, *maaseh khoshev*, or “skillfully worked,” that were used for both the artistic weaving of the cherubim on the veil of the tabernacle, and for the ephod are used here. Intricate care and fine detail is to be used in the weaving of this breastplate. It would have probably been woven with hand looms brought by the people when they departed Egypt.

¹⁵ (con't) **of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and fine woven linen, you shall make it.**

The colors used here are the same as for that of the ephod. They follow the same meaning as they did before – divinity/royalty for the gold, the law for the blue; royalty for the purple – which is a combination of blue and red; war, blood, and judgment for the red; and finally righteousness for the woven linen.

¹⁶ **It shall be doubled into a square:**

The shape of this breastplate will be square, the same as the brazen altar and the same for the incense altar, which has not yet been described. The brazen altar signified judgment. The incense altar will signify Christ's intercessory work for us. Both of these roles are seen in the breastplate – judgment and intercession.

Being square, shows that these roles of judgment and intercession reach to the four corners of the earth without distinction or interruption. The scope of the significance of the breastplate is without limits.

Concerning this doubling over of the cloth, it's surprising how many scholars fail to see the reason for it. They say it is simply to strengthen the material to hold the weight of the stones which will be embroidered onto it. This has nothing to do with it. The reason is specifically stated in Leviticus 8:8 –

“Then he put the breastplate on him, and he put the Urim and the Thummim in the breastplate.” Leviticus 8:8

The breastplate serves as a pouch for the enigmatic Urim and Thummim which are used by the high priest to discern God's will.

¹⁶ (con't) **a span *shall be* its length, and a span *shall be* its width.**

The *zereth*, or span, is introduced into the Bible. It is a rare word which will be seen just seven times. It comes from *zarah* which means “to scatter.” Thus it is the distance between the tip of the little finger to the end of the outstretched thumb, as if the fingers are scattered.

If you take your hand in that fashion and place it on your arm at the tip of your middle finger, and then do the same where your hand ended, you will see that it will end at your elbow. In other words, a span is one half a cubit.

17 And you shall put settings of stones in it, four rows of stones:

There will be four rows of stones, three to a row, or twelve individual stones. The word for “row,” which is *tur*, is introduced into the Bible here. It comes from an unused root meaning to arrange in a regular manner. Thus the idea of a row is the result.

These stones will be put into settings in a manner similar to those on the shoulders of the ephod. These settings were probably of filigree work. Each stone had its own beautifully made setting to hold it in its place.

The number four here is the preferred number for the arrangement. Four is the number of God’s creative works. Bullinger defines it as, “...the number of *material completeness*. Hence it is the *world number*, and especially the ‘city’ number.”

Whereas the four rows speak of creation, the three stones per row indicate, that “...which is *solid, real, substantial, complete, and entire*.” It speaks of Divine completeness, or perfection. The stones are not to be arbitrary, and none of them will be the same makeup. Each will be unique.

17 (con’t) *The first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and an emerald; this shall be the first row;*

The first row of stones in Hebrew are *odem pitdah u-bareqeth*. The identity of almost all of the twelve stones named here cannot be precisely determined. Many of them are introduced into the Bible here in this passage, and some of them are only used a minimal number of times in Scripture.

The color of the stones can often be determined by the root of the word used. For example, the first stone in Hebrew is *odem*. This is the same as the word *adom* which was first used in Exodus 25:5 concerning the “ram skins dyed red.”

It is a red stone, but exactly which is unknown. Some say “carnelian,” some “sadius,” some “red quartz,” some “ruby,” etc. We know that it is not a ruby for the same reason

as with the next stone, the *pitdah*, which the NKJV translates as “topaz.” These are stones which can be eliminated based on their hardness.

In other words, it was not possible at this time in history to engrave on a topaz. Therefore, both the KJV, the NKJV, and any other which say “topaz” should get a demerit for their translation of the second stone. The same is true with “ruby” for the previous stone.

The final stone, the *bareqeth*, comes from the word *baraq*, which means “flashing” or “lightening.” This tells us pretty much nothing of value in determining what the stone is. As you can see one must look at what is logical and possible concerning these individual stones. In the end, the colors can usually be known. At times, good guesses can be made, but because even the finest scholars of both antiquity and even in modern times cannot agree, it is unwise to be dogmatic on what they really are; only what they are not.

¹⁸ the second row shall be a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond;

v’hatur ha’sheni nophek sappir v’yahalom. The second word, *sappir*, is the same name as that which was used to describe the pavement under the feet of the Lord when Moses and the leaders of Israel had their meal on Mount Sinai after the ratification of the covenant.

There it probably meant “sapphire.” The same word is used again here, but it is not the same stone. It is probably one that is similar to it though. The third stone, *yahalom*, comes from the word *halam*, which means to hammer or to strike down. Thus it is a stone noted for its hardness, but it is not a diamond.

It is recognized that neither the sapphire nor the diamond could be engraved at this time in history. The KJV and the NKJV get at least two demerits.

¹⁹ the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst;

v’hatur ha’shelishi leshem shebo v’akhlamah. The second stone, here called an agate, comes from an unused root meaning “flame.” So it is a gem known for its sparkle. However, as flames divide into flashes, it could be a stone with lines running through it. All translations agree on “agate” though. The third stone, *akhlamah*, comes from the

word *kalam*, which means to dream. Thus it is a dream stone. All translations say “amethyst.”

²⁰ and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper.

v’hatur ha’revii tarshish v’shoham v’yashepheh. The first stone, *tarshish*, is the same as the name of a son of Javan noted in Genesis 10:4. It is also the name of a Benjamite and a Persian noble. And, it is the name of a port on the Mediterranean Sea; the place to which Jonah intended to flee in his exciting adventure.

The stone can only be best-guessed as to what it is. The second stone is the *shoham*. It was first seen in Genesis 2:12 and is the same stone used for the shoulder stones on the ephod. The third stone is *yashepheh*. It comes from an unused root meaning “to polish.” Some suppose it to be the Jasper because of the same general sounding name – *yashepheh*/jasper.

²⁰ (con’t) They shall be set in gold settings.

As I noted above, these were probably settings very similar to those on the ephod for the shoulder pieces. They would most likely be of gold filigree.

²¹ And the stones shall have the names of the sons of Israel, twelve according to their names, like the engravings of a signet, each one with its own name; they shall be according to the twelve tribes.

The same terms are used here as in verse 28:11. The *pittuakh*, or “engravings” is a noun which indicates what an engraver makes. It comes from the verb *pathakh*, which means “to appear,” and so you get the idea of the work of the engraver’s hands having “appeared” as engravings. The other word, *khotham*, indicates a signet. The work here is to be exceptionally fine and detailed. Each name of the sons of Israel is to be clearly and precisely engraved on one of these twelve stones according to their name and according to their tribe. Thus, the stone will stand as representative of the tribe on the breastplate before the Lord.

*Beautiful stones, lustrous and bright
Each unique and worthy of a place of respect*

*Carefully sculpted and polished; fitted just right
In them no mar can the greatest lapidary detect*

*Each engraved like a signet, bearing a name
One of the sons of Israel
A spot upon the honored plate, each can claim
A sign of the redeemed each stone does tell*

*And like the stones, those redeemed by the Lord
Are precious in His sight, no flaw in them is shown
This is how the redeemed are noted in the word
Yes, this is what the Bible to us makes known*

II. The Judgment of the Children of Israel (verses 22-30)

²² “You shall make chains for the breastplate at the end, like braided cords of pure gold.

The unscholarly scholars at Cambridge state, “The ‘chains like cords’ are those mentioned in v. 14, so that the verse is really superfluous.” Nothing is superfluous in Scripture. They receive a peanut-head award for their comment. These chains appear to be the same chains mentioned before, but now we are seeing *what* they are used for. They are to be fastened to the shoulder settings on the ephod which are separately made from the breastplate. However, though the ephod and the breastplate are actually two implements, we see now that they are incomplete without one another.

²³ And you shall make two rings of gold for the breastplate, and put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate.

The word “ring” here is the same word used to describe the rings used for inserting poles into the Ark and the Table of Showbread, *tabbaath*. This comes from the verb *taba* which means “to sink.” This then gives the idea of a signet ring which is sunk into clay or wax in order to make a seal. From this comes the idea of any ring.

These rings are to be placed on the two upper corners of the breastplate. The chains would then be passed through the rings and secured to the settings of the shoulder

pieces. Unlike the chains, it should be noted that these rings are just like the rings for the ark and the table, the adjective *tahor*, or pure, is not used for them.

²⁴ Then you shall put the two braided *chains* of gold in the two rings which are on the ends of the breastplate;

This verse shows us that only two chains were made. These then correspond to the chains which were mentioned in verse 14. This is further understood from the details of the actual completion of the work in Exodus 39. Just two chains are made, having been mentioned two separate times for emphasis and to ensure the details are exactly followed. One end of them is to be attached to the two rings which are then attached to the breastplate.

²⁵ and the *other* two ends of the two braided *chains* you shall fasten to the two settings, and put them on the shoulder straps of the ephod in the front.

What is being said is that the breastplate will be attached to the two settings on the shoulder piece so that it will hang down from them. In essence, they are being combined into a single unit. Everything is being tied together into one. Again, neither the settings nor the rings are described by the adjective “pure.” Only the chains are.

²⁶ “You shall make two rings of gold, and put them on the two ends of the breastplate, on the edge of it, which is on the inner side of the ephod.

Two more rings are to be made of gold. These are to be on the two lower corners of the ephod. However, they will be on the inner side which is the side turned towards the ephod. The word translated as “edge” is *saphah*. It means “lip.” The material for the breastplate had been folded in half. These rings are attached to the inside half, or lip. Hence they will be out of sight.

²⁷ And two *other* rings of gold you shall make, and put them on the two shoulder straps, underneath the ephod toward its front, right at the seam above the intricately woven band of the ephod.

The translation here says “on the two shoulder straps” because the same word, *katheph*, is used here as was used in verses 7 & 12. However, the word in this case means “side” and is speaking of the front half of the ephod, not the shoulder piece.

Several translations got this right. There will be two gold rings woven into the front half of the ephod on the inside of it, one on the left side of the breastplate, and one on the right. Here is how Webster's translation says it –

“And two other rings of gold thou shalt make, and shalt put them on the two sides of the ephod underneath, towards the forepart of it, over against the other coupling thereof, above the curious girdle of the ephod.” Webster

The reason for this is explained in the next verse...

²⁸ They shall bind the breastplate by means of its rings to the rings of the ephod, using a blue cord, so that it is above the intricately woven band of the ephod, and so that the breastplate does not come loose from the ephod.

A blue *pathil*, or cord, will tie the rings of the breastplate to the rings of the front half of the ephod. As none of the four rings are visible, it implies that the blue cord is also not visible. And yet, the details are so specific and precise. A picture is obviously being made for us to think on and contemplate. This word *pathil* comes from the verb *pathal*, which means “to twist.” It is used in the context of wrestling or being astute. It is this cord which binds the ephod and the breastplate, keeping them united, as it were, as one.

²⁹ “So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastplate of judgment over his heart, when he goes into the holy *place*, as a memorial before the Lord continually.

With the breastplate of judgment secure, and with the names of the sons of Israel right over his heart, the high priest would bear their names as a memorial before the Lord continually. Charles Ellicott describes the obvious significance for the earthly high priest–

“The high priest was to be wholly identified with the people; to be one with them in affection no less than in action; to bear their names on his shoulders, as supporting them and wrestling for them, while he also bore their names on his heart, as loving them and feeling for them. Thus he was continually to present before God a two-fold “memorial” of His people, and to make a sort of double appeal, on the one hand, to God's power, and, on the other hand, to His mercy and loving-kindness.” Charles Ellicott

³⁰ And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim,

Introduced here are two of the most enigmatic instruments to be named for all of the associated religious rites and instructions. The word Urim is the plural of the word *uwr*, or “fire.” Thus it means “lights.” It is found just seven times in Scripture. The word Thummim is the plural of the word *tom*, or “integrity.” Thus it means “perfections” or “that which is blameless or innocent.” It is found just five times in Scripture. Together, they are literally translated “Lights and Perfections.”

Interestingly, this verse uses the exact same expression, *v'natata el*, or “And you shall put in...” that was used in Exodus 25:16 concerning putting the tablets of the Testimony into the Ark of the Covenant. And in both cases it is Moses, or “He who draws out,” who puts the items in. A direct tie is being made to these two separate accounts once again. What the Urim and Thummim actually did, what they were, or how they were used is unknown. But we do know that they were used for inquiring of God. This is seen, for example, in Ezra 2 –

“These sought their listing *among* those who were registered by genealogy, but they were not found; therefore they *were excluded* from the priesthood as defiled. ⁶³ And the governor said to them that they should not eat of the most holy things till a priest could consult with the Urim and Thummim.” Ezra 2:62, 63

Whatever they were and whatever they did, it appears Moses was already aware of them. No note of explanation is given concerning them, and so he already knew about them. In Deuteronomy 33:8, they are considered the greatest of glory to the tribe of Levi –

“And of Levi he said:
'Let Your Thummim and Your Urim *be* with Your holy one,
Whom You tested at Massah,
And with whom You contended at the waters of Meribah,'”

^{30 (con't)} **and they shall be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the Lord.**

Along with the names of the sons of Israel, the Urim and Thummim are considered important enough to be thought of as being over Aaron's heart. What would be so important about them that this would be the case?

^{30 (fin)} **So Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel over his heart before the Lord continually.**

On the breastplate in full display were the stones representing the children of Israel. On the stones were their names, thus designating the tribes. And within the breastplate itself were the Urim and Thummim. Contained within all of this is the thought of “rendered judgment.” This was to be continually before the face of the Lord.

*Chains of gold running from breastplate to ephod
Rings of gold used to connect them together as one
A blue cord to keep the breastplate secure, we have been showed
But when worn, it remains unseen – why was this done?*

*Lights and Perfections hidden away
Kept in a pouch behind the fiery stones and over the heart
What mysteries do they tell, who can say?
And when they are used, what truths will they impart?*

*The mysteries of these things brings curiosity to us
We long to see the meaning hidden away from our eyes
Somehow we know they point to Jesus
And so their meaning to us please apprise*

III. Pictures of Christ

The ephod, the memorial stones, and the breastplate are all united as one piece even though they have been described separately. The symbolism of the memorial stones from last week, then, was partially overlooked in order to complete this passage first.

There were two memorial stones made of the same type of stone. Two implies a difference and yet a confirmation of something. For example, there is the humanity of Jesus and the deity of Jesus. They contrast, and yet they confirm that He is the incarnate Word of God. There is the Old Testament and the New. They contrast; law and grace, but they confirm the entirety of the word of God.

As there were two memorial stones on two separate shoulders, they contrast and yet they confirm a whole. Six on each shoulder shows the number of man. Thus they picture the scope of humanity Jew and Gentile being born by Christ. He bore our sufferings and burdens before His Father, reconciling us to Him. Together they equal 12, or that of government.

The breastplate itself was to be fashioned of the same material as the ephod. The materials and colors carry the same meaning as each time they have been used. They picture Christ's deity/royalty for the gold, His fulfillment of the law for the blue; His royalty for the purple – which is a combination of blue and red; and His judgment for the red. Finally, the fine woven linen is a picture of His righteousness.

The square shape of the breastplate matches the square brazen altar and thus signifies judgment. But it also matches the altar of incense and thus it signifies petition and intercession. Its size introduced a new word to us, *zereth*, or span. It comes from another word, *zarah*, which means "to scatter." This word is consistently seen to indicate judgment, such as scattering the people in exile or winnowing grain – which is in itself a picture of judgment, such as in Isaiah 41:16 –

"You shall **winnow** them, the wind shall carry them away,
And the whirlwind shall scatter them;
You shall rejoice in the Lord,
And glory in the Holy One of Israel." Isaiah 41:16

Thus, the size of the breastplate indicates judgment, just as its name states – the Breastplate of Judgment. The stones on the breastplate are 12 in number, but are listed as four rows of three each, and so they signify all of the created who have been redeemed. They signify the complete Divine plan for redemption. As they total 12, they signify the "*perfection of government.*"

Unlike the shoulder stones which were two – like but separate stones – signifying Jew and Gentile, these are 12 individual stones united into one whole on the Breastplate. They then are what Paul speaks of in Romans 10 –

"For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him." Romans 10:12

Though there is a difference, there is now no distinction; we are no longer divided. We are all one as the Lord intercedes for us before His Father. AW Pink explains this to us –

"On the jewels were inscribed the names of Israel's twelve tribes. Therefore, what we have foreshadowed here is Christ, as our great High Priest, bearing on His heart, sustaining, and presenting before God, His blood-bought people. There is a slight distinction to be drawn from what we have here and that which is set forth in Exodus 28:9-12. There, too, we have the names of Israel's tribes borne by their high priest

before God. But there they are seen resting upon his “shoulders,” whereas here (v. 29) they rest upon his heart. In the one it is the strength or power of Christ engaged on behalf of His helpless people; in the other, it is His affections exercised for them.”

Christ bore the sins of all, Jew and Gentile – represented by the two like, but separate stones on His shoulders. Now we are united as one as He exercises His mediatorial role for all without distinction.

The engraving of the names upon the stones is specific. It is to be as a signet. These words imply eternal security. The name is engraved in the stone itself. It shouts out, “This is a son of Israel.” The believer’s standing before God never changes. The judgment has been wrought by Another and so we are inscribed once and forever within the stone of God’s governmental perfection.

Likewise, each stone is set in a gold filigree setting. We are, attached, if you will, by the Lord through an act of faith in His accomplished work. This is exactly seen in the pure gold chains attached to the gold rings. The chains of verse 22 are described as “braided cords of pure gold.” The word for cords is *aboth*. It is something that binds something together. It is used in a negative way in Isaiah 5 –

“Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity,
And sin as if with a cart **rope**.” Isaiah 5:18

However, in verse 22, they are “of pure gold.” It is the same word, *tahor*, which was used to describe the gold of the Ark, of the Mercy Seat, the Menorah, and the other implements which picture Christ. In this case, we are literally chained to Him as our High Priest through His perfect and unstained work.

Let us now remember the significant point that the adjective “pure” is lacking from the golden rings and from the settings. Why would this be? The reason is that we are saved by an act of grace through faith. When we receive His work, which He bore on our behalf, we are accepted into His kingdom.

We move from the burden of His shoulders to the place above His heart. However, it is the pure gold of His work which saves us. Our faith may be weak and imperfect, but His work which saves is not. Thus the chains, representing what He did for us, have the adjective “pure.” The rings, representing our faith don’t.

And yet, our faith not being pure, is represented by a ring. There is no beginning or end to a ring. Thus, the exercising of our faith in the work of Christ, no matter how shallow, results in an endless security because of what He did. God asks for faith from His faithless creatures... and so just a little bit will do. The picture we are given is astonishingly exact in how it presents our salvation.

Concerning the stones, it has been seen that we simply don't know what most of them were. This is for a reason; it doesn't matter. The focus is not on us, but on the Lord. As adopted children of God, we are precious in His sight, just as the stones were precious in nature.

There is no internal illumination from the stones. Rather, only when the light of Christ shines on us do we shine out, or reflect, the radiant beauty that God has given us. In our previous state of darkness, this was unseen and wasted.

But in Christ, we go from being justified to being glorified. The light of Christ radiates off of us and illuminates who we truly are meant to be. When we stand in God's presence some day, we will see what He already sees because of Christ. We may not feel radiant at times, but to God, we shine forth in a dazzling display of beauty. The stones then, regardless of their actual identity, are fully known to God. As Paul says to Timothy, and which perfectly resembles this thought –

“Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’” 2 Timothy 2:19

Another thought about these stones is that they certainly came from a variety of areas. Some may have come from a particular land, others from another, some from the ocean, some from the river. However, they were all incorporated into the one breastplate.

So it is with the redeemed of God. We are all different, we may come from the farthest corners of the earth, and we may look completely different from one another, but we all reflect the glory of the Lord in a marvelous and unique way. None is truly to be exalted above another. Paul sums this thought up in Romans 12:3-8 –

“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. ⁴ For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, *being* many,

are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. ⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; ⁷ or ministry, *let us use it in our* ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸ he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”

We are all precious stones in the breastplate of the Lord. When God the Father looks at Christ, our High Priest, He sees us on the very heart of His Son; He sees the redeemed people whom He purchased with His own blood. God could no more reject us now than He could reject His own Son. This is the intimate position we now hold before the Father of heavenly lights.

It is pictured in the breastplate as individual stones of various types, colors, and attributes. However, someday, when we are glorified, those distinctions will be erased. This is the promise from Jesus in Revelation 2 –

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives *it*.” Revelation 2:17

The very name of the breastplate, it being the “Breastplate of Judgment,” conveys a purposeful intent. It is as a voice calling out in the presence of God, “Judgment has been rendered here! These are mine, and they are secure because of what I did.” For this reason, it is called a “memorial before the Lord continually.”

The Lord could no more forget us than He could forget His own agonizing passion on the Hill of Calvary. We stand justified, not because we deserve it, but because He has earned it for us. Judgment is complete; we are secure. The placement of the breastplate above the heart calls to mind the memorable words of the Song of Solomon –

“Set me as a seal upon your heart,
As a seal upon your arm;
For love *is as* strong as death,
Jealousy *as* cruel as the grave;
Its flames *are* flames of fire,
A most vehement flame.

⁷ Many waters cannot quench love,

Nor can the floods drown it.
If a man would give for love
All the wealth of his house,
It would be utterly despised.” Song of Solomon 8:6, 7

The love of the Lord for the people He has redeemed is reflected in the placement of the breastplate. As far as the other four gold rings and the blue cord, those were kept unseen, hidden as it were from sight. And yet the details given are so exacting. The cord of blue signifies the law. We have seen this numerous times already. The rings again bear the same significance.

They are emblems of our faith. In all, there are six rings, six being the number of man. And yet, we are securely tied to our great High Priest by His accomplishment of the law for us. We trust His work in fulfillment of it and we are united to Him.

Our faith is tested and it often fails, but we are bound to Christ by His fulfillment and completion of the law. Peter’s words exactly reflect this concerning the gold rings –

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, ⁸ whom having not seen you love.” 1 Peter 1:6-8
The blue cord and the rings aren’t seen because they reflect our faith in what is unseen. We believe that Christ fulfilled the law for us – on our behalf – and we are saved. In our attempt to fulfill the law, there is only death – open and visible to all. But in Christ’s fulfillment of it for us, the law is concealed, no longer to harm us. This is the same as the Tablets of the law being hidden in the Ark. Our wrestling with the law is ended and our misdeeds are hidden away. Instead, we are held fast to our High Priest by our faith in His works. This is seen in Paul’s words to the Corinthians –

“The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

-1 Corinthians 15:56, 57

But how can we be sure the symbolism is correct on this? The answer is in what the final two things mentioned in this passage signify, the Urim and Thummim. They are Lights and Perfections. But understanding what they point to requires looking at the etymology of the words as well as what Moses does with them.

There is a direct connection being made between the Ark and the Breastplate. Both are containers for the law. The tablets were placed by Moses in the Ark, and the Urim and Thummim were placed in the breastplate by him as well. These two items are what provide the word of the Lord to the people and they were used to render judgment for the people. Both of these functions are the same as the law.

Urim means Lights. It comes from *uwr*, fire, which corresponds to *owr*, light. Numerous times in the Bible, the law of the Lord, the word of the Lord, or the judgments of the Lord are said to be light. Three examples for us to see this are –

“For the commandment *is* a lamp,
And the law a light;
Reproofs of instruction *are* the way of life.” Proverbs 6:23

“Listen to Me, My people;
And give ear to Me, O My nation:
For law will proceed from Me,
And I will make My justice rest
As a light of the peoples.” Isaiah 51:4

“Your word *is* a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.” Psalm 119:105

The *Thummim* comes from the word *tom*. This corresponds to the adjective *tamim* or “perfection,” and thus being blameless. This is seen in the following two verses –

“As *for* God, His way *is* perfect;
The word of the Lord is proven;
He *is* a shield to all who trust in Him.” Psalm 18:30

“The law of the Lord *is* perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the Lord *is* sure, making wise the simple.” Psalm 19:7

In these, and other examples, we can find that the law of the Lord is what is pictured in the Urim and Thummim. It thus has the same significance as the tablets within the Ark. Christ fulfilled the law and it was secreted away under the mercy seat. He thus embodies the law and His blood covers the sins of the law for His people.

In placing the Urim and Thummin behind the stones representing God's redeemed people, and within the Breastplate of Judgment that is connected to the ephod by a blue thread attached to gold rings, it signifies that our faith in His work is what justifies us. If we need to consult God, we do it through Christ. Matthew Henry gives us a splendid analogy of this in regards to the Urim and Thummim –

Now, Christ is our Oracle. By him God, in these last days, makes known himself and his mind to us, Heb 1:1,2; Joh 1:18. He is the true Light, the faithful Witness, the Truth itself, and from him we receive the Spirit of Truth, who leads into all truth. Matthew Henry

The truly amazing thing about this is that such minute detail was given for things that were to remain completely unseen, and yet they perfectly describe what Christ has done for us. In Christ, we are safe, we are secure, and we are so forever.

We stand justified by faith, apart from deeds of the law because He has accomplished those deeds for us. It is all seen in these ancient symbols that until just an hour ago had no real meaning to you at all! Is that not right? But now you can see once again how minutely the plan of redemption is revealed in these ancient pictures. What a marvel!

If we must close, and close we must, let it be with a thought concerning the gold rings. Our faith is reckoned as good as gold to God, even if it is not pure gold. We weaken at times, we question God's plan and His goodness, but when we get into that desperate pit, let us remember also the chains that secure us.

They are chains of the purest of gold. They are the deeds of Christ holding us fast to Himself. What He looks for is faith, we demonstrate it, and He accepts it. The eternal ring tells us that we are His. Let us remember that now and always.

Closing Verse: *"Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You." Psalm 119:11*

Next Week: Exodus 28:31-43 (Clothed in Majesty and Righteousness)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Breastplate of Judgment

You shall make the breastplate of judgment
Artistically woven according to the workmanship of the ephod
You shall make it: of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread
And fine woven linen, you shall make it, as I have now showed

It shall be doubled into a square, you see
A span shall be its length, and a span its width shall be

And you shall put settings of stones in it
Four rows of stones, as I will show
The first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and an emerald
This shall be the first row

The second row shall be a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond
The third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst
And the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper
They shall be set in gold settings; no detail shall be missed

And the stones shall have the names
Of the sons of Israel
Twelve according to their names
Like the engravings of a signet as well

Each one with its own name, certainly
According to the twelve tribes they shall be

You shall make chains at the end for the breastplate
Like braided cords of pure gold, as I now state

And you shall make two rings
For the breastplate, of gold
And put the two rings
On the two ends of the breastplate, just as you are told

Then you shall put the two braided chains
Of gold in the two rings
Which are on the ends of the breastplate
So shall you accomplish these things

And the other two ends of the two braided chains
You shall fasten to the two settings, as I relay
And put them on the shoulder straps
Of the ephod in the front, just as I say

You shall make two rings of gold
And put them on the two ends of the breastplate, as showed
On the edge of it, as you are told
Which is on the inner side of the ephod

And two other rings of gold you shall make
And put them on the two shoulder straps, please understand
Underneath the ephod toward its front
Right at the seam above the ephod's intricately woven band

They shall bind the breastplate
By means of its rings to the ephod's rings
Using a blue cord, so that it is above
The intricately woven band of the ephod, so do these things

And so that the breastplate does not come loose from the ephod
This is the reason for what you have been showed

So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel
On the breastplate of judgment over his heart, so shall it be
When he goes into the holy place
As a memorial before the Lord continually

And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment
The Urim and the Thummim, according to my word
And they shall be over Aaron's heart
When he goes in before the Lord

So Aaron shall bear the judgment
Of the children of Israel
Over his heart before the Lord continually
For this reason, these things I do now tell

How marvelous are these details, O God!
Precious and sublime are the things hidden in Your word!

Help us for all our days as in this life we trod
To search them out, seeking Christ our Lord

And through Him we praise You for all that You have done
For in Him it is finished, and in Him the victory is won

Glory to You, O King of the ages
For the marvelous splendor found in Your words pages

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 28:31-43

(CLOTHED IN MAJESTY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS)

On Tuesday morning, while at my morning job and thinking about completing this sermon, I was pondering how people get duped into things concerning bad doctrine. The Hebrew Roots movement rejects Christ's grace and reinserts the requirements of the law.

It basically says, "What Jesus did on that cross wasn't enough." In turn, each follower of this heresy is in the process of working their way to heaven... an infinite climb which will be cut short at their death. Instead of heaven, they will find another sad end.

If those same folks would simply read the word, take it at face value, and understand it in context, they would come to the letter of Galatians, put away their heretical works, and trust in the grace of Christ's finished work – boasting in His cross alone. There would be peace in their lives, harmony between God and them, and they would be able to bridge that infinite gap via His shed blood.

Mostly though, I was thinking about the cult of Mary. People pray to her, they worship her, they trust in her to be their mediator to God. What is so curious to me is that after about 5 years of sermons in Genesis and Exodus, we have had literally thousands and thousands of pictures of Christ.

We have had pictures of the dispensations of time through which Christ works. We have had pictures of God's people in collective snapshots, such as in the rapture, or in Israel, or in the church – all of which center on Christ.

In fact, in all of these 208 Genesis and Exodus sermons, plus the 13 Ruth sermons, and in the other various sermons we've done, there has not been one single picture of Mary... not one! Even if we were to force her into a picture or two as the RCC has done, it would still be far less than pictures of the apostles or the redeemed collectively, which are only the *result* of Christ's work.

Comparing zero to about 17 jillion pictures of Christ, it should be obvious to even the dullest of sorts that God really wants us to focus on Jesus. It is all, and I mean all, about Him. Don't get led astray into strange doctrines, and don't take your eyes off of Jesus. Today's text verse is about the priests and saints of the Lord, but they are only priests and saints *because* of the Lord...

Text Verse: *Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness,
And let Your saints shout for joy. Psalm 132:9*

The psalmist speaks of the priests being clothed with righteousness. This is pictured in today's verses and it continued on all during the time of the law. But there is more. Because of the work of Christ, we too are counted as a kingdom of priests, and we too are clothed with righteousness. It is a truth which is to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The High Priestly Robe (verses 31-35)

³¹ **“You shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue.**

Some of Aaron's garments have already been detailed, including the ephod and the breastplate. Now a robe is detailed which will be worn under those implements but over the fine woven tunic. It is known as a *meil*. It was first mentioned in verse 28:4 in the list of what was to be made. Now its details are given.

This *meil* is a type of tunic which would reach from neck all the way down to somewhere around the knees; some believe even as far as to the feet. It was a completely seamless garment as is inferred by Exodus 39:22 –

“He made the robe of the ephod of woven work, all of blue.”

The term “woven work” implies a seamless garment. However, Flavius Josephus explicitly documents this fact in his commentary on the priestly garments. He says that “the coat did not consist of two parts, nor was it sewed upon the shoulder, nor on the side, but was one long piece of woven work.”

It would have a hole for the head to go through and it had no sleeves. Therefore, the top portion of it would be mostly covered by the ephod and the breastplate. However, the lower part was fully visible. The plain blue would be a beautiful contrast to the variegated ephod and the gleaming breastplate.

This blue, as we have seen in other details of the tabernacle and priestly garments, signifies the law, especially in adherence to it. The word translated as “all,” as in “all of blue” is the adjective *kalil*. This is a new word in Scripture which comes from the

verb *kalal*, which means to complete or make perfect. Thus it means that this robe is to be entirely made of only this color.

³² There shall be an opening for his head in the middle of it;

At the top and the middle, logically where the neck is, there was to be an opening for Aaron's head to go through. Rather than a slit, it was to be round like a modern t-shirt. The word for "opening" is *peh*, meaning "mouth."

³² (con't) it shall have a woven binding all around its opening,

saphah yihyeh lephiv saviv maaseh oreg – "lips it shall have at the mouth around, work of woven." The word translated as "binding" is *saphah*, meaning "lips." Just as the robe was to have a mouth, so it would have lips around the mouth. The same word is translated as "speech" elsewhere because the lips are the place where speech issues forth from. The Hebrew is far more descriptive than how the English reads.

The word for "woven" is *arag*. It is a verb used for the first of thirteen times which means "weaving." It is what a spider would do when forming a web, or what a weaver would do on a loom. The reason for this woven work is next explained...

³² (con't) like the opening in a coat of mail, so that it does not tear.

The word for "coat of mail," *takharah*, is very rare. It is used just twice, and both times it is speaking of this garment. It comes from the verb *kharah*, which means "to burn with anger." Thus, it probably is facetiously used just as a coat of mail would be used in fighting.

The idea here is that this opening would be sewn onto the woven garment to give it additional strength to keep it from tearing. In other words, it is exactly what we have on our t-shirts today. If that lip wasn't sewn all around the mouth of the shirt, the fabric would simply, and quickly tear as we pulled our head through.

³³ And upon its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet, all around its hem,

The hem is introduced here. It is the word *shul* which comes from an unused root meaning “to hang down.” Thus it indicates the bottom edge. To fully grasp the meaning, it is translated as “train” in Isaiah 6:1 –

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the **train** of His *robe* filled the temple.” Isaiah 6:1

Onto this hem, pomegranates were to be attached which were to be sewn out of blue, purple, and scarlet. The pomegranate is also a new word in the Bible, *rimmon*. It will be seen 32 times and it is an enigmatic symbol. The word *rimmon* is associated with the word *rum*, or “to be high, or exalted.”

It also carries the connotation of mental maturity and calling to remembrance. The modern Jewish notion of the pomegranate representing the law because it has 613 seeds, just as the law has 613 commandments, is a bit far-fetched. This is especially so because a pomegranate doesn’t have 613 seeds. The number varies with each fruit.

However, in that they are attached to the blue garment of the high priest, it does point to the notion of calling the law to remembrance. As far as the colors which these pomegranates were to be sewn, their meanings remain constant.

The blue represents the law; royalty is seen in the purple – which is a combination of blue and red; and war, blood, and judgment is signified by the red. The pomegranates were to completely circle the hem of the garment.

³³ (con’t) **and bells of gold between them all around:**

Paamon or “bells” are now brought into the Bible. This particular word for “bell” is to be used only in connection with this high priestly garment. The word comes from *pa’am*, which means “times” or “occurrences.” In the ringing of a bell there is an occurrence which can be counted.

One would think that because they are on his garment that they would be described with the adjective *tahor*, or pure. However, that is lacking. But don’t despair! They are, in fact, made with *zahav tahor*, or “gold pure.” This is later seen in Exodus 39:25 –

“And they made bells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates on the hem of the robe all around between the pomegranates:”

³⁴ a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe all around.

Jewish scholars of the past have claimed a certain number of pomegranates and bells were hung from the hem. However, the Bible is silent on this, and therefore there is no symbolism in that regard. Rather, what is clear is that they were to alternate between a golden bell and a pomegranate all the way around the hem.

³⁵ And it shall be upon Aaron when he ministers,

Verse 35 is a puzzling verse to many, but by looking at it one clause at a time, it clears up. The robe with the bells is to be worn whenever he ministers. The word for “minister” is *sharat*. It comes from a primitive root word and means, “to attend as a menial or worshipper.” In essence, it means to “wait on.”

³⁵ (con’t) and its sound will be heard when he goes into the holy *place* before the Lord and when he comes out,

The sounding forth of the bells was to be heard anytime that Aaron was to enter the Holy Place before, or in the face of, the Lord – as the word means. As he entered and as he exited, his movements would be heard. The word translated here as “sound” is *qol*. It means “voice.” A voice is something that calls out in an understandable way.

Thus, the *voice* of the bells was calling out as a reminder. But it is not a reminder for the Lord. He is fully aware of all things. He needed no reminders. Therefore, the voice of the bells was to be a reminder to Aaron of his responsibilities within the Holy Place.

³⁵ (con’t) that he may not die.

v’lo yamut – “...and no he die.” The penalty for not treating the duties of the office with proper respect was death. The bells upon his garments were a reminder that he was to never treat his duties as an unholy thing.

Almost all scholars tie this sounding of the bells to the people outside the Holy Place, informing them that the priest was inside attending to his duties and that they were to pray and worship while he was in there. To support this, Luke 1:9, 10 is cited –

“So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division,⁹ according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense.”

This is incorrect. These garments describe those worn by the high priest, not the priest selected to offer incense before the Lord. Further, whether the people outside prayed or not had no bearing on whether the high priest lived or died.

Rather, he was the servant attending the Lord. The Lord is holy. Should a servant show disrespect to his king, he would be killed. How much more then should the high priest treat the Lord with absolute holiness! The bells were to call this to memory with each step that he took.

The pomegranates were there as a testimony that he was to be mentally mature in the presence of the Lord. To fail in this regard would result in death. This lesson was learned by his two eldest sons when they failed in this regard –

“Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them.² So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.³ And Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the Lord spoke, saying:

‘By those who come near Me
I must be regarded as holy;
And before all the people
I must be glorified.’”

So Aaron held his peace.” Leviticus 10:1-3

This verse concerning the bells is one of several such times this precept was stated to Moses.

*A pomegranate and a bell, a pomegranate and a bell
A delightful fruit to think about and a wondrous tinkling too
In wearing these on your garments, all will go well
So you shall call to mind the things which you are to do*

*Attend to your duties, but keep the Lord on your mind
Each step that you take, call Him to remembrance*

*Trust in Him alone, leaving all else behind
And in this manner, have your duties in attendance*

*Walk in holiness all of your days
For your tasks are the most important ever known
And in your victory a new path you shall blaze
And to those who follow you, that precious path will be shown*

II. Holiness to the Lord (verses 36-39)

³⁶ “You shall also make a plate of pure gold

The next item to be made is a plate of pure gold. The plate is a new word, *tsiyts*. It indicates a burnished plate, but it also means a flower which is bright-colored, and even a wing which gleams in the air. Thus, this was probably a plate resembling a flower. The Greek translation of the OT calls it a *petalon*, the plural of leaf. Later, it will be called the holy crown. Therefore, it was probably somewhat like a crown of leaves or flowers. The gold for this plate is given the adjective *tahor*, or pure. The gold was to be completely undefiled in any way. It is a reflection of the divinity of Christ. The idea is that this plate would be highly visible and reflect any light which touched it.

^{36 (con't)} and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet:

Like the memorial stones and the stones of the breastplate, this plate was to be engraved as a signet. The words were to be clear and visible. As this was on his head, it would be the point most seen by anyone observing him. Even more than the memorial stones, or the stones of the breastplate, this would be the main focus of the high priestly attire.

However, like a canvass which is only a vessel for a painting, the gold was merely a vessel for conveying something else. In the case of this plate, it would be just two words. And the words to be engraved consisted of just eight letters...

^{36 (con't)} HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

qodesh Yehovah – “Holiness to Yehovah.” The number eight in the Bible is the superabundant number and the number of new beginnings. There was a rift between God and man and now that rift is beginning to be healed by the work of the high priest.

He would be the mediator between God and man. The Lord is holy and the high priest was to be HOLY TO THE LORD. There was to be a dignity in the office which would allow him to minister on behalf of the people redeemed by God.

³⁷ And you shall put it on a blue cord, that it may be on the turban;

The plate was to be attached to the turban by a blue cord. Consider the symbolism of the metal and the color of the cord. One speaks of divinity and royalty, the other speaks of the law.

³⁷ (con't) it shall be on the front of the turban.

The plate was to be right at the front of the turban, right at the forehead of Aaron. This is seen explicitly in the next verse...

³⁸ So it shall be on Aaron's forehead,

After 2500 years of human existence, the *metsakh*, or forehead, is introduced into the Bible here, and for a very good reason. The word comes from an unused root meaning "to be clear," and hence, "conspicuous." Therefore, the forehead is considered the prominent place of the man in the Bible.

The forehead is the place of conscience and the place of identification. It can therefore be a place of a clear conscience or a seared conscience. When King Uzziah illegally burned incense before the Lord, usurping the duties reserved for the priests, it was his *forehead* which broke out in leprosy.

When the Lord scolded Israel for having no shame, He said they had a harlot's *forehead*. In Ezekiel 9, when the people who mourned over the abominations of the land were sealed for salvation, a mark was placed upon their *foreheads*.

The same is true with the sealed 144,000 of Revelation. It will be upon their *foreheads*. They will be those who realize that Christ is Lord, and their conscience will lead them to being sealed by the Lord. In contrast is the great whore recorded in Revelation 17:5 –

And on her forehead a name *was* written:

MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT,
THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS

AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

The conscience of this great whore is completely seared to the holiness of the Lord. The use of the forehead now for the first time in the Bible shows that an awareness of both wrongdoing and what is right is to be maintained by the high priest. One cannot understand holiness without understanding depravity.

Therefore, the high priest is to be aware, at all times, of the holiness of the Lord. He is further to reflect this holiness in all that he does. This is seen in the continuation of the verse...

38 (con't) that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts;

This verse shows the infinite gap which exists between God and man. Aaron, as representative of God, was to bear the iniquity of the holy things of the people which they offered to the Lord. What this means is even that which was offered according to the law, and which was considered "holy," still bore iniquity before the pure holiness of the Lord. This truth is seen in the book of Haggai –

“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Now, ask the priests *concerning the law*, saying, ¹² “If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?””

Then the priests answered and said, “No.”

¹³ And Haggai said, “If *one who is unclean because of a dead body* touches any of these, will it be unclean?”

So the priests answered and said, “It shall be unclean.” Haggai 2:11-13

The fact is that though in the land of the living, all people are spiritually dead before God, having inherited Adam’s original sin. Therefore, anything we touch is defiled and impure. The gold plate on Aaron’s head was an indication of God’s acceptance of his office as high priest to mediate between the people’s tainted offerings and His perfect holiness. John Calvin notes –

“It sounds harsh and almost paradoxical to say that holy things themselves are unclean, so as to need pardon; but it is to be held that there is absolutely nothing so pure but that it contracts some stain from us... Nothing is more excellent than the worship of God; and yet the people could offer nothing, even when it was prescribed by law,

without the intervention of pardon, which they could obtain only through the priest.”
John Calvin (via John Lange)

Aaron, as a picture of the coming Christ, was to bear the iniquity of the people before the Lord. The place of conscience, and the place of sealing and acceptance, meaning the forehead was to be reflective of this truth...

³⁸ (con't) **and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord.**

At all times while ministering on behalf of the people, Aaron was to bear the plate and thus bear the iniquity of Israel. In so doing, they and their offerings would be accepted before, or in the face of, the Lord.

³⁹ **“You shall skillfully weave the tunic of fine linen *thread*, you shall make the turban of fine linen, and you shall make the sash of woven work.**

The items to be made for Aaron’s attire close out with these words. The tunic, the turban, and the sash, not mentioned in any form since verse 4, are now instructed to be made. No other details are given here as guidelines for Moses.

The word for “weave” is *shabats*. This is the second and last use of the word in the Bible. It was used in verse 20 concerning the gold settings of the stones of the breastplate. Therefore, as it means “set,” it is believed to indicate here a checkered weaving.

Both the tunic and the turban were made in this way, with fine linen. These would then be solid white. The tunic would be under all of the other garments and it would have both sleeves extending to the wrists, and it would reach all the way to the ankles.

The sash is said to be made of “woven work” and is explained in Exodus 39 to be “of fine woven linen with blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, made by a weaver” (verse 39:29). What is unusual about this sash is that it was probably not visible at all as it would be under the other garments. And yet, the instructions are clear, and the weaving of chapter 39 is specific.

*Holiness to the Lord, pure and undefiled by sin
Performing His duties of mediation for us
Access to the Father has been granted again
Because of the work of our High Priest, Jesus*

*Only He can take what is tainted by our sin
And make it acceptable to God for each of us
Yes, God now accepts us once again
Because of the work of our High Priest, Jesus*

*Holiness to the Lord, because of the victory He did win
And now He has also brought that victory to us
Yes, we are granted full rights as sons, thanking God again
Because of the work of our High Priest, Jesus*

III. Consecrating Aarons and His Sons (verses 40-43)

⁴⁰ “For Aaron’s sons you shall make tunics, and you shall make sashes for them.

The tunics and the sashes for the sons of Aaron were to be white. There is nothing else noticeable about them. The instructions are simple and without any particular detail. The verb for making the tunics in this verse is *asah* instead of *shabats* of the previous verse. Therefore, these were probably not patterned. The garments of the sons were simple, unadorned except in pristine white, and yet they were distinct from all other people around them.

⁴⁰ (con’t) And you shall make hats for them,

The word for “hat” is *migbaath*. This is the first of just four times it will be used and only in reference to these caps for the sons of Aaron. It is from the same root as *gibah* or “hills” and *gabia* or “cups.” Hence, they are caps which fit the head.

⁴⁰ (con’t) for glory and beauty.

The same term as was used to describe Aaron’s garments is again used here – for glory and for beauty. It may seem remarkable that plain white garments would be so described, but white symbolizes righteousness. At times in the Bible, Christ’s garments, or those of angels, are represented as being white. The glory and the beauty then is reflective of that which is of God – His righteousness.

⁴¹ So you shall put them on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him.

It is Moses who is instructed to not only have the garments made, but also to be the one to present and invest Aaron and his sons with them. It is really an amazing thing to consider. The prophet of God, the one who speaks His word, is the one to bring about the *initiation* of the priesthood.

Thus it logically follows that the priesthood is subordinated to the office of prophet. The pattern follows through with Christ who was from the beginning the Word of God, but who *became* God's High Priest according to the word of God as is indicated in Hebrews 5:5.

⁴¹ (con't) **You shall anoint them, consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me as priests.**

The word for "anoint," *mashakh*, has only been used once so far in the Bible. It referred to Jacob's action of "anointing" the stone which he had set up as a pillar after sleeping on it the night before. Now it will become a common word in the history of the law. It is the same word used for anointing prophets, priests, and kings. It is the basis of the word *mashiakh*, or "messiah."

The words for "consecrate them" are literally "fill their hand." Moses would fill their hand with a part of a sacrifice and then present them to the Lord, thus consecrating them. And the word for "sanctify" means "to make them holy." In their ordination, they would be set apart as priests; acceptable ministers to the Lord.

⁴² **And you shall make for them linen trousers to cover their nakedness; they shall reach from the waist to the thighs.**

The *miknas*, or undergarments are introduced here and will only be noted five times, always in regards to the priests. The final time will be in the book of Ezekiel. It comes from a word which gives the sense of "hiding." They are specifically noted as for the covering of their *besah ervah*, or "flesh of nakedness."

The linen they are made of is a new word too, *bad*. It is probably from the word *badad*, or "shoots." Thus one gets the idea of divided fibers that are woven together. The nakedness of the priests was to be covered in order to reflect purity and holiness instead of indecency. These would reach from the waist to a little above the knees.

⁴³ They shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they come into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister in the holy *place*, that they do not incur iniquity and die.

One must ask why this covering is required. Nakedness was created by God and there was no hint of indecency in the Garden of Eden. However, after the fall, the man and his wife realized they were naked. Thus the nakedness of man is connected to the knowledge of sin.

Further, sin is an inherited disease. It is one which affects all people and which is transferred by the father through a union with a woman. Thus, the life of humans is one fraught from the beginning with sin, as well as both moral and physical decay. Thus, covering their bodies was symbolic of being covered in righteousness and life.

Should they expose their private parts before the Lord, it would be an affront because they had exposed the *source* of the transfer of that first sin committed so long before by their first father and which continued to be transmitted through them.

It is important to note that both the KJV and the NKJV receive demerits in their translation of this verse. It is not the “tabernacle of meeting” but the “tent of meeting.” The word is *ohel* and it means “tent.” This is why it first says, “the tent of meeting” and then “near the altar.” Although not yet described, this is speaking of the altar of incense which will stand in the Holy Place.

^{43 (fin)} *It shall be a statute forever to him and his descendants after him.*

Anytime, from the life of Aaron, and through all of his descendants during the time while the law remained in effect, they were to be obedient to this precept. They were to wear these undergarments at all times when ministering to the Lord in their prescribed manner.

IV. Pictures of Christ and His Work

With the verses completed for the passage and the chapter, let’s take a few minutes and look at how they point to Christ and His work. First, the robe which is to be worn by Aaron is all of blue. As blue signifies the law, it is intended to show us, like the picture seen in the Ark, that Christ Jesus is the embodiment of the law.

As I noted, the word for “all,” as in “all of blue” is the word *kalil*. This comes from *kalal*, meaning to complete or make perfect. It is Christ who perfectly fulfilled the law, completing it on our behalf. He is literally “robed” in the completion of the law. Also, the robe was seamless, and points to John’s words about Jesus on the cross –

“Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece.” John 19:23

Shortly after this occurred, John records Jesus’ dying words, “It is finished.” The high priest of Israel’s robe was merely a picture of Christ embodying the law, fulfilling it, and finishing it for us. However, before He died, something else was recorded about Christ’s tunic. Despite dividing His other garments, the value of His tunic led them to say –

“Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,” John 19:24

In Matthew 26:65, the high priest of Israel tore his clothes during Jesus’ trial. This was in direct violation of the Law of Moses. In Leviticus 21 it says –

“*He who is the high priest among his brethren, on whose head the anointing oil was poured and who is consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes;*” Leviticus 21:10

What we see in this was an ending of the old order of things. The Law of Moses was ended in Christ’s work and the New Covenant was established in His blood. The note of keeping the high priest’s robe from tearing was given as an anticipatory picture of the true High Priest’s garment not being torn.

But, the recording of the high priest tearing his garment signifies the ending of that priesthood. That Christ’s garment wasn’t torn, and yet His body was, signifies the introduction of the New. Next, the word to describe the hem around the neck was that very rare word *takharah* which comes from a root “to burn with anger.”

In this, the symbolism seems obvious; the anger of the Lord at the sin of man is what was on display there at the cross. The penalty for that sin was the tearing of Christ’s body, the true robe of humanity.

The pomegranates or, *rimmon*, as I said are associated with the word *rum*, or “to be high, or exalted.” They also carry the connotation of mental maturity, and calling to

remembrance. The wearing of the pomegranates then only looked forward to the maturity of the New Covenant established through Christ's work. This is seen in the use of the same word, *rum*, in Isaiah 52 –

“Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently;
He shall be **exalted** (*rum*) and extolled and be very high.
¹⁴ Just as many were astonished at you,
So His visage was marred more than any man,
And His form more than the sons of men;
¹⁵ So shall He sprinkle many nations.
Kings shall shut their mouths at Him;
For what had not been told them they shall see,
And what they had not heard they shall consider.” Isaiah 52:13-15

Christ was exalted through His death in fulfillment of the law. In Christ we too now have that maturity. Paul explains it in the book of Galatians where he calls the law a tutor to lead us to Christ –

“But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” Galatians 3:23-25

The colors of the pomegranates – blue, purple, and red, all point to the completed work of Christ, just as each time these colors have been mentioned. He kept the law, He was exalted to His rightful kingly status, and His blood is the judgment *on* our sin or *against* the sin of unbelievers.

The *paamon*, or bells, are specifically given to represent calling to remembrance the fulfillment of the law by Christ. The word comes from *pa'am*, or occurrences. Each precept of the law was specifically and perfectly fulfilled by Christ. Each tinkle of the bell is to call that to remembrance.

That they were of gold indicates His deity which reminded His humanity of each task He was to fulfill for His redeemed. That both the pomegranates and the bells are attached specifically to the blue robe of the High Priest signifies calling to remembrance His work in completion of the law and acknowledging His exalted status because of it.

That they encircled the entire hem shows the unbroken nature of His work in its fulfillment. Every word and every detail fills us with pictures of the work of Christ on our behalf.

The specific note about Aaron wearing this robe at all times when he went in and out before the Lord, and that the sound was to be heard lest he die, continues the picture of the constant reminder by God to Christ of His need to not die *because* of the law, but *in fulfillment of* the law. If He failed in any precept, He would die before the Lord. Thanks be to God, He prevailed.

The engraved plate, as I noted, is later called a crown. It pictures the royal kingship of Christ. Unlike Israel which had offices of king and priest which were not to be intermingled, Christ is the fulfillment of them both. This is explicitly stated by the prophet Zechariah concerning the coming Messiah –

“Take the silver and gold, make an elaborate crown, and set *it* on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. ¹² Then speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, saying:

“Behold, the Man whose name *is* the BRANCH!

From His place He shall branch out,

And He shall build the temple of the Lord;

¹³ Yes, He shall build the temple of the Lord.

He shall bear the glory,

And shall sit and rule on His throne;

So He shall be a priest on His throne,

And the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” Zechariah 6:11-13

The special word used to describe this plate, *tsiyts*, speaks of Christ’s Human and Divine natures. The pure gold represents His pure divinity, but that it is a flower speaks of His humanity. This is seen where the same word speaks of the fading glory of man –

“The voice said, ‘Cry out!’

And he said, ‘What shall I cry?’

‘All flesh *is* grass,

And all its loveliness *is like the flower* of the field.’” Isaiah 40:6

Unlike fallen man though, Christ is the unfading flower who stepped out of heaven to restore us to that same beautiful state.

The engraving of HOLINESS TO THE LORD on this plate signifies the perfection of Christ. It is He who is the true Mediator for God's people. It is He who makes our offerings acceptable to God once again, and it is He who restores us – fully and completely – to our heavenly Father.

That there were two words on the engraving signifies His Divine/ Human nature – *qodesh Yehovah*. The 8 letters signify the new beginnings which are found in Christ Jesus. In fact, the name JESUS in Greek, IESOUS, is numerically equal to 888. Thus He is the ultimate example of the New Beginning for fallen man.

The blue cord which tied the plate to the turban signifies the law as fulfilled which ties the divine Lord to His intercessory role as our high priest. It is He who is the bridge between the infinite Father and finite us.

The specific naming of the placement of the plate on the forehead of the high priest is to show both the place of conscience and of identification. The duality is seen in that He is first conscious *of those* He ministers *for*, meaning us. And He is also conscious of His rightful place before His Father.

Secondly, it reveals His priestly identity presented *before* us and which comes *from* His Father. It is He who bore our iniquities at the cross, and it is He who still makes our sin-filled lives acceptable as HOLINESS TO THE LORD. Only through Him can we be considered acceptable to God. This is actually realized on the very last page of the Bible with these marvelous words –

“And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. ⁴They shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads.” Revelation 22:3, 4

The linen tunic and the linen turban reflect Christ's absolute righteousness. It is what crowns Him and it defines His very character. This is why it is on Aaron's head as a turban and is what is closest to his body concerning garments. They picture the pure and unsullied life and authority of Christ.

The unusual word to describe this linen, *shabats*, signifies that it is checkered into His very nature. Unlike any other human, only He possesses this complete righteousness in His nature. It is “set,” if you will, into His very being. As it comes out on both his arms

and under his robe, it signifies that righteousness is an all-evident trait of His. Thus, it is this characteristic of Him that Pilate proclaimed –

“I have found no fault in this Man.” Luke 23:14

The woven sash which was used for the tunic, but hidden under the other garments is reflective of His divine majesty. This is seen in the 93rd Psalm –

“The Lord reigns, He is clothed with majesty;

The Lord is clothed,

He has girded Himself with strength.

Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved.” Psalm 93:1

The chapter closes with a transitional set of verses which lead us into the next chapter and the details for the consecration of Aaron and His sons. Without going into complete detail, the white tunics, sashes, and hats for Aaron’s sons merely picture our righteousness, endowed to us because of the work of Christ. It is He who has brought many sons to glory through His work.

The hats, as I noted, are a special word used only for these hats of the priests. The word is *migbaoth* and it is from the same root as *gibah* or “hills,” and *gabia* or “cups.” These words are tied directly to the Aramaic word Gabbatha, the place where Christ was judged before Pilate.

The symbolism is beautiful. The priests of the Lord Jesus are granted that status as the helmet of salvation upon their head because of the judgment rendered on Christ at Gabbatha.

The statement that the garments of the sons of Aaron were “for glory and for beauty” was the same statement made for the garments of Aaron. In other words, *because of* the work of Christ, His priests now bear the same glory and beauty as He before the Father. Think of it! Imagine what we have been granted!

Yes, we are considered righteous children of God because of Christ, but even more it is we who are considered a kingdom of priests to God because of Him. This is what is pictured in the white garments of the sons of the high priest.

As it was Moses who clothed Aaron and his sons, so it is the Word of God who clothed Christ as a High Priest and who now clothes us through faith in His word. In this, we are

anointed – sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13). We are consecrated – the offering of our hands is acceptable to the Lord (Hebrews 10:20). And we are sanctified – made holy to serve and minister to God as priests (Revelation 22:3).

Lastly today, in the final two verses are a picture of our acceptable nature before God because of Christ. The linen undergarments are a picture of *our spiritual nakedness* being covered by *Christ's righteousness*. As nakedness was not a consideration in the Garden of Eden, it is not physical nakedness which is being pictured.

Rather, it is the spiritual nakedness of fallen humanity. Though it is difficult for us to consider, the record of the cross is that Christ's garments were taken from Him and parted up, with the exception of the tunic for which lots were cast.

This means that He hung exposed in His flesh to the world. And yet He was considered, just as Adam once was, spiritually covered. His death, shameful by the standards of the world, grants us His same spiritual covering. Through Him, we can never again incur the iniquity of sin and die. We are freed from sin's power because of the work of Jesus Christ our Lord.

In all today, we have seen dozens and dozens of pictures of Christ and His work. As I said at the beginning of the sermon, it is up to us where we will fix our eyes and our devotions. If you want to fix them on the law, you will be judged by that law. If you want to fix them on Mary, you will die apart from Christ. Rather, call on Jesus, be reconciled to God, and have peace in yourselves because of the finish work of Another; because of Jesus' work...

Closing Verse: *And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. ⁴ They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. Revelation 22:4*

Next Week: Exodus 29:1-14 *Looking into these verses will be more than fun...* (The Consecration of Aaron and His Sons, Part I) (79th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Clothed in Majesty and in Righteousness

You shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue
Follow all of the directions as I instruct you

There shall be an opening for his head in the middle of it
It shall have at its opening all around
Like the opening in a coat of mail
So that it does not tear; we don't want that tearing sound

And upon its hem you shall make pomegranates
Of blue, purple, and scarlet, all around its hem
And bells of gold all around between them

A golden bell and a pomegranate
A golden bell and a pomegranate, so shall it be
Upon the hem of the robe all around
These instructions you shall follow exactly

And it shall be upon Aaron when he ministers
And its sound when he goes into the holy place will be heard
Before the Lord and when he comes out
That he may not die; do according to my word

You shall also make a plate
Of pure gold and engrave on it; attend to my word
Like the engraving of a signet
HOLINESS TO THE LORD

And you shall put it on a blue cord, you see
That it may be on the turban
On the front of the turban it shall be

So it shall be on Aaron's forehead, as I tell
That Aaron may bear the iniquity
Of the holy things which the children of Israel
Hallow in all their holy gifts, given to Me

And it shall always be on his forehead, according to my word
That they may be accepted before the Lord

You shall skillfully weave the tunic
Of fine linen thread
You shall make the turban of fine linen
And you shall make the sash of woven work, as I have said

For Aaron's sons you shall make tunics
And you shall make sashes for them, follow in this duty
And you shall make hats for them
For glory and beauty

So you shall put them on Aaron your brother
And on his sons with him, so shall it be
You shall anoint them, consecrate them, and sanctify them
That they as priests may minister to Me

And you shall make for them
Linen trousers to cover their nakedness
They shall reach from the waist to the thighs
As a part of their regular dress

They shall be on Aaron and on his sons
When they come into the tabernacle of meeting; these instructions apply
Or when they come near the altar to minister in the holy place
That they do not incur iniquity and die

It shall be a statute forever to him
And his descendants after him, all of them

Once again, O God we have seen Christ revealed
Each word points to Him and what He has done
In the words which were long ago concealed
New insights keep coming of Your precious Son

Thank You for the wonder of it all
And grant us the wisdom that on name of Jesus we will call

And then through Him we shall glorify you for eternal days
And to You, O God, we shall sing our marvelous words of praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 29:1-14

(THE CONSECRATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS, PART I)

Towards the end of chapter 28, the Lord told Moses the purpose of the special garments which were made for Aaron and his sons. In verse 41, he said –

“So you shall put them on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him. You shall anoint them, consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me as priests.” Exodus 28:41

The covenant was cut, the law was confirmed, and the place where the law would be administered has been described. Further, the instructions for making the garments of those who would administer the law has been given. Every detail has ultimately pointed to the work of Christ.

And so before going on, it needs to be noted that if each of these things which has been given to administer the law point to Christ, then in Christ’s coming, they are no longer needed. The ark and its mercy seat; the table of showbread; the menorah; the tabernacle and the tent; the courtyard; each pillar and socket – all of it.

If Christ fulfilled these pictures, then the items are no longer needed. And if there is no longer a need for an ark or a mercy seat or a temple to contain them, then the law which these things detailed is no longer in effect. One cannot have a law without one to minister that law. And one cannot have a minister of the law if there is no place to minister.

This should be as clear as crystal to Christians. And yet, the heresy of reinstating the law into our theology never ceases to raise its ugly head. And so, even before looking at the consecration of Aaron and his sons for the priesthood of the law, let us remember this truth. The law and *everything* associated with it only pointed to Christ, including this priesthood. The author of Hebrews explains this...

Text Verse: *“For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. ¹³ For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar.” Hebrews 7:12, 13*

Let us never lose sight of this fundamental truth as we now turn to the establishment of the Aaronic priesthood; a priesthood which only remained in effect until it was

superseded by the work of Christ, our true High Priest who descends not from Aaron, but from Judah.

This is why the author of Hebrews almost immediately follows up with words that tell us that the Law of Moses is annulled “because of its weakness and unprofitableness.” The law made nothing perfect. But on the other hand, in Christ there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we can now draw near to God.

In Christ, we have a new priesthood, an eternal one which is superior to the law in all ways. We have a Mediator who is without sin and who will never fail us. Let us remember this truth as we look at the establishment of the Aaronic priesthood. These were fallible men administering a law of bondage and death.

However, it is a necessary part of the redemptive story. By seeing the failings of this priesthood, the glory of Christ’s priesthood stands out all the more radiantly. It is all to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Investiture of Aaron and His Sons (Verses 1-9)

¹“And this is what you shall do to them to hallow them

As I said, at the end of chapter 28, Moses was given instructions to anoint, consecrate, and sanctify Aaron and his sons. We will now be given the specific process by which this is to be accomplished. In Leviticus 8, the actual rites which are prescribed here will be carried out.

The word translated here as “hallow” means to sanctify. It is what is required in order to set them apart for their duties. Five things will be accomplished in order to sanctify them. The first is washing. This is found in verse 4. The next will be investiture of them with the garments of the priesthood. This will be seen in verses 5-9.

After this, will come the anointing mentioned in verse 7. After that will be the sacrifices of the bull and the rams. This is recorded in verses 10-23. And finally, will be the filling of the hand as recorded in verse 24. This filling will be for the purpose of a wave offering. Charles Ellicott notes the purpose of these five acts –

“All of these were symbolical acts, typical of things spiritual—ablution, of the putting away of impurity; investiture, of being clothed with holiness; unction, of the giving of

Divine grace, &c.; the entire consecration forming an acted parable, very suggestive and full of instruction to such as understood its meaning.” Charles Ellicott

Here in verse 1, the offerings are mentioned first. The Pulpit Commentary says this is because it was to have them “in readiness when the investiture and anointing were over.” This is incorrect. Moses is still on the mountain and only receiving instructions. He isn’t actually there, ready to do the prescribed tasks. The same thing here is happening as that which occurred with the mentioning of such things as at other times, like the ark and the mercy seat being mentioned first before all other furniture.

The thing which sanctifies is mentioned first. In the case of the animals, it is their shed blood which will be used to cover the sins of Aaron and his sons. For this reason, the bull and rams are named first. Each step of the process is showing us the holiness of God and the need for atonement, even for the high priestly line.

1 (con’t) for ministering to Me as priests:

It should be understood that these things were required, and they allowed Aaron and his sons to minister to the Lord, but they did not make them perfect. This will be seen throughout the history of Israel under the law. Further, when the high priest sacrificed for Israel each year on the Day of Atonement, he first had to sacrifice for *his own sins*. Therefore, the Aaronic priesthood is one of imperfection, but established by grace and with mercy. Were this not given, these men would be unacceptable as priests to the Lord.

1 (con’t) Take one young bull and two rams without blemish,

The first portion of the hallowing process is to take one young bull. The word is *par*. It comes from *parar*, which means “to defeat.” *Par* means “a bullock” because it breaks “forth in wild strength.” It may also have a reference to dividing the hoof.

They are also instructed to take two rams. The ram is *ayil*. This comes from *uwl*, meaning “mighty.” Therefore, it indicates strength or anything strong. In the case of a ram, it is the strong animal of the flock.

Those selected are to be “without blemish.” The Hebrew word is *tamim*, which means “blameless” or “perfect.” It was first used to describe Noah in Genesis 6:9. Later, the Lord told Abraham to “walk before me and be *tamim* (or blameless).” It is also the word

used to describe the Passover lamb of Exodus 12. Now, for the fourth time in the Bible, it is used to indicate the animals which are to be sacrificed in place of Aaron and his sons.

² and unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil (you shall make them of wheat flour).

Meal offerings are next mentioned. They are a bloodless offering, but each is specifically noted as being unleavened. Leaven, or yeast, in the Bible pictures sin. Just as bread puffs up when leavened, man puffs up in pride, arrogance, or wickedness through sin. It is also something that causes corruption, just as sin is what causes corruption in man.

The first bread is simply *lechem*, or bread. We will see in verse 23 that this is a round loaf of bread. The circle in the Bible signifies that which is divine and eternal. It has no beginning or end.

The second bread is *khallah*, a new word introduced into the Bible. It comes from *khalal*, meaning “to pierce.” Therefore it is pierced or punctured cakes. These cakes were to be mixed with oil. The third is another new type of bread, *raqiq*. This comes from *raqaq*, which means “to spit.” So it is a thin cake, like a wafer. These wafers were to be smeared with oil.

Each of these was to be made of *soleth khittim* or fine wheat flour. The word *khittah* or “wheat” comes from the word *khanat*, which means to make spicy, to embalm, or to ripen. The flour, or *solet*, comes from an unused root meaning “to strip.” Thus it is fine flour. It has only been seen once so far in the Bible, at the time of Abraham. When the Lord appeared to him on the way to destroying Sodom, we read these words –

“So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, ‘Quickly, make ready three measures of **fine meal**; knead *it* and make cakes.’” Genesis 18:6

We will see that these will all be waved before the Lord. It was to be an acknowledgement that bread is what sustains the body, and that the mercy which allows man to be acceptable before God comes solely by an act of grace.

³ You shall put them in one basket and bring them in the basket, with the bull and the two rams

It's always curious to come to a verse like this. One must ask why the Lord is so specific about them bringing the three types of loaves in *sal ekhad*, or "basket one." Is this entirely necessary? Couldn't He have just said, "Bring them in a basket," or "Bring those along with the animals"?

And yet, there is great specificity which asks us to stop and consider why one basket is specified. The *sal*, or "basket," comes from the word *salal*, which means "to build." Thus it indicates a basket which is built up through the weaving process, specifically with a type of willow branch.

4 "And Aaron and his sons you shall bring to the door of the tabernacle of meeting,

The translation is incorrect. It is "the tent of meeting," not the "tabernacle of meeting." The word is *ohel*, signifying a tent, not *mishkan*, which would be the tabernacle itself. At this door of the tent, an item which is not yet described, known as the bronze laver, will be placed. That will have a specific purpose in the rituals of the priests as they minister to the Lord.

4 (con't) and you shall wash them with water.

As part of the ordination process, Moses is to wash Aaron and his sons with water. This implies an entire washing of their bodies. At this strategic place, just between where the people were allowed to come, and the entrance to the place where the Lord dwelt, they were to be prepared for being acceptable to enter His presence.

The people would be witnesses of this part of the process, and it was intended to allow them to see that they remained unclean and unacceptable to enter where their King was. Only those chosen and properly prepared could do so. After this washing of their bodies, the laver will be used differently. This is seen in Exodus 30 –

"Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ¹⁸ "You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base also of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it, ¹⁹ for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. ²⁰ When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the Lord, they shall wash with water, lest they die. ²¹ So they shall wash their hands and their feet, lest they die. And it shall be a statute

forever to them—to him and his descendants throughout their generations.”

-Exodus 30:17-21

Each step, they are being progressively instructed in the holiness of God and the need to be pure and undefiled as they approached Him on behalf of the people.

⁵Then you shall take the garments, put the tunic on Aaron, and the robe of the ephod, the ephod, and the breastplate, and gird him with the intricately woven band of the ephod.

Two of the things previously described, the sash and the Urim and Thummin, are not mentioned. Also, the order here for two of the pieces of clothing is inverted. When the clothing of them is actually done in Leviticus 8, the missing items will be mentioned and the two inverted items will be noted in the right order.

For now, only basic instructions are given. These instructions now are not in error, but they are noted according to what the Lord determines is needed in order for Moses to clearly understand what is expected for the ordination process.

You should remember now that the clothing of Aaron and his sons only occurs *after* their washing. However, the continued washing of their hands and feet in the regular discharge of their duties occurs *after* they are clothed. Why is this something we should remember? Because you will be given a test on it at the end of the sermon to see if you remember.

⁶You shall put the turban on his head, and put the holy crown on the turban.

The turban is what is to adorn Aaron's head and the holy crown is to adorn the turban. This "holy crown" is the "plate of pure gold" mentioned in verse 28:36. Here it is called *netser ha'qodesh*, or "crown, the holy." The word *netser* is introduced here. It comes from *nazar*, which means "to consecrate." It indicates something set apart and includes the idea of the Nazirite who is found in Numbers 6. There is to be a separation noted between Aaron and all others, highlighted by this marvelous holy crown.

⁷And you shall take the anointing oil, pour *it* on his head, and anoint him.

The anointing oil was first mentioned in Exodus 25:6, but its specific makeup will not be explained until chapter 30. Again, this is not out of order, but rather the use, being given

before the makeup of the substance, follows logically along with the other prioritized items so far.

This special anointing oil will be used to anoint Aaron, his sons, and the tabernacle along with everything in it. As far as the means of anointing Aaron, it was poured or smeared on his head in an extravagant amount. His sons however would simply be sprinkled with this oil. The anointing of Aaron was remembered by David in a most vivid way in the 133rd Psalm –

“Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is*
For brethren to dwell together in unity!
² *It is* like the precious oil upon the head,
Running down on the beard,
The beard of Aaron,
Running down on the edge of his garments.
³ *It is* like the dew of Hermon,
Descending upon the mountains of Zion;
For there the Lord commanded the blessing—
Life forevermore.” Psalm 133:1-3

⁸ Then you shall bring his sons and put tunics on them.

The clothing of the sons is intended to set them apart for their priestly duties. Though not in the mediatorial role of Aaron, the sons are consecrated to perform the necessary services required for the care of the people of Israel. They are also set apart for the care of the items in the holy place of the tabernacle.

⁹ And you shall gird them with sashes, Aaron and his sons, and put the hats on them.

The second and third of the three designations of the priestly office are noted here. They were to be girded with sashes and have the hats placed on their heads. These three items then are the standard dress expected of the priests as they ministered for the people and before the Lord.

^{9 (con't)} The priesthood shall be theirs for a perpetual statute.

In these words, confusion can arise unless one understands what the Lord means. The priesthood will last only as long as the law lasts. If the law is annulled, then the priesthood ends with the annulling of the law. When the Messiah came who fulfilled all

of the types and shadows of the law, and who also fulfilled living out the law, then the law was set aside and the priesthood ended.

The word for “perpetual” is *olam*. It means “the vanishing point.” It can mean eternity, but in the case of the law, it is not to be so understood. The law would serve its purpose, and as long as it was in effect, the priesthood would belong to the line of Aaron.

⁹ (con’t) **So you shall consecrate Aaron and his sons.**

u-mileta yad ad aharon v’yad ba’nav – literally, “...and you shall fill (the) hand of Aaron and (the) hand of his sons.” In the ordination and consecration of Aaron and his sons, they would be set apart as acceptable concerning the offerings which filled their hands *from* the people and *to* the Lord. Thus, the term “fill the hand” indicates their acceptability and thus their consecration.

*Clothed in righteousness, adorned in white
Cleansed by the blood of the Lamb
Now our garments are pure; clean and bright
Saved forevermore by the Great I AM*

*We are now priests unto the Most High God
We have been brought new unto Him by the blood of the Lamb
Forever and ever golden streets we will trod
Saved forevermore by the Great I AM*

*Throughout the ages we will serve the Eternal King
Subjects of His kingdom because of the blood of the Lamb
For endless, ceaseless ages to Him we shall sing
Saved forevermore by the Great I AM*

II. The Slaying of the Bull (Verses 10-14)

¹⁰ **“You shall also have the bull brought before the tabernacle of meeting, and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands on the head of the bull.**

The KJV incorrectly says, "...thou shalt cause a bullock to be brought." It is not "a" bull, but "the" bull mentioned in verse 1. It was to be set apart because it was "without blemish." The KJV confuses this and diminishes the importance of what is being said.

This bull, without any blemish, was to be brought to the door of the tent, not the tabernacle. There before the tent, they were to place their hands on the bull's head. In this is symbolically a transfer of the sin and imperfection of the men to the bull.

In this act, the bull thus takes on the curse which they deserve for their sins and it is transferred to the bull. As the animal is accursed, it must die. Thus we have what is known as a *vicarious substitute*. The sin is symbolically removed from the one and transferred to the other. Therefore, one life is given in place of another.

¹¹ Then you shall kill the bull before the Lord, by the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

It is Moses who is instructed to kill the bull. He will act as the priest *pro-tempore* until Aaron and his sons are fully consecrated as priests. In this verse, we see something which occurs from time to time. Instead of saying, "...kill the bull before Me," it says, "...kill the bull before the Lord."

The words are intended to be fulfilled in the future, at a specific time and at a specific place. Therefore, even though He is speaking about having this accomplished in His own presence, He still uses the formal term "before the Lord."

A way of understanding this would be for the president to say to a person on a mission, "You are to get this document and bring it directly to the office of the president." The matter is so important, that the stress is laid on the *position* rather than the *person*. In the case of the Lord, as He is both position and Person, He uses the term "before the Lord."

¹² You shall take *some* of the blood of the bull and put *it* on the horns of the altar with your finger,

Once the bull was bled out, it would be a confirmation of the death of the animal for "the life is in the blood" according to Leviticus 17:11. With this proof of the death of the substitute, then some of its blood was to be put on the horns of the altar with his finger.

The horns, or *qarnoth*, of the altar are the place of mercy and safe refuge. Further, horns are a symbol of strength. For the blood to be placed on them signified the

granting of mercy and the allowance of safety from the wrath which had been transferred to the bull. As there are four horns pointing toward the four corners of the earth, it further symbolizes the power of the act to fully save and cleanse the sinner. David understood this when he wrote these words –

“I will love You, O Lord, my strength.

²The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;

My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;

My shield and the **horn** of my salvation, my stronghold.” Psalm 18:1, 2

Another point is that Moses is specifically told to apply the blood with his *finger*. The word *etsbah*, or finger, has only been used one time so far in Scripture, in Exodus 8:19 when the magicians of Pharaoh ascribed the plague of the lice to the “finger of God.” The word *etsbah* comes from another word, *tsebah*, which indicates dyed material and thus one gets the idea of grasping something. Therefore, the finger is that which accomplishes a task. The creation is said to be the work of the Lord’s fingers in the 8th Psalm. Thus in this verse, the mercy, the refuge, and the remission of the sins is granted by God, but it is accomplished by the work of the mediator’s fingers.

¹² (con’t) **and pour all the blood beside the base of the altar.**

After the proof of death has been testified to on the horns of the altar, the rest of the blood was to be poured out at the base of the altar. This signifies the complete removal of the life-force which bore the sins of Aaron and his sons.

¹³ **And you shall take all the fat that covers the entrails, the fatty lobe *attached* to the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat that *is* on them, and burn *them* on the altar.**

As new words come into the Bible, I always try to highlight them to you. In this verse are three new words – the *yothereth*, or lobe; the *kabed*, or liver; and the *kilyah*, or kidneys. One must wonder why these particular parts of the animal were to be burnt on the altar. The fat around the entrails signifies the health of life, its abundance. This is seen, for example, from David in Psalm 63 –

“My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness,

And my mouth shall praise *You* with joyful lips.” Psalm 63:5

The liver signifies the seat of emotions and feeling. It is used synonymously with disposition and character. In Lamentations, Jeremiah says –

“My eyes fail with tears; my bowels are troubled; my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people because the children and the sucklings faint in the streets of the city.” Lamentations 2:11 (Jubilee Bible)

The kidney’s position within the body makes them almost inaccessible. When an animal is cut up, they will be the last organs which are reached. Because of this, the kidneys symbolize the hidden parts of man, and thus the mind.

These then were to be offered to the Lord because they symbolized those most intimate aspects of the person. They are the very substance of who he is. The life of the animal was given in exchange for the sins of the men. Therefore, these attributes of theirs were being offered to Him in fire on the altar.

In fact, the word for “burn” here is *qatar*. It is a new word in the Bible and it gives the idea of the smoke of incense. It is the act of turning something into a fragrance by fire. These parts of the animal, signifying these most intimate aspects of the person, were to become as incense to the Lord.

¹⁴ But the flesh of the bull, with its skin and its offal, you shall burn with fire outside the camp.

The rest of the entire animal was to be taken outside the camp and burned with fire. Nothing of it was to remain and none of it was to be eaten. The animal was under a curse, and thus to eat it would be symbolic of taking the sin into oneself.

Instead, it was to be returned to the old order of things where sin remained. In its place, those for whom the animal died would be reckoned under the new order of things. They would be new men with a new nature, cleansed from their defilement before the Lord.

One new word in this verse is *peresh*, meaning dung. It is translated here as offal (and dung is usually pretty awful!). It is what passes through. The entire animal, including what was inside of it, was to be wholly burnt outside the camp.

^{14 (fin)} It is a sin offering.

These last words of the day show us the imperfection of the Aaronic priesthood. Because these were fallible men who required sacrifices for themselves before they could sacrifice for the people, the priesthood could not endure forever. It could only do so until it was replaced by the One who would be perfect and without a need of sacrificing for His own sins. Only then could man truly be purified of the stain of sin which had clung steadfastly to him since the fall of his first father.

*The bull is slain, his blood poured out
The proof of the death is evident in the bowl of blood
But for that bull, don't shed a tear or pout
Sin is atoned for by the crimson flood*

*There! On the cross of Calvary hangs a Man
For the sins of mankind, was shed His blood
We ask, "Can it truly atone for sin? God says, "Yes, it can!"
And so we plunge ourselves 'neath that crimson flood*

*And through His death, our High Priest He came to be
When He went behind the veil and presented His blood
He did this because of God's love – for you and for me
And so let us tell the world of the marvelous crimson flood*

III. Pictures of Christ

Again, as we do each week, it is time to look at the verses today in what they actually picture in relation to the Person and work of Christ.

The meal offering consisted of three things: unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil. All of them were to be made of wheat flour. These point to three aspects of Christ's life and ministry.

Bread is symbolic of life, the word, and provision which sustains man, among other things. The *lechem*, or bread, is simply the normal term for bread. It was to be made without leaven and thus symbolizes life without sin. It is thus a picture of Christ, the sinless Man, who is the word of God, our life, and our provision. As I said earlier though, it is round bread. Thus it also signifies the divine eternity of Christ. As it says of Him in Hebrews –

“Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Hebrews 13:8

The second is the unleavened cakes mixed with oil. That cake is known as *khallah*, which comes from *khalal*, meaning “to pierce.” Thus this bread pictures Christ’s work as the One who was pierced to give us life. This bread was to be mixed with *shemen*, or oil. Oil signifies several things in the Bible such as joy, prosperity, etc. However, its preeminent signification is that of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the work of the Spirit is mixed into the piercing of Christ. The two are not disconnected, but are intricately enmeshed together.

The third type of bread is *raqiq*. This comes from *raqaq*, which means “to spit.” So it is a thin cake, like a wafer. These wafers were to be smeared with oil. In Leviticus 15:8, it notes that if a person defiled by a discharge were to spit, *raqaq*, on a person, it would make them unclean. This bread then pictures Christ’s passion when He was spit on and beaten by the unclean Gentiles as is stated in Luke 18. This was prophesied in Isaiah, using the word *roq* which comes from *raqaq* –

“I gave My back to those who struck Me,
And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard;
I did not hide My face from shame and **spitting**.” Isaiah 50:6

However, this bread is said to have been “anointed” with oil. The word is *mashakh*. It is the same word used to identify the coming Messiah in Isaiah 61:1 –

“The Spirit of the Lord God *is* upon Me,
Because the Lord has **anointed** Me
To preach good tidings to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives,
And the opening of the prison to *those who are* bound.” Isaiah 61:1

Thus, this third bread with its oil also pictures Christ as the One anointed to fulfill the messianic pictures presented in the Old Testament. Each type of bread was to be made of *soleth khittim* or fine wheat flour.

Khittah, or wheat, is the finest of the biblical grains. The word comes from *khanat*, which means to make spicy, to embalm, or to ripen. When the wheat is ripened, it is

valuable as food and as seed for more wheat. Through Christ's ministry, a harvest of wheat is realized. He spoke of this in John 12:23-26 –

“The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. ²⁴ Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. ²⁵ He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him *My* Father will honor.”

The fine wheat flour is a picture of His unchanging character and purity. After these were specified, the Lord told Moses that all three of the breads were to be brought before Him in one basket. The three loaves in the single basket indicate three different aspects of Christ's single ministry. He is the bread of life; He is the One pierced for our transgressions; and He is the one who brings about our salvation and the growth and great harvest of the church.

And yet, there is great specificity which asks us to stop and consider why *one basket* is noted. The *sal*, or “basket,” comes from the word *salal*, which means “to build.” It indicates a basket which is built up through the weaving process. Thus it is through these various aspects of Christ that His ministry is built and embodied. This aspect of His work can be summed up by the words of Hebrews 2:9 –

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.” Hebrews 2:9

After this, the washing and clothing of Aaron and his sons is mentioned. This was to be done at the door of the tent of meeting where they were to be first washed with water. This pictures the total cleansing of the priests.

In Aaron's case, as the high priest, it pictures Christ's perfect purity as our High Priest. It points to His baptism before He entered into His public service in order to fulfill all righteousness. For the sons, it pictures those who follow Christ and are purified by His work. This is seen in John 13 where Christ said this –

“He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.” John 13:10

In that passage, John uses two different words. One indicates a full bathing, the second indicates a lesser washing. Through Christ's work, we are completely cleaned. We stand justified and free of guilt. However, we also continue to go through a process of sanctification where we need to be purified from time to time.

This is pictured in the priests need to wash their hands and their feet as they ministered to the Lord. These external washings signify the universal corruption of man and our need for external purification. The water pictures the spiritual regeneration which occurs when we are set apart by Christ.

Only after the washing was accomplished were the garments then put on them. In the case of Aaron, his garments are emblematic of the divine work of Christ. In this passage, he had seven articles placed upon Him, each representing an aspect of His work which we have seen in previous sermons. Together, they form a picture of Christ, the Prophet, Priest, and King who is completely distinct and set apart from all others.

After he was clothed, Moses then anointed Aaron. That is a picture which was seen once already in the bread, and which is repeated here. It is the anointing of the Holy Spirit on Christ which was prophesied in Isaiah 61. It is also referred to by Peter in Acts 10:38 where he told Cornelius that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power."

In the case of the sons of Aaron, the symbolism again follows through to us. Three items were placed on them – tunics, sashes, and hats. The tunics picture our being clothed in His righteousness. The sashes picture us having girded our waists with His truth. The hats picture our having been granted a helmet of salvation upon our head because of the judgment named for Christ at Gabbatha, the name of which bears the same root as that of the hats.

As far as the terminology concerning the priesthood, that of Aaron and his line, it was to be as long as the law was in effect. However, for the priesthood which this only pictures, Christ's priesthood, Hebrews tells us of its duration –

"Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. ²⁴ But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood." Hebrews 7:23, 24

The priesthood which Christ established, and to which we belong is one which will span eternal ages.

Finally today, we looked at the bull offering. The bull is an exacting picture of Christ. It is the sacrifice that the high priest made for his *own sins* each year on the Day of Atonement. As Christ has no sins of His own, and thus needing no sacrifice, the bull pictures Him as the perfect High Priest.

As the bull pictures Christ, then the symbolism is rather sobering. These men placed their hands on the bull in a symbolic act of transferring their corruption and guilt to it. In Christ, we transferred our corruption and our sin to Him – the sinless Son of God whom the bull pictures. Paul explains this in 2 Corinthians 5 –

“For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

The slaying of the bull symbolizes the death of Christ as our Substitute. The bull was to be without blemish, symbolizing the perfect Man, Jesus. The application of the bull’s blood on the horns of the altar shows that Christ’s blood has brought all who come to Him mercy and a place of refuge.

The particular instructions that the blood was to be applied with the finger demonstrates the creative workings of God on our behalf. Jesus told the people of Israel that if He truly cast out demons with the *finger* of God, then surely the kingdom of God had come upon them. The application of the blood signifies Christ’s exacting work for His redeemed.

As I said earlier, the mercy, the refuge, and the remission of the sins is granted by God, but it results from the work of the mediator’s fingers. As Jesus is fully God, the proof of His death in the shedding of His blood is completely sufficient to take away the sin guilt that we bear.

The pouring out of the blood at the base of the altar pictures the full proof of Christ’s death. He bled until the life had expired from His body. His blood was completely poured out. Despite this, the burning of the fat that covers the entrails, the fatty lobe attached to the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat that is on them symbolizes the offering of the very essence of Christ to God. Paul explains it exactly in Ephesians 5 –

“And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” Ephesians 5:2

The verses ended today with the final disposal of the body of the bull, with the exception of those parts already mentioned. It was to be taken *outside* the camp and burned with fire. The author of Hebrews explains the symbolism for us –

“We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. ¹¹ For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. ¹² Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. ¹³ Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.”

-Hebrews 13:10-13

Here we are again at the end of a passage which upon a cursory reading seems to have little other than historical value. And yet, it is a passage rich in significance because of what it shows us. The details are in the words and the words reveal so very much.

The law really existed, and it served its purpose, but the law also was given in types and shadows in order to show us the supremacy of what still lies ahead. In Christ, the law was annulled. In its place has come the most marvelous of priesthoods. It is an eternal one and one which has the ability to perfect those who come to Christ through it.

If you have trusted in earning God’s favor through self, or through deeds of an outdated law which could never save, I would ask you to reconsider your stance. Christ’s priesthood is superior to that of Aaron’s in all ways. Take your sins, place them at the feet of Jesus, and be reconciled to God through what He has already done. Please allow me just another moment to tell you few verses to make this simple and understandable for you...

Closing Verse: *“And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. ¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” Hebrews 10:11-14*

Next Week: Exodus 29:15-25 *Wonderful things the Bible will relate to you... (The Consecration of Aaron and His Sons, Part II)*

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it

on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Consecration of Aaron and His Sons

And this is what you shall do to them
To hallow them for ministering as priests to Me
Take one young bull and two rams without blemish
And continue to follow my directions explicitly

And unleavened bread
Mixed with oil, each unleavened cake
And unleavened wafers anointed with oil
You shall them of wheat flour make

You shall put them in one basket
And in the basket them you shall bring
With the bull and the two rams
So you shall do this thing

And Aaron and his sons you shall bring
To the tabernacle of meeting, at the door
And you shall wash them with water
On them water you shall pour

Then you shall take the garments
Put the tunic on Aaron, and the robe of the ephod too
The ephod, and the breastplate
And gird him with the intricately woven band of the ephod –
So shall you do

You shall put the turban on his head
And put the holy crown on the turban, as I have said

And you shall the anointing oil take
Pour it on his head, and anoint him
For the ordination's sake

Then you shall bring his sons
And put tunics on them, so shall you do

And you shall gird them with sashes
Aaron and his sons, and put the hats on them too

The priesthood shall be theirs for a perpetual statute
So you shall consecrate Aaron and his sons
In these things, the priesthood you will institute

You shall also have the bull brought
Before the tabernacle of meeting, as I say
And Aaron and his sons shall put their hands\
On the head of the bull, this they shall obey

Then you shall kill the bull before the Lord
By the door of the tabernacle of meeting
According to My word

You shall take some of the blood of the bull, for sure
And put it on the horns of the altar with your finger
And all the blood beside the base of the altar pour

And you shall take all the fat that covers the entrails
The fatty lobe attached to the liver, so shall you do
And the two kidneys and the fat that is on them
And burn them on the altar, as I now instruct to you

But the flesh of the bull
With its skin and its offal, you shall do this thing
You shall burn with fire outside the camp
It is a sin offering

Lord God Almighty, we thank you for what You have done
You have made us a kingdom of priests to You
And it is only because of the work of Your Son
It is only because of what He alone did do

And so we do thank You and we give You praise
Yes, Lord God Almighty, we shall do so... even unto eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 29:15-25

(THE CONSECRATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS, PART II)

The details for the consecration of Aaron and his sons are lengthy and they are complex. They were given by God in order to have a line of people who would be acceptable ministers to God on behalf of the people. But it is not the people who were actually acceptable to Him. Rather, it was the types and shadows of Christ that they only represented which made them so.

The priesthood was required by God for the service of the Law, but it was initiated by Moses on God's behalf. Perfection will not come from imperfection, and Moses was an imperfect man who ministered before the Lord. In the ordination rites we will see today, Moses will have certain tasks to do, just as he has throughout this ritual.

These will include slaughtering animals, anointing Aaron and his sons, and handling their wave offering. The animals are in a different category than man; their blood was not capable of purifying the sin and defilement of man; and the stain of sin remained on the minister and those ministered to – meaning Moses, Aaron, and his sons.

The law and its ministers were simply a stepping stone in the process of redemptive history. They fulfilled their purpose, but they made no one perfect. The author of Hebrews explains this to us by using the enigmatic figure of Melchizedek from Genesis 14 and contrasting him to Aaron. What he says is our text verse for the day...

Text Verse: *“Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?” Hebrews 7:11*

David, writing in the psalms, highlighted the fact that someone would come along who would hold the position of an eternal priesthood, pictured by the mysterious Melchizedek. The book of Hebrews takes that prophecy, ascribes it to Christ Jesus, and then shows how it contrasts the imperfection of the Levitical priesthood.

By demonstrating that the Levitical priesthood was imperfect, that it was conducted by imperfect men, and that they could never make anyone else perfect, we are shown that something else was needed to restore us to the perfection which God requires in order for us to intimately fellowship with Him once again.

Eden was lost and it will be restored. We know this, but we also know that it can never come through a law mediated by imperfect priests. And so today, while we are looking at the continuing consecration of Aaron and his sons, let's try to remember that everything we are looking at is temporary and typical.

It is temporary in what it deals with, meaning the Law of Moses; and it is typical in that it typifies, or pictures, Christ Jesus' more perfect ministry. If we can keep our minds on that now, and every time we open the Bible, we will have a much clearer understanding, and a much deeper appreciation of, why all these details are included for us to look into. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The First Ram (verses 15-18)

¹⁵ "You shall also take one ram,

Verses 10-14 from last week detailed the slaughter of the bull of the consecration. Now the two rams which were selected, along with the bull in verse 1, are to be sacrificed. They were, as verse 1 noted, to be "without blemish." In the Hebrew, there is an article before "ram" in this verse. It says, "...and ram, the one." It is one of the two which has been selected as a burnt offering to the Lord.

^{15 (con't)} and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands on the head of the ram;

Of this verse, John Gill says that by putting their hands on the head of the ram, they were –

"...confessing their sins, acknowledging their guilt, and by this act transferring the same to the ram, which was to be a burnt offering, and was typical of the imputation of sin to Christ, as before observed."

Despite being a great Bible commentator, the analysis is incorrect. According to verse 18, this animal will be offered as a sweet aroma to the Lord. If this were a sin offering, the last thing we would want to do is to offer it in this manner to the Lord. That would be comparable to saying, "I'm going out to steal a new furniture set for the house as a devotion to the Lord."

Instead, the sins of Aaron and his sons were symbolically transferred to the bull of the previous verses. Now, this ram is given as “token of the dedication of themselves wholly to God, as *living sacrifices*” (Charles Ellicott).

This then follows logically after the sin offering in type and picture of Christ. Nobody can offer themselves as a holy and dedicated person to Christ until they *first* receive His forgiveness of sins. Unfortunately, this is how many churches work in the world today. People come in, they are told to live good lives, and they are told to do good stuff for the Lord.

However, if they have never had their sins dealt with first, then it doesn't matter how much good they do. The offering of their lives is tainted with sin and it is unacceptable to God. If Mother Teresa didn't receive Christ as Savior, then He never received her life of piety as an offering. It is that simple.

Only after the sin is dealt with can we offer ourselves properly to the One who has been offended by fallen man and his life of sin, even since the days of Adam. What we look at as a seemingly barbarous set of rituals from an outdated law, are only a type and shadow of exactly what necessitated the death of Jesus Christ.

To state that these animal sacrifices were somehow unnecessary or barbarous is an implicit statement that Christ's even greater sacrifice was also unnecessary. Woe to us if we should ever presume to hold to such a view. The holiness of God is revealed in each animal sacrifice that is mentioned in these verses.

¹⁶ and you shall kill the ram,

The ram is to die in place of Aaron and his sons. Death is involved, but life is involved as well. Taking the death of the bull from last week, and then the death of the ram so far this week, a picture right from the New Testament is being made. Concerning the bull, Paul writes in Romans 6:7-11-

“For he who has died has been freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. ¹⁰ For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God. ¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Concerning the ram, Paul says also in Romans that we are to be “living sacrifices” to God. That sounds contradictory – a living sacrifice – but it is pictured here in the death of this ram for the on-going consecration of Aaron and his sons.

¹⁶ (con’t) **and you shall take its blood and sprinkle *it* all around on the altar.**

Unlike the bull, nothing here is said concerning applying the blood to the horns of the altar. As I noted then, the horns, or *qarnoth*, of the altar are the place of mercy and safe refuge. They are also a symbol of strength.

For the blood to be placed on them signified granting of mercy and the allowance of safety from the wrath which had been transferred to the bull. As there are four horns pointing toward the four corners of the earth, it symbolizes the power of the act to fully save and cleanse the sinner.

This is unneeded here because the mercy has already been granted, and the sins have *already been* expiated. As far as the translation which says to “sprinkle” its blood all around the altar, this is not what is happening. It should say something like “scatter” or “splash.” It is a completely different word than that which will be used in verse 21. The NIV gives a far better rendering with –

“Slaughter it and take the blood and splash it against the sides of the altar.”

Jewish commentaries concerning this action say that “the blood was cast at two of the corners, and thus moistened all the four sides. This was regarded as casting it ‘on the altar all around’” (Pulpit Commentary).

The purpose of this blood being splashed on the altar “expresses one’s complete, voluntary surrender, and readiness to die while yet living” (Lange). This is what Christ did for us. When we are in Christ, then that same yielding on our part is reckoned as acceptable to God. However, even our very best services and offerings to God, are still not acceptable without the covering of Christ’s blood. Only as seen through what He has done can the things we do be considered in that same acceptable light.

¹⁷ **Then you shall cut the ram in pieces,**

The handling and dividing of the animal here is completely different than for that of the bull. There were a few expressly named parts of the bull which were to be burned on

the altar, but its flesh, hide, and offal were to be burned outside the camp as a sin offering. However, this animal is divided up and washed.

The word for “you shall cut” is *nathakh*. It is introduced here and it is actually quite rare, being used just nine times in the Bible. It comes from a primitive root meaning “to dismember.” Thus it means “to cut in pieces” or “to divide by joints.” Such is the action that is accomplished here.

17 (con't) wash its entrails and its legs,

Another new word here is *kerá*, or leg. It specifically signifies from the knee to the ankle. The washing of these was to signify purity. In picture, it is the purity of Christ which will be offered on the altar. As the legs are the part of the animal which are covered in the dirt of the earth, it is these that are washed.

In this, it would cleanse the externally defiled parts. This is seen in the washing of the feet throughout the Bible as symbolic of washing away worldly defilement. This is why Jesus said in John 13:10, “He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet.”

Abraham understood this and brought water to wash the Lord’s feet when He arrived at his tent in Genesis 19:2. For this reason, the legs along with the entrails were washed. The animal pictures the purity of Christ, offered up to God as a perfect offering.

17 (con't) and put *them* with its pieces and with its head.

They would be divided here so that the entire animal could be burnt together as a whole unit. If the legs were not removed, they would hang out from the fire and smolder, but not be burnt up together with the body.

But in picture, Christ was completely consumed in His ministry under the law, and in His death in fulfillment of it. Thus, this ram was to picture Him in this way. Once it was cut up, its body was to be treated in a completely different way than that of the bull, as we see next...

18 And you shall burn the whole ram on the altar.

The entire ram is to be burnt right there on the altar. The expiation of sin is not needed. Because of this, the animal is considered an acceptable substitute to be offered to the Lord on behalf of those it replaced. Such a burnt offering, without any associated

defilement, represented perfect self-sacrifice. For this reason, it was entirely acceptable to God.

The word for “burn” here, *qatar*, is the same as that of verse 13 last week where the intimate parts of the bull alone were burnt on the altar. The contrast between that sin offering and this whole burnt offering couldn’t be made any clearer.

This word, *qatar*, signifies making something fragrant through fire. The entire animal was such an offering. In picture, the ram here signifies the wholly acceptable offering of Christ to God on behalf of man. In the bull, He is seen as the sin offering which was burned outside the camp.

But in the ram, He is seen as the whole and complete perfection of every good deed, offered to God on the brazen altar. It is He who is pleasing to God in the fulfillment of the law. In Him we are viewed as if having been presented to God in exactly the same way. It is a marvelous thing for us to consider. We are an acceptable offering to God because of the work of Another.

18 (con’t) It is a burnt offering to the Lord;

The *olah*, or burnt offering, gives the idea of ascent, as if going up stairs. The smoke of the offering was to *ascend* to Yehovah who symbolically was to receive it on high. It is translated into Greek as *holocaust*, a word we are familiar with concerning the complete burning of many Jews during WWII.

18 (con’t) it is a sweet aroma,

The word “sweet,” or *nikhoakh*, hasn’t been seen since Genesis 8:21 when Noah built an altar to the Lord and sacrificed to Him after the flood. The word comes from *nuakh*, which means restful and thus abstractly delight, as in a sweet odor. It is exactly what Paul was referring to when he thanked the Philippians for their gift sent to him as an offering –

“Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things *sent* from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.” Philippians 4:18

18 (con’t) an offering made by fire to the Lord.

The word “offering” here is a new one in the Bible, *ishsheh*. It is a word used in a liturgical sense which indicates especially an offering by fire. It comes from *esh*, meaning fire.

As a short explanation of the two animals thus far mentioned, the bull was given to make the man acceptable to God by having his sins expiated. The first ram has been given to show that in Christ, the man’s actions, as a self-sacrifice, are acceptable to God. The two follow in order to show that the first must precede the second.

Paul, being a Jew and well versed in the Old Testament types and pictures, wrote words which reflect exactly what was going on in this first ram offering. Two verses of special note are –

“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” Ephesians 5:1, 2

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Romans 12:1, 2

*A sweet smelling aroma to the Lord
An offering made of our lives and our work
We shall be obedient to Him and to His word
No duty that is proper shall we set aside or shirk*

*As Christ our Lord gave Himself for us
We should also walk in love and so be a suitable offering
Let us endeavor to follow our Lord Jesus
And act in emulation of His eternal proffering*

*Offering ourselves and our bodies as a living sacrifice
People living out our lives holy and acceptable to God
Because for our sins, Christ Jesus paid the price
And now it is our duty to be circumspect in this life we trod*

II. The Sprinkling of the Blood (verses 19-21)

¹⁹ “You shall also take the other ram,

The Hebrew says, “...the ram, the second.” In verse 22, it is called *el millium*, the “ram [of] consecration,” because in the acts associated with it, this portion of the consecration of Aaron and his sons will be complete. This ram is essentially a peace, or fellowship, offering, but because it is a part of the consecration, there is more to it than a normal peace offering.

^{19 (con’t)} and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands on the head of the ram.

The laying of the hands on the head of the bull was for the transfer of sin. The laying on of hands for the first ram was as an offering of the individual wholly to the service of God. The laying of hands on this animal was to signify the receiving of the authority to serve. Each offering is logically noted, in order, to show the process of acceptable service to God.

²⁰ Then you shall kill the ram,

The word for “kill” here, *shakhat*, is a general word which can mean kill, but the word “slaughter” would be much better. They don’t shoot the thing with an arrow, or beat it to death with a bat. Instead, they cut the animal so that it bleeds out into a basin. This is what should come to mind with each of the sacrifices that are seen in this chapter and in the many sacrifices ahead of us.

^{20 (con’t)} and take some of its blood and put *it* on the tip of the right ear of Aaron and on the tip of the right ear of his sons, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot,

As odd as this may seem at first, a moment of explanation and everyone who doesn’t understand should have their “aha” moment. The application of the blood to the priests is the crowning moment of the entire process. It is symbolic of the complete dedication of the priest’s life to the service of the Lord.

The returning of the blood to these men signifies their acceptance as ministers and the granting of their authority as such. The blood symbolizes life. The shed blood thus symbolizes death. They symbolically *die to self* and henceforward are *to live for God*.

That each point of application is on the right side has meaning in and of itself. Biblically, the right side is the side of strength, honor, blessing, authority, judgment (as in salvation), wisdom, cleansing, and the like. Applying the blood to the right includes in some measure, each of these connotations.

First, blood is applied to the *tenuk*, or lobe of the ear. This signifies obedience in the sense of spiritual hearing. They were to heed the Divine voice which would speak to them either through the law or through God's prophets. Their lives were to be consecrated to this hearing of the word, in the sense of applying it to their lives. Following this, it was to be applied to the *bohen*, or thumb, of the right hand. This word comes from a root which means "thick." Therefore, it is the thick part of the hand, and thus the thumb. The fingers symbolize human activity. Here, the thumb represents the whole hand.

Their hands, thus meaning their spiritual activities, were to be set apart to God, to holiness, and to only that which was sanctified. They were to be ministers ready to not only hear the Divine voice, but to respond to it through their daily activity.

Finally, the blood was to be applied to the *bohen*, or big toe, of their foot. It is the same word as thumb. As the big toe is the thick appendage, it received the application of blood as representative of the entire foot.

This symbolized that the priests were to walk only in paths of holiness, directing their steps towards God in the race that was set before them. This verse, with the three principle points of application, is explained by Paul in many different passages, but it is well summed up by him in Colossians 1 –

“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; **(ear)** ¹⁰ that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, **(toe)** being fruitful in every good work **(thumb)** and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; ¹² giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.”

-Colossians 1:9-12

In the application of the blood to these three extremities, there is the sense that their entire lives were enclosed in the service of God. From head to toe and from hand to foot, their lives were thus sanctified as acceptable ministers.

However, there is the truth that even with this application, they still couldn't hear, understand, serve, or walk in a truly proper manner. Further, as this blood actually did nothing but symbolize something else, it only looked forward in type and shadow.

As Aaron only pictured the true High Priest, Christ, then they were only a shadow of the One who literally fulfilled these ancient images. The history of the Aaronic priesthood is one filled with fallible men who often made disastrous decisions.

Their being set apart for the service of God was only an anticipatory look towards Christ who would come as the more excellent priest with a more excellent ministry which is established on better promises.

20 (con't) and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar.

As the slaying of this ram signifies the receiving of authority to serve, the splashing of the blood around the altar signifies the acceptance of them for that purpose. There is a duality to the application of the blood – first to them, and then to the remainder of it being splashed on the altar.

21 And you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar, and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle *it* on Aaron and on his garments, on his sons and on the garments of his sons with him;

There are two separate points on which most scholars agree and comment on. One is that this is speaking of the blood which was *going to be* splashed on the altar, not the blood that was splashed on the altar. Their reasoning is that there wouldn't be enough blood to use for the sprinkling. The second thing they comment on is that this blood signified their justification before the Lord.

Both of these make no sense at all. If they were to use the blood that was *going to be* splashed, it would have said that. Instead, the wording is very distinct, *min ha'dam asher al ha'mizbeakh* – "from the blood that is on the altar." Secondly, their justification came from the blood of the bull, not these rams.

Other than a bit of its blood being applied to the horns, that blood was poured out on the ground, not on the altar. This is ram's blood that had *already* been splashed on the altar. The amount isn't what is important. Rather the fact that it had been splashed *on the altar* is what is.

There is a specific process here: 1) Slaughter; 2) Splash on the altar; 3) Take blood from the altar to use in sprinkling. It is a confirmation that not only had the blood of the ordination ram been applied to both priest and altar, but that it was then accepted by God and returned to them along with the anointing oil.

In picture, it is their "Pentecost moment." They had been received as acceptable and they were symbolically endowed with that acceptance. No great amount of blood was necessary. In fact, if it was a heavy amount, it would literally stain the garments.

The word for "sprinkle" here is *nazah*. This is its first use in Scripture. It indicates sprinkling for purification, cleansing, atonement, expiation, etc. In this case, it is for the hallowing, or sanctification, of Aaron, his sons, and their garments. Only a small amount would be needed to symbolically confirm their consecration and acceptance for duty.

^{21 (con't)} **and he and his garments shall be hallowed, and his sons and his sons' garments with him.**

As the verse itself notes, the blood of the ram which had been splashed on the altar and then mixed with the oil was then sprinkled on them and their garments as a sign of their hallowing. This is reflected by Paul's words of Romans 15 –

"Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on *some* points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, ¹⁶ that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

-Romans 15:15, 16

It is the *offering* which is considered acceptable which is sanctified by the Holy Spirit. As a side note, one of the ancient Sanhedrin commentaries says that after Aaron's clothes were sanctified by the blood from the altar, they were not to ever be burned, or torn, or thrown out.

The tradition says that even if the high priest were to die, the clothes should stay. This is certainly reflected in Christ's seamless garment which was not torn, but instead lots were thrown for it. Even more, John records the following concerning the linen Christ was buried in –

“Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying *there*,⁷ and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself.”

-John 20:6, 7

His body departed, but the garments which He was buried in remained. The handkerchief even showed careful signs of folding, something no grave robber would have done. Instead, He meticulously took the time to care for that which He performed His priestly functions in.

*Let us endeavor to be filled with all that is good
With Christ's wisdom and spiritual understanding
And let us act as Christ determines we should
Not as the world around us is constantly demanding*

*If we rely on Christ our walk will be worthy of the Lord
Fully pleasing Him in each and every way
We will be fruitful in every good work, according to His word
And will be people pleasing to God, each and every day*

*And as we increase in the knowledge of our God
Strengthened with all might, and according to His glorious power
We will be steadfast through every trial we trod
Let us so live, day unto day and hour unto hour*

III. A Wave Offering Before the Lord (verses 22-25)

²² “Also you shall take the fat of the ram, the fat tail, the fat that covers the entrails, the fatty lobe *attached to* the liver, the two kidneys and the fat on them, the right thigh

The fat that was already mentioned in connection with the bull's sacrifice is repeated here. These signify the health of life, the seat of emotions, and the seat of reasoning.

These, along with the other fat of the ram and the right thigh, were to be separated from the animal. Fat in the Bible signifies abundance.

The *shoq*, or thigh, actually can mean the thigh, shoulder, hip, leg. It comes from a word meaning “abundant.” Thus it is the *abundant* area of meat on an appendage. As it is the right thigh, it signifies the honorable side. In all, that which is abundant and most honorable is what is being seen here.

²² (con’t) **(for it is a ram of consecration),**

The term here is *el millium*, “the ram of filling up.” This is because, as Charles Ellicott notes –

“...when a person was dedicated or consecrated to God, his hands were filled with some particular offering proper for the occasion, which he presented to God. Hence the word consecration signifies the filling up or filling the hands, some part of the sacrifice being put into the hands of such persons, denoting thereby that they had now a right to offer sacrifices and oblations to God.” Charles Ellicott

As Aaron and his sons are to be filled up with this offering, and as this offering is one which signifies receiving authority to serve, we have a New Testament parallel from the hand of Paul –

“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. ²¹ Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.” 2 Timothy 2:20, 21

The same idea of filling the hand which is seen in this passage was for many years a part of the rites of ordination in the Church of England. Ellicott shares this with us –

“It seems in reference to this ancient mode of consecration, that in the Church of England, when a person is ordained priest, a Bible is put into his hands with these words, ‘Take thou authority to preach the word of God.’” Charles Ellicott

How unfortunate it is that most of that once great heritage has now devolved into anything but preaching the word of God.

²³ one loaf of bread, one cake *made with* oil, and one wafer from the basket of the unleavened bread that *is* before the Lord;

The three breads mentioned in verse 2 are now brought back into the narrative for the ordination offering. However, there is a new aspect which was not revealed previously. In verse 2, for the first bread it simply said “unleavened bread.” Now, however, it is further described as *kikkar lekhem* or “circular-loaf bread.”

The circle in the Bible gives the idea of that which is divine and eternal. There is no beginning or end to it. These three breads and their spiritual meaning were all explained last week and all point to the work of Christ. These, along with the select parts of the ram, now have a specific purpose...

²⁴ and you shall put all these in the hands of Aaron and in the hands of his sons,

What is more accurate here would be, “...you shall put all these *on* the hands of Aaron and *on* the hands of his sons.” The reason why is because of the ritual which is going to be conducted. Aaron and his sons were to open their hands and Moses would then place them on their open hands. The reason for this follows...

²⁴ (con't) and you shall wave them *as* a wave offering before the Lord.

The *tenuphah*, or “wave offering, is introduced here. The word comes from *nuph*, which means to wave, or to move to and fro. The Pulpit Commentary describes for us what transpired –

“The offerings were to be laid first, on the hands of Aaron, and then on those of his sons, which were to support them; while Moses, putting his hands under theirs, made a waving motion with them towards the four corners of the heavens, to indicate that the gifts were offered to the omnipresent God. This process was that “filling of the hand,” by which the actual installation in office took place. Moses, by the act, transferred the priestly functions, which he had hitherto exercised, to his brother and his brother’s descendants. He made them by his muscular energy perform their first priestly act.”

This description appears to be sound. By making a waving motion to the four corners of the earth, it would thus be “before” or “in the face of” the Lord. It was an offering to, and an acknowledgment of, His omnipresence.

Although these are only the instructions for the ritual, Moses must have either felt a twinge of loss or a twinge of relief at them. Either he would soon be resigning a responsibility that he would be grateful to continue with, or he would soon be letting go of a burden that he was grateful to see end. Either way, not long after conducting this ritual, and a few other priestly functions during their time of ordination, he would no longer serve in the capacity of prophet and priest.

²⁵ You shall receive them back from their hands and burn *them* on the altar as a burnt offering, as a sweet aroma before the Lord.

The items were waved by the strength of Moses and they were then taken back by Moses as if Aaron and his sons were still common people making an offering to God. They are being endowed with priestly authority, but they would not yet be considered fully installed. Until the completion of the rite, it is Moses who would continue acting as a priest before the Lord.

The wave offering being returned to the Lord as a burnt offering was to signify the complete submission of themselves to the Lord. In picture, each thing in their hands symbolizes Christ as has already been explained. The true and eternal priesthood, which these rites of the Aaronic priesthood only foreshadow, are embodied in Him.

The innards and fat of the animal, the right shoulder, the three types of bread – each of them show us a picture of the most intimate parts of Christ and His ministry which were offered up to God as a whole burnt offering and a sweet aroma to the Lord.

His work was found acceptable and through it, He has obtained a more perfect priesthood and ministry than could ever have been obtained by mere fallible, fallen men and by the blood of bulls and goats.

At the ordination of Aaron, God looked forward in time to the ministry of Christ and He smelled a sweet savor only because of what it pictured, not because of the animal burning there on the altar. In truth, the final words of today look forward to the life of our precious Lord Jesus...

^{25 (fin)} It *is* an offering made by fire to the Lord.

The entire life and ministry of Christ was an offering made by fire to the Lord. His perfection far surpasses the earthly rituals which were conducted by Moses in the

ordination of Aaron and his sons. The law, along with its priesthood, was destined to be superseded by something else because it could never make men perfect.

This is evident in the fact that Moses is acting as God's priest in order to establish the Aaronic priesthood. But Moses will later be seen to fail in his actions before the Lord. In this act, Aaron will be included in Moses' failure. Both men will be punished for their transgressions and both men will die, as all the priests of Israel died after them.

Only a perfect High Priest with a perfect ordination and a perfect execution of His duties is capable of perfectly pleasing God. Thank God for Jesus Christ who is wholly suited to the enormous task. When we look back on our lives of sin and rebellion, we can be assured that the penalty for our actions has been fully and perfectly taken care of by Him.

The often overwhelming details of the Old Testament come alive when they are seen through the flawless lens of Christ. Let us endeavor to live for Him in this life, but not fear when we fail. The author of Hebrews will close us out today with wonderful words of Christ's ability to fully handle our many faults...

Closing Verse: *"For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ¹⁵ And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."* Hebrews 9:13-15

Next Week: *In these verses the ordination will be complete, this we shall see...* Exodus 29:26-37 (The Consecration of Aaron and His Sons, Part III) (81st Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Consecration of Aaron and His Sons

You shall also take one ram, as I now say
And Aaron and his sons shall
Put their hands on the head of the ram; it shall be this way

And you shall kill the ram, so shall you do
And you shall take its blood
And sprinkle it all around on the altar; as I instruct you

Then you shall cut the ram in pieces, after it has been bled
Wash its entrails and its legs
And put them with its pieces and with its head

And you shall burn the whole ram on the altar
It is to the Lord a burnt offering
It is a sweet aroma
By fire to the Lord is made this proffering

You shall also take the other ram
And Aaron and his sons, as to you I say
Shall put their hands on the head of the ram
Thus it shall be this way

Then you shall kill the ram
And take some of its blood too
And put it on the tip of the right ear of Aaron
And on the tip of the right ear of his sons, so shall you do

On the thumb of their right hand
And on the big toe of their right foot
And sprinkle the blood all around on the altar, please understand

And you shall take some of the blood
That is on the altar, this you shall do
And some of the anointing oil
And sprinkle it on Aaron and on his garments too

On his sons and on the garments
Of his sons with him, as I to you tell

And he and his garments shall be hallowed
And his sons and his sons' garments with him as well

Also you shall take the fat of the ram
The fat tail, the fat that covers the entrails too
The fatty lobe attached to the liver
The two kidneys and the fat on them, so you shall do

The right thigh (for it is a ram of consecration)
One loaf of bread, one cake made with oil, according to My word
And one wafer from the basket
Of the unleavened bread that is before the Lord

And you shall put all these in the hands
Of Aaron and in the hands of his sons, and so fulfill My word
And you shall wave them
As a wave offering before the Lord

You shall receive them back from their hands
And burn them on the altar as a burnt offering
As a sweet aroma before the Lord
It is by fire to the Lord, a proffering

Lord God Almighty, we thank you for what You have done
You have made us a kingdom of priests to You
And it is only because of the work of Your Son
It is only because of what He alone did do

And so we do thank You and we give You praise
Yes, Lord God Almighty, we shall do so... even unto eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 29:26-37

(THE CONSECRATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS, PART III)

We go to the mechanic from time to time to get our car tuned up. Only a dummy would think, "I sure am glad I'm getting this done. Now I'll never have to come here again." No. Rather, we get a tune up from time to time in order to keep the car running properly. If for no other reason than a funny clunking sound, we eventually have to go in again for more work.

Some of us have regular intervals we go in. That way, we stay ahead of the game. We are proactive in our mechanical needs. Some of us aren't so careful and it is the clunking sound that forces us back to the shop. No matter what, we know we will eventually have to go.

In Israel, every time people came to the temple to sacrifice, it reminded them of their sin. It had to be so. They placed their hands on an animal and confessed their transgressions over it. After that, the animal's throat was cut and its blood was poured out.

Even if they didn't believe that they deserved what the animal got; even if they didn't think of themselves as sinful; they were still reminded that the God who they had come to thought they were. There could be no mistaking this as the thing twitched and writhed until it was emptied of its life blood.

These sacrifices were there to remind them of this. And they were required often enough that they were never to forget it. Each year, they would go to Jerusalem on the Day of Atonement. They would also make sacrifices at other times and for other reasons. Each time they made one, they could think, "Gee, I did this before and here I am again. I guess I must need a spiritual tune up."

The best part about Jesus, if we actually believe His word, is that we have received a permanent tune up – at least concerning the sin-debt that we owe. Aaron and his sons are being consecrated in order to begin a priesthood that would require constant tunes up for the people it served. This included them as well. But Christ, has a priesthood far, far superior to that...

Text Verse: *"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,"*¹⁷ then He

adds, “*Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.*”¹⁸ Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.” Hebrews 10:16, 17

It is a marvel and a wonder. Jesus Christ’s sacrifice took care of the sin debt once and forever. It is, as He said with His dying words on the cross... FINISHED. Now in Christ, there is a remission of sin and there is no longer an offering for sin. We have full pardon, full redemption, and eternal salvation.

As we continue with the consecration rites which will be expected for Aaron and his sons, let us remember this. It’s all to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Wave and the Heave Offerings (verses 26-28)

²⁶ “Then you shall take the breast of the ram of Aaron’s consecration and wave it *as* a wave offering before the Lord;

The ram of the consecration, or literally, the ram of the filling, which began to be detailed in verse 19 last week continues to be described here. Its breast was to be taken and waved before the Lord as a wave offering.

The term for “breast” which is *khazeh*, is used now for the first of thirteen times. All will be in Exodus through Numbers. It comes from *khazah* which means “to see” because it is the part that is most seen when looking at the front of the animal. This particular part of the animal has a special significance and was to therefore now be waved before the Lord.

²⁶ (con’t) and it shall be your portion.

This breast which had been waved was to be given to Moses as his “portion.” Here another new word is brought in translated as “portion.” It is *manah*. It is a noun from a verb which means “to appoint;” thus it is an assigned portion. This word is used, for example, in the tender account of Elkanah and his beloved Hannah which is found in 1 Samuel 1 –

“And whenever the time came for Elkanah to make an offering, he would give **portions** to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters.”⁵ But to

Hannah he would give a double **portion**, for he loved Hannah, although the Lord had closed her womb.” 1 Samuel 1:4, 5

The Lord now tells Moses that this breast was to be his. However, later, this same breast which is waved will belong to Aaron and his sons. This is recorded in Leviticus 7:28-32 –

“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁹ ‘Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘He who offers the sacrifice of his peace offering to the Lord shall bring his offering to the Lord from the sacrifice of his peace offering. ³⁰ His own hands shall bring the offerings made by fire to the Lord. The fat with the breast he shall bring, that the breast may be waved *as* a wave offering before the Lord. ³¹ And the priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast shall be Aaron’s and his sons’. ³² Also the right thigh you shall give to the priest *as* a heave offering from the sacrifices of your peace offerings.’”

As this is later to be the portion of the priestly line, then we are being shown two things right now. The first is that Moses is acting as the priest in order to establish the priesthood. He is receiving priestly wages for his work.

The second is a logical deduction which can be made from the rite. It is that this is a fallible priesthood which is initiated by a fallible man in the consecration of other fallible men. If they are imperfect, then the law which they minister cannot perfect anyone.

As this is so, then it by necessity must be a temporary priesthood. And if a temporary priesthood, then the law to which they minister must also be temporary. The law which so many confused Christians return to in order to attempt to be pleasing to God is a law of imperfection.

How good it would be for us to simply trust in the greater priesthood of Christ which came through His perfect work. Here, even before the beginning of the Aaronic priesthood, we can learn so much if we will just open our ears, pay heed with our minds, and attend to what the rest of the Bible says about these things!

²⁷ And from the ram of the consecration you shall consecrate the breast of the wave offering which is waved, and the thigh of the heave offering which is raised, of *that* which *is* for Aaron and of *that* which is for his sons.

There are two actions which can occur with an offering. One is to wave it. A wave offering is moved backwards and forwards and horizontally. This signifies the four

directions – north, south, east, and west. This is what was done with the breast. In this type of offering a picture of the cross of Christ is formed.

A heave offering is an offering which is lifted upwards in a single motion. This is what occurred with the thigh. In this is a picture of Christ on the cross. The same word, *rum*, that is used to describe this offering is used to describe the work of Christ in Isaiah 52 –

“Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently;
He shall be **exalted** and extolled and be very high.” Isaiah 52:13

As you can see, each has its own significance, and each pointed to the work of Christ. Every offering of this type, for generation after generation was simply a foreshadowing of the coming work of the Lord. Of this verse and the next verse, the liberal dolts at Cambridge state the following –

“The verses (which do not agree with vv. 22, 24; for the thigh which was there burnt on the altar is here to be the perquisite of the priests) are probably a later insertion, correcting v. 26, and harmonizing (though imperfectly) vv. 22, 25 with the practice that was usual in the case of a peace-offering, viz. for the priests to receive both the breast and the right thigh...” Dolts at Cambridge

In other words, these liberal scholars see this verse as being in error and inserted afterwards in order to harmonize the instructions with what would later occur with all such offerings. Verses 22 and 24 show that the right thigh was to be *burned* on the altar as a sweet aroma before the Lord.

In not understanding the intent of this verse, they make the immediate assumption that it is in error because it now says that the right thigh was to be *given to Aaron and his sons*. If it was burned on the altar, then how could it have been given to Aaron and his sons? But they are incorrect in their analysis.

If one refers to the *actual* ordination of Aaron and his sons in Leviticus 8, it is evident that burning the thigh of the consecration is exactly what does occur –

“And Moses sprinkled the blood all around on the altar. ²⁵ Then he took the fat and the fat tail, all the fat that *was* on the entrails, the fatty lobe *attached to* the liver, the two kidneys and their fat, and the right thigh; ²⁶ and from the basket of unleavened bread that was before the Lord he took one unleavened cake, a cake

of bread *anointed with* oil, and one wafer, and put *them* on the fat and on the right thigh; ²⁷ and he put all *these* in Aaron's hands and in his sons' hands, and waved them *as* a wave offering before the Lord. ²⁸ Then Moses took them from their hands and burned *them* on the altar, on the burnt offering.

They *were* consecration offerings for a sweet aroma." Leviticus 8:24-28

There is no contradiction in this verse and verses 22 & 24. Rather, this is a short digression to explain that from the time *after* the consecration, the right thigh was to belong to Aaron and his sons. However, for the ordination, this was not given to them. Instead it was offered to the Lord on their behalf. They weren't yet ordained. Therefore they were not yet given the rights of ordained priests.

Rather than being cumbersome, contradictory, or confused, it is a logical time to show that the ordination was the *exception* to the rule of the right thigh. The dolts at Cambridge get no credit for their analysis. Instead, they get shameful demerits for not thinking this verse through, for not checking the passage which concerns the actual ordination, and for attempting to appear smart when they actually have made themselves look doltish and uneducated by trying to find fault in God's word.

²⁸ **It shall be from the children of Israel *for* Aaron and his sons by a statute forever.**

The rights of the offerings were to be *l'khaq olam* or "by statute forever." This is not to be taken in the ultimate sense that we think of when we use the word "forever." Rather, *olam* gives the sense of "to the vanishing point."

In the context of the Aaronic priesthood, it would last until the coming of the Messiah who would fulfill the types and pictures of the Old Covenant. At that time, the law would pass away, being superseded by that which the law only anticipated. Until that time though, the giving of the breast and thigh to Aaron was to be a permanent statute. And there is a reason for this...

²⁸ (con't) **For it is a heave offering; it shall be a heave offering from the children of Israel from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, *that is*, their heave offering to the Lord.**

The breast of the wave offering was given to Aaron and his sons because Aaron bore the breastplate of judgment upon his breast for the sons of Israel. The right thigh was to be given to them because he bore the memorial stones on his shoulders for them as well.

As he carried the responsibility and burden of them upon himself, these offerings were to be given in kind to him. The contrast between this offering and the burnt-offering of verses 15-18 is summed up very well by Benson –

“In the burnt-offering, God had the glory of their priesthood, in this they had the comfort of it.” Benson

The meaty and wholesome parts of the animal were given to Aaron and his sons as a comforting aspect of their high responsibilities before the Lord.

*An offering waved to my God
To the four corners of the earth I offer it
In hopes that through acceptance together we will trod
And so to Him, this offering I submit*

*An offering lifted high to my God
I raised it up and petition Him for my life
In hopes that through acceptance together we will trod
And that between us will end, our state of strife*

*An offering raised up to My God above
And an offering lifted up to Him on High
On behalf of the people that I love
I will be raised on Calvary's cross, there to die*

II. Imputed Holiness (verses 29-34)

²⁹ “And the holy garments of Aaron shall be his sons’ after him,

Verses 29 & 30 are now a new digression, but by no means an illogical or misplaced one. Verse 31 in thought follows logically after verse 28, but at some point the matter of the garments of Aaron, which were made specifically for the office of high priest, must be addressed. What will happen to them when he dies?

The answer is found in these two verses. The logic of placing these two verses here is evident. The ram of the ordination, or the “ram of the filling” is that by which the office is filled. Therefore, to mention this now concerning the garments for the office which is held is appropriate and precise.

In this is another hint of the temporary nature of the law. Noting that the garments of Aaron were to pass down to his sons after him shows that he would, in fact, die. Thus nothing is made perfect through the Aaronic priesthood.

If Aaron is the representative of the law before the Lord, and if he is to die, then it implies that his sinful state remained. Further, if the designated representative before the Lord died, then those on whose behalf he ministered for were also not perfected. This is explained in Hebrews 10 –

“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. ² For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. ³ But in those *sacrifices there is* a reminder of sins every year. ⁴ For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” Hebrews 10:1-4

However, at the time of the establishment of the priesthood, these things weren't expected to be thought through. Only now as we look at the whole counsel of God can we clearly see the temporary nature of the law, and the limitations that went along with the associated offices and rites connected to it. Only in Christ is that which is perfect and eternal realized.

As far as the passing on of these garments, the transfer of them from Aaron is noted in Numbers 20:24-28 –

“Aaron shall be gathered to his people, for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the children of Israel, because you rebelled against My word at the water of Meribah. ²⁵ Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up to Mount Hor; ²⁶ and strip Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; for Aaron shall be gathered *to his people* and die there.’ ²⁷ So Moses did just as the Lord commanded, and they went up to Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. ²⁸ Moses stripped Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there on the top of the mountain. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain.”

This is the only time that the transfer of these garments is noted in Scripture, but it would have been the regular custom at the death of each high priest. As long as the

garments lasted, they were to be passed on. We can only assume that as they wore out, new ones were made to replace them.

²⁹ (con't) **to be anointed in them and to be consecrated in them.**

The Hebrew is more expressive than the English here. *l'mashkha bahem u-l'maleh bam eth yadam*. Only Young's gives a proper, literal translation of what it says –

“...to be anointed in them, and to consecrate in them **their hand;**” (YLT)

To consecrate them in their hand goes back to the idea of filling the hand for the duties of the job. The hand of the man performs the tasks of the job. And so to fill their hand in the rite of consecration then makes the work of their hands acceptable to the Lord. Thus, whoever was to perform the priestly duties was to be properly anointed and consecrated for the office.

³⁰ **That son who becomes priest in his place shall put them on for seven days, when he enters the tabernacle of meeting to minister in the holy *place*.**

Again, as has been noted elsewhere, it is not the “tabernacle of meeting” but the “tent of meeting.” The word *ohel* signifies a tent. Aaron would be the first priest to be so ordained. This is recorded in Leviticus 8 –

“And you shall not go outside the door of the tabernacle of meeting *for* seven days, until the days of your consecration are ended. For seven days he shall consecrate you. ³⁴ As he has done this day, *so* the Lord has commanded to do, to make atonement for you. ³⁵ Therefore you shall stay *at* the door of the tabernacle of meeting day and night for seven days, and keep the charge of the Lord, so that you may not die; for so I have been commanded.” ³⁶ So Aaron and his sons did all the things that the Lord had commanded by the hand of Moses.” Leviticus 8:33-36

The number seven, as has already been seen, is the number of perfection. It corresponds to countless occurrences in Scripture. Why seven days is chosen for this rite of ordination then should be explained. Seven represents *spiritual perfection*.

Looking at the different ways to arrive at seven, we can see several important truths. The first is one plus six. As a cardinal number, one denotes *unity*; as an ordinal it

denotes *primacy*; six is the number of man. Thus, the ordination of Aaron shows the unity of the office and the primacy of the man in relation to all others in Israel. The second is two plus five. Two is the number of difference or division; five is the number of grace. In this then, there is the idea that the office of High Priest is a distinct office through which grace is offered.

And the third is three plus four. Three is the number of divine perfection – that which is real, solid, substantial, and complete; four is the number of creation. In this then we see the uniting of body and soul.

These seven days set aside for ordination follow logically and perfectly with each formation of the number. Aaron is being prepared to be the sole man to assume the high priestly role. He is the “set apart man” through whom the grace of God is transmitted to His people. And, he is the man who is to be prepared both physically and spiritually for the accomplishment of the tasks set before him.

However, this ordination is only a shadow of the true ordination of Christ as our eternal High Priest who literally fulfills what Aaron only pictures. This seven day period is only given as a prefiguring of the greater High Priest to come.

³¹ **“And you shall take the ram of the consecration and boil its flesh in the holy place.**

The rest of the animal which was not burnt on the altar or given to Moses as the officiating priest will be taken and boiled, as it says, “in the holy place.” However, this will be further defined in Leviticus 8 to not be specifically *in* the holy place, but at its door –

“And Moses said to Aaron and his sons, ‘Boil the flesh *at* the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and eat it there with the bread that *is* in the basket of consecration offerings...’” Leviticus 8:31

³² **Then Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread that *is* in the basket, *by* the door of the tabernacle of meeting.**

In verses 23-25, one of each of the three types of bread were taken from the basket and presented to the Lord as a part of the burnt offering. That which remained, along with the flesh of the ram, was to be eaten by the door of the tent of meeting.

If you remember, each of those types of bread individually pictured Christ. The ram has also pictured Christ. Thus this meal is symbolically a partaking of His body. As He said in John, “My flesh is food indeed” (John 6:55), and “I am the Bread of life” (John 6:35).

The sharing of it between the Lord and Aaron and his sons is intended to solidify the bond between them. Christ, being He who unites the heavenly and the earthly as One. All during the week of ordination, they were being spiritually prepared for their lifelong duties as priests to the Lord, as is next made explicit...

³³ They shall eat those things with which the atonement was made, to consecrate *and* to sanctify them;

The purpose of the food is to consecrate and sanctify them. But how was this possible? It is because these were the things with which atonement was made. This is really the first time this word, *kaphar* or atonement, is used in the Bible in this sense.

It has only been used twice so far. The first was when Noah *covered* the ark with pitch in Genesis 6:14. The second time is when Jacob set about to appease, or *cover*, the anger of his brother Esau with a gift in Genesis 32:20.

Now it is used for the third time indicating the covering or atonement of the sins of Aaron and his sons. This covering or atonement is simply a combination of the words “at-one-ment.” In others words, the intent of atonement is to reconcile through the covering. Peace and harmony is restored.

In the case of Aaron and his sons, the need for atonement actually highlights their failings. They needed a sacrifice for themselves. In this foreshadowing of Christ, we see how He far excelled the Aaronic priesthood. He had no sins of His own.

The sacrifices of Aaron were first for himself and only then for the sins of others. However, the atonement of Christ’s sacrifice was exclusively for the sins of others. God in His grace and mercy accepted the temporary covering of the death of animals until the time when He would send Jesus to be the final, permanent sacrifice for the sins of those He would redeem.

³³ (con’t) but an outsider shall not eat *them*, because they *are* holy.

The “outsider,” or *zuwr*, is introduced into the Bible here. In this context it means anyone who was not of the ordained priestly line of Aaron, not even a regular Levite.

This word comes from a primitive root which means to turn aside, as if for lodging. And so it speaks of a stranger or a foreigner. It is someone who is not a part of what is going on in the usual dealings of a place or matter. Because the food was considered holy, only someone who was consecrated as holy was to partake of it.

³⁴ And if any of the flesh of the consecration offerings, or of the bread, remains until the morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire. It shall not be eaten, because it *is* holy.

This is a direct command which is very similar to that of the Passover sacrifice. Concerning that sacrifice in Exodus 12, it said –

“You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire.” Exodus 12:10

The consecration offerings, like the Passover, were not to be eaten on the second day. Instead, they were to be burnt with fire. The reason for this is specifically given – “...because it is holy.” The holiness of God is what is to be impressed upon their minds. Food which had gone through the night was susceptible to corruption. This would be unacceptable to consume when considering God’s holy and incorruptible nature.

Further, it was exclusively to be eaten by the priests. If not, it was to be returned to God by fire, not passed on to another. If another ate of it, it would diminish the entire ordination process because they were not so ordained. It would be, in essence, mixing the holy with the profane.

And finally, if something which was devoted to a sacred use was given to someone else, they could then use it as an object of superstitious worship of some sort, such as a talisman. Like the Passover which pictured Christ so well, no such thing was to happen to the holy food of the consecration which also pictures Him in every detail.

*The offering shall be pure and undefiled
And it shall not be allowed to become corrupt
Upon you with My grace I have smiled
Therefore, let nothing our fellowship interrupt*

*The offering shall be pure, not stained with sin
It shall be holy as I am also holy*

*Only through holiness can you the victory win
This is how it is and how it shall be*

*The offering is Pure and Undefiled
It is Pure and not stained with sin
Upon My people through Jesus I have smiled
For them and through His holiness, the victory He did win*

III. A Holy Offering to the Lord (verses 35-37)

³⁵ “Thus you shall do to Aaron and his sons, according to all that I have commanded you. Seven days you shall consecrate them.

What this verse is telling us is that this same ceremony was to be conducted, not just on the first day, but on each day for seven days. This means that no matter what day the rite was started on, it would include at least one Sabbath. And yet, there was no guilt to be imputed for having conducted the priestly affairs on a Sabbath.

This is spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 12:5, where the priests are said to profane the Sabbath and yet remain blameless. This is just the first of such recorded instances in Scripture. The priestly functions were to progress on without regard to a Sabbath. Again, it is showing a distinction between the holy and the profane.

If a priest were not on duty, they would be required to observe the Sabbath, but if they were on duty, they would not be so required. Further, if they were called to duty on the Sabbath, they would be held guiltless. This is seen in the record of the fateful end of the wicked queen Athaliah –

“‘This *is* what you shall do: One-third of you entering on the Sabbath, of the priests and the Levites, *shall be* keeping watch over the doors; ⁵ one-third *shall be* at the king’s house; and one-third at the Gate of the Foundation. All the people *shall be* in the courts of the house of the Lord. ⁶ But let no one come into the house of the Lord except the priests and those of the Levites who serve. They may go in, for they *are* holy; but all the people shall keep the watch of the Lord. ⁷ And the Levites shall surround the king on all sides, every man with his weapons in his hand; and whoever comes into the house, let him be put to death. You are to be with the king when he comes in and when he goes out.’

⁸ So the Levites and all Judah did according to all that Jehoiada the priest

commanded. And each man took his men who were to be on duty on the Sabbath, with those who were going *off duty* on the Sabbath; for Jehoiada the priest had not dismissed the divisions.” 2 Chronicles 23:4-8

³⁶ And you shall offer a bull every day as a sin offering for atonement.

Each of the seven days of the ordination, a bull was to be sacrificed as “a sin offering for atonement.” This looked forward to “the full and complete atonement for sin by the sacrifice of Christ.” This again takes us back to the number seven and its derivatives.

As I noted, and as just one example, three plus four is seven. Three is the number of divine perfection – that which is real, solid, substantial, and complete; four is the number of creation. In this then we see the uniting of body and soul.

The bull pictures Christ, the High Priest. The blood pictures His blood covering, or atoning, for our sin. And so the seven pictures Him as the God/Man who is wholly capable of accomplishing this atonement.

He was wasn't just an offering for sin; He was made to be sin that we, by imputation of His righteousness, might become the righteousness of God in Him. This is all being pictured in these verses which are so quickly passed over by most who dare to read them even just one time.

^{36 (con't)} You shall cleanse the altar when you make atonement for it, and you shall anoint it to sanctify it.

The cleansing of the altar here shows us a rather important truth which is found in the Bible. Sin is considered in a much wider sense than we tend to think of it. The biblical aspect of sin is that it can even infect a material object. That which is unholy is defiled, and defilement is sin. This is seen explicitly in Haggai 2 –

“On the twenty-fourth *day* of the ninth *month*, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, ¹¹ “Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Now, ask the priests *concerning the law*, saying, ¹² “If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?””

Then the priests answered and said, “No.”

¹³ And Haggai said, “If *one who is unclean because of a dead body* touches any of these, will it be unclean?”

So the priests answered and said, "It shall be unclean."

¹⁴ Then Haggai answered and said, "'So is this people, and so is this nation before Me,' says the Lord, 'and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.'" Haggai 2:10-14

In order to consecrate the altar, he had to make atonement for the sin of the altar. But where did that come from? It came from the sinful men who erected it. Further, the materials used in it are a part of the fallen creation.

Therefore, at least symbolically, it had to be made acceptable so that the gifts laid upon it would also be acceptable. John Lange, however, asks an obvious question concerning the state of the priests who would minister at it and their own sinful state. Did their sin also transfer to the altar?

"But as yet there can be no reference to this source of impurity; for in that case how could the priests ever make atonement for the altar?" John Lange

It is a good question, but the fact that the High Priest had to continue to sacrifice for his own sins year by year on the Day of Atonement showed that he was still a man with sin. The atonement for the altar was not made by sinless priests at all. And yet, the altar was to be considered acceptable for use.

Hence, once again, we see that the service of these men under the law, and thus the law itself, was to only be a temporary stepping stone in God's greater redemptive workings. The law could save none. Nor could it truly bring a state of sinless perfection to man.

In the sanctification of the altar, it was set apart for sacred use. It was also deemed as holy so that the gifts offered upon it would be holy. This is seen in Matthew 23 –

"Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? ²⁰ Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it."

-Matthew 23:19, 20

However, in Christ the true Altar, we read that He sanctified Himself, so that our lives as gifts to God might be acceptable to Him. This is seen in John 17 –

"As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth."

-John 17:18, 19

³⁷ Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and sanctify it.

This is now the third time that an interval of seven days is mandated. The first was in verse 30 concerning consecration of the son to replace Aaron. The second was in verse 35 concerning the consecration of Aaron and his sons. And now we have this time concerning the atonement and sanctification of the altar.

Once the period of seven days, with its associated rites, was complete then the altar would be ready for service as is seen next...

^{37 (con't)} And the altar shall be most holy.

Literally, it says *ha'mizbeakh qodesh qadashim* – an altar, holiness of holinesses. From that time forward, the altar would be considered acceptable for the offering of the gifts of the people to the Lord. Because of its most holy status, the result is the final words of our verses today...

^{37 (fin)} Whatever touches the altar must be holy.

Scholars disagree on what is meant here. Ellicott and those in agreement with him say that it should read as the NKJV, "Whatever touches the altar must be holy." He says –

"...nothing which is not holy must touch it. The future has the force of an imperative, as in the Ten Commandments."

However, other scholars disagree and say that it should read, "...whatever touches the altar shall be made holy." (Jubilee Bible). Their stand is that –

"...this may be understood as implying that whatever was laid on the altar became the Lord's property, and must be wholly devoted to sacred uses, for in no other sense could such things be sanctified by touching the altar." Adam Clarke

The second is correct. The altar was once and for all sanctified as holy so that whatever was *offered upon it* would become holy. Further, that which was unholy and which touched it became set apart as devoted to the Lord. This is seen in the account of Joab going into the altar to seek mercy in 1 Kings 2. He was not holy when he went in, but his fate was devoted to the Lord through the word of Solomon.

So why is this important? The answer is that the altar pictures Christ. Our offerings to God are made holy through Him. They are not holy in and of themselves. Nor can our touching Him in a defiled state make Him impure. This is seen in the account of the woman with the flow of blood in Luke 8 –

“Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, ⁴⁴ came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped.

⁴⁵ And Jesus said, “Who touched Me?”

When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, “Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’”

⁴⁶ But Jesus said, “Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me.” ⁴⁷ Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately.

⁴⁸ And He said to her, “Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace.” Luke 8:43-48

As with all things in the Bible which may seem obvious on the surface, the truth is that more often than not, there is more to what is going on than meets the eyes. Christ was not defiled by the unclean woman, and yet she – meaning her offering of faith – was deemed holy by God and accepted because she had offered upon the true Altar.

These verses, some of which seem so immensely different that the religion we espouse in knowing Christ, are actually intricately tied up in who He is and what He has done and still does for us. The law had to come and these rites and rituals needed to be given first before we could realize our need for that which is greater.

The temporary atonement of a bull or a ram, being graciously offered by God, could never truly perform the function it was given for. It could only temporarily stay off His wrath and provide us with His mercy and grace. The law was necessary, but thank God that the law is now fulfilled and set aside.

In Christ, we have the fullness of what was actually lacking in the law. We have peace with God, we have atonement for our sins, and we have full redemption as sons of God – all by mere faith in His marvelous provision. Let us never forget this as we read these sometimes difficult passages. We have what they only pictured. We have Jesus; sweet Jesus. If you have never received the precious gift of Christ Jesus; do it today!...

Closing Verse: *“And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. ¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” Hebrews 10:11-14*

Next Week: Exodus 29:38-46 *Wonderful words through which we will trod (I Will Dwell Among Them and be Their God) (82nd Exodus Sermon)*

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Consecration of Aaron and His Sons

Then you shall take the breast
Of the ram of Aaron’s consecration
And wave it as a wave offering before the Lord; per His behest
And it shall be your portion

And from the ram of the consecration
You shall consecrate the breast
Of the wave offering which is waved
And the thigh of the heave offering which is raised, it is the best

Of that which is for Aaron, as I tell you
And of that which is for his sons too

It shall be from the children of Israel
For Aaron and his sons by a statute forever, so I to you tell

For it is a heave offering
It shall be a heave offering from the children of Israel
(hear My word)
From the sacrifices of their peace offerings
That is, their heave offering to the Lord

And the holy garments of Aaron
Shall be his sons' after him, so shall you do
To be anointed in them
And to be consecrated in them too

That son who becomes priest in his place
Shall for seven days put them on
When he enters the tabernacle of meeting
To minister in the holy place, these he shall do

And the ram of the consecration you shall take
And boil its flesh in the holy place
A boiling of its flesh you shall make

Then Aaron and his sons shall
The flesh of the ram, they shall be eating
And the bread that is in the basket
By the door of the tabernacle of meeting

They shall eat those things
With which the atonement was made, so shall it be
To consecrate and to sanctify them
But an outsider shall not eat them, because they are holy

And if any of the flesh of the consecration offerings
Or of the bread, remains until the morning – do hear Me
Then you shall burn the remainder with fire
It shall not be eaten, because it is holy

Thus you shall do to Aaron and his sons
According to all that I have commanded you to do
Seven days you shall consecrate them
According to all that I instruct to you

And you shall every day offer a bull
As a sin offering for atonement, yes each day
You shall cleanse the altar when you make atonement for it
And you shall anoint it to sanctify it, as to you I say

Seven days you shall make atonement
For the altar and sanctify it, according to these words from Me
And the altar most holy shall be
Whatever touches the altar must be holy

Lord God Almighty, we thank you for what You have done
You have made us a kingdom of priests to You
And it is only because of the work of Your Son
It is only because of what He alone did do

And so we do thank You and we give You praise
Yes, Lord God Almighty, we shall do so... even unto eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 29:38-46

(I WILL DWELL AMONG THEM AND BE THEIR GOD)

If you've read through the Old Testament, you may have gotten kind of tired of all the offerings that are mandated in it, especially in Exodus and Leviticus. I actually had a friend quit reading the Bible because of them. It seemed brutal, pointless, and overly excessive to her.

Reading the pages one after another and not understanding what is actually going on can certainly lead to that kind of conclusion. Be honest, it seems tedious at times, doesn't it? Even the Lord said that he had had enough of Israel's burnt offerings. If you don't believe me, check Isaiah 1:11.

But the reason was because of the manner in which they were offered, not because it wasn't the right thing to do. The Lord had called Israel and had given them these rules for a reason. It was first so that they would be His people and He would be their God. There was to be communion with Him through their offerings.

But they got to the point where communing with God was a chore and not a joy. They mechanically offered what the law required and there was no true fellowship in what they did. The second reason for the required offerings was to show us something else. These offerings under the law, like every other detail of what we have seen, were given as a type and shadow of Christ to come.

I know that the thought of analyzing a bunch of sacrifices and offerings may seem dull, but it's not. If you still aren't impressed with the verses ahead when we get done today, I'll give you a full refund on your time. But I just don't believe you will ask for it. If you truly love what Christ has done, then those things which picture Him will be worth the time you spend looking into them.

Text Verse: *For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:*

"I will dwell in them

And walk among them.

I will be their God,

And they shall be My people." 2 Corinthians 6:16

The Lord said in our sermon verses today that he would dwell among the children of Israel and that He would be their God. He said in 2 Corinthians 6 that He would dwell among us and be our God. Doesn't that at all get your curiosity up? How do the two

accounts tie together? How can the morning and evening sacrifices of ancient Israel point us to our current position with God?

Well, stay awake and pay attention for the next 30 or 40 minutes and you'll see. One thing is for sure, we can't find out if we don't open the book and study it. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Lamb, Morning and Evening (verses 38 & 39)

³⁸ “Now this *is* what you shall offer on the altar:

The consecration of the altar was explained in the previous verses, especially in verses 36 and 37. Now, immediately following that description, the account moves directly into the establishment of the daily offerings to be made on the altar.

The purpose of the ordination rites which were described, both for the priests and for this altar, is explained in these verses today. They are the end design to which that ordination is subservient, which is the worship of God and an acknowledgment to Him that all things come from Him.

It would make no sense to ordain the priests and consecrate the altar if there was not an ultimate purpose for their ordination and its consecration. Therefore, it shows that the intent for those consecrations find their fulfillment in what will now be described.

No exception is given here, or anywhere else, concerning relief from these offerings. Even if the land were completely deprived of food or animals, these would still be required because God, being the Source of all things, was to be acknowledged for being the provider or withholder of those things for the people.

His grace could be anticipated if these offerings were made, but even if it was withheld, they were still to be given in petition for mercy. To refuse to offer them as instructed would first be a violation of the covenant, and secondly a stubborn refusal to acknowledge the sovereignty of God who controls the nations and who directs the destiny of Israel.

The life of the people belonged to the Lord, and therefore, these sacrificial animals stood as representative of their lives being offered daily to him. These offerings then could be summed up by Paul from his words in Romans 12 –

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service.* ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Romans 12:1, 2

This mandate will continue throughout the duration of the Old Covenant. Even until the time of Christ, these offerings were made. At His coming, they were made obsolete, but they continued on until the destruction of the temple in AD70.

The re-establishment of them is being planned right now, but this doesn't mean they will be acceptable to God. Rather, they are a part of what God has said would come in the final 7 years of the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27. However, these offerings were so especially important to the covenant while it was in effect, that we read this in Ezra 3 –

“From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the Lord, although the foundation of the temple of the Lord had not been laid.”

-Ezra 3:6

Even before the laying of the foundation of the second temple, the daily offerings prescribed here were initiated. The same will probably be true with the reestablishment of the offerings in the coming of the next temple. As we will see though, the offerings only picture the coming work of Christ. In Him, they are fulfilled and set aside.

³⁸ (con't) **two lambs of the first year,**

The words read, *kebasim bene shanah shnayim* – “lambs, sons of the year, two.” These lambs were to be young, in the first year, picturing innocence. A lamb of any age is a beautiful picture of innocence, but one of the first year is especially so. It's hard to imagine sacrificing such a pure and unstained animal.

However, it needs to be considered that it is the Lord who is mandating the sacrifice. As He is the Creator of the lamb, then it is His prerogative to stipulate whatever animal He chooses. In selecting a young, tender, and innocent lamb, He was making a picture of His own Son to come.

Every single day, 360 days a year, and therefore 720 times, these young lambs were sacrificed in anticipation of the day when the pure, perfect, and innocent Son of God

would be sacrificed. These lambs then only prefigure His perfect innocence, and His infinite tenderness.

Lambs are not rebellious, but submissive animals. They don't fight even as they go to their deaths, but rather they remain silent. They will willingly go where the master leads them. Such an animal then made a perfect picture of Christ who voluntarily submitted to His Father's will and who did not fight or speak against the authority that came to take His life.

Lambs further picture many of His other endearing attributes of harmlessness to those He died for, His humility even toward those who cared nothing for Him, His patience towards the objects of His wrath, and they even emulate Christ in that lambs are useful for both food and clothing.

For those who partake of Him, He is their food. And for those who receive Him, He is their unstained white garment of righteousness. The sacrifice of these lambs was to be a twice-daily anticipation of many of the good things to come in Jesus Christ the Lord.

One more aspect of them is actually not yet recorded. However, in Numbers 28:3, it is added into the details where it says, "two male lambs in their first year **without blemish.**" Not only were these to be innocent lambs which were to be sacrificed to the Lord, but they were to be without blemish.

These then picture Christ as anticipated by Isaiah with the words that "He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth." Peter then further refines the image in the New Testament –

"And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here* in fear; ¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

-1 Peter 1:17-19

³⁸ (con't) **day by day continually.**

la'yom tamid – "daily continually." From the first day that they were to be offered, until whatever point set by God in His eternal counsel, these offerings were to be made continually and without interruption.

If a war raged around Jerusalem, and the walls were ready to be breached, the offering was not to be withheld from the Lord. If the rains poured down, or if the snow piled deep, the offering was to continue unabated. God did not delay in offering His Son; Israel was not to delay in offering what merely pictured His coming.

The idea for Israel was first to understand that they continuously contracted new defilement which offended the Lord. And so daily they needed His pardon in order for them to continue before Him. Secondly, it was to show them that the worship of Him wasn't to be limited to a Sabbath day or one of the set feast days, but it was to continue on at all times, and every day of the year.

³⁹ One lamb you shall offer in the morning,

ha'kebes ha'echad taaseh ba'boqer – “the lamb the one you shall offer in the morning.” The first lamb was to be taken and sacrificed as an offering in the morning. There is a lesson for Israel to consider in this act, but there is also a picture of the Christ to come. In a moment we will look at both, but only after seeing what occurs with the second lamb...

³⁹ (con't) and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight.

v'eth ha'kebes ha'shnei taaseh ben ha'arbayim – “and the lamb the second you shall offer between the evenings.” The second lamb was to be sacrificed at a particular time which would later become known as the time of the evening offering, or even simply as the time of the offering. This is found, for example, in the great challenge between the 450 prophets of Baal and Elijah –

“And it came to pass, at *the time of* the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, ‘Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You *are* God in Israel and I *am* Your servant, and *that* I have done all these things at Your word. ³⁷ Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You *are* the Lord God, and *that* You have turned their hearts back *to You* again.’” 1 Kings 18:36, 37

This time became so important to the Jews, that even during exile when the sacrifices had stopped being made, those who were observant still used that time of day to make a sacrifice of prayer, petition, and praise to God. This is seen, for example, in Daniel 9 –

“Now while I *was* speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God, ²¹ yes, while I *was* speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering.” Daniel 9:20, 21

For the people of Israel, these two daily sacrifices were to be a reminder of the sin-debt they incurred each night, necessitating a morning sacrifice, and the sin-debt they incurred each day, necessitating an evening sacrifice. An innocent died each morning and each evening as a symbolic reminder of the mercy of God towards them.

Thus, the nation was given a reminder to rededicate itself to the Lord morning by morning and evening by evening. They were to offer themselves as that reasonable living sacrifice that Paul later tells us in the church to be.

The only difference is that instead of considering the death of an innocent little lamb, we are to consider the death of the Lamb of God. How much more then should we treat the offering as holy and worthy of our fullest attention and devotion!

Just as Peter equated Christ with these innocent lambs of the morning and evening sacrifice, Paul asks us to consider our own selves in a similar light, being holy and without spot or blemish –

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”

-Ephesians 5:25-27

But there is more in this verse to consider. The Hebrew term here is *ben ha'arbayim* – “between the evenings.” It seems like a perplexing phrase, but one has to consider biblical time. According to the Bible, a day is divided into “evening” and “morning.” Thus there are actually two evenings to be reckoned. The first began after twelve and went through until sunset.

The second evening began at sunset and continued till night, meaning the whole time of twilight. This would therefore be between twelve o'clock and the termination of twilight. Between the evenings then is a phrase which allows the three o'clock sacrifices

at the temple to be considered as the evening sacrifice even though to us it would be considered an afternoon sacrifice.

The sacrifice of these two lambs then, one in the morning and one “between the evenings,” meaning at 3pm, then picture the work of Christ on His final day. His final daylight hours are exactly recorded in the gospels. Luke says this concerning the time which parallels that of the morning sacrifice mandated here in Exodus –

“As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led Him into their council, saying, ⁶⁷ ‘If You are the Christ, tell us.’” Luke 22:66

And again, Luke tells us of the ending of this day of brutality, torture, and death –

“Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. ⁴⁵ Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’” Having said this, He breathed His last.”

-Luke 23:44-46

The same time that Christ began his last day there in front of the chief priests and scribes, the morning offering was being made. And the same time that Christ died on the cross, which is carefully and meticulously recorded in the gospels, was the same time that the evening sacrifice was being made – the sixth hour, or 3pm.

God, knowing in advance of what was to come in the final day of Christ’s earthly ministry in fulfillment of the law, ensured that these two lambs would be sacrificed, day after day and year after year, as a picture of the ultimate sacrifice of His own precious Son.

Now, in the remembrance of the Day, and in the life which was given for us, we can press on in the full assurance that morning by morning and day by day our sins are truly removed and God’s mercy is granted in all its fullness to us. As Christ offered Himself once for all, He is literally therefore a continual sacrifice for us.

What these continual day by day offerings pictured is what we have realized in the absolute sense through our receiving of Christ Jesus the Lord. Because of this, how much more should we be like Daniel and offer our own spiritual sacrifices of prayer,

praise, and petition to God both morning and evening and at all times in between. As Matthew Henry says –

“Our daily devotions are the most needful of our daily works, and the most pleasant of our daily comforts. Prayer-time must be kept up as duly as meal-time. Those starve their own souls, who keep not up constant attendance on the throne of grace; constancy in religion brings in the comfort of it.”

*A Lamb, spotless, and pure – without any defect
Will be sacrificed in my place
And looking at that Lamb, I can certainly detect
The greatest love and grace... this I see looking upon His face*

*Oh! That I could refrain and not see Him die
Oh! If there could be any other way
How could this Lamb go through with it for one such as I?
Oh God! This perfect Lamb alone my sin-debt can pay*

*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!
Behold the sinless One, there on Calvary's tree
He has prevailed and the path to heaven has been unfurled
The Lamb of God who died for sinners like you and me*

II. Sanctified by Glory (verses 40-43)

⁴⁰ With the one lamb shall be one-tenth of an ephah of flour

Along with the lambs, other offerings were to be presented. The first such named offering says, *v'issaron solet*, “and one-tenth of flour.” From later verses, we know it is one-tenth of an *ephah* of flour. This is the first time that a division of tens is indicated in the Bible using the word *issaron*, or “the tenth part.”

An *ephah* is believed to be around 4 1/2 gallons, and so 1/10th of that would be a bit more than 3 lbs of flour. Elsewhere, the tenth part of the *ephah* is specifically known as an *omer*. This was to be presented with the first lamb each day. With this it was to be...

⁴⁰ (con't) mixed with one-fourth of a hin of pressed oil,

The *ephah* is a measure of dry goods; the *hin*, now introduced into the Bible, is a measure for liquids. It is believed to be a word of Egyptian origin. Although not certain, a *hin* is reckoned at about 3/4 of a gallon and so 1/4 of a *hin* is somewhere around a pint, maybe 1 1/2 pints.

There is to be 1/4 of a *hin* of *shemen kathith* or “oil pressed.” The word *kathith* is used for the second of just five times. It indicates something beaten. It is only used in connection with the olives that have been made into oil. This oil was to be mixed in with the flour and presented as a daily offering along with the first lamb.

The flour is an obvious picture of Christ, the Bread of life, who came down from heaven. It was a reminder that day by day we are to dine on Christ. He is our sustenance and that which nourishes us. The oil from beaten olive pictures the anointing of the Spirit upon Him which was suitable to carry Him through the suffering and trials that He endured.

Together, they made a tasteful food offering to God, just as Christ crucified became our Bread of life. As He is our spiritual meal, then we can and will be able to endure whatever trial or suffering we too may face.

⁴⁰ (con't) **and one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering.**

The same amount of wine as oil was to be presented to the Lord. However, this was not mixed with the bread, but was poured out as a drink offering. The word for “wine” here is *yayin*. It is a common word for wine, which was used ten times in Genesis, but is seen just this once in all of Exodus.

It comes from an unused root meaning “to effervesce.” Thus it indicates fermented wine. It is to be considered wine which has alcohol content to it, thus banqueting wine. This is only the second time that a drink offering has been mentioned in Scripture. The first was after Jacob’s night, sleeping on the stone when he had his heavenly dream in Genesis 35 –

“So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured a **drink offering** on it, and he poured oil on it. ¹⁵ And Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him, Bethel.”

Like that drink offering, these were to be wholly poured out to the Lord. The Pulpit Commentary disagrees. They say –

“The application of the “drink-offerings” is uncertain. Josephus says (Ant. Jud. 3:9, § 4) that they were poured out round the brazen altar. But the analogy of the “meat offering” makes it probable that a portion only was thus treated, while the greater part belonged to the priests. In the entire provision by which burnt and peace-offering were to be necessarily accompanied with meat-offerings and drink-offerings, we can scarcely be wrong in seeing an arrangement made especially for the convenience of the priests.”
Pulpit Commentary

This is entirely incorrect. The wine contains alcohol content. This was forbidden for the priests to consume during the time they ministered in their duties. This is seen in Leviticus 10:8-11 –

“Then the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying: ⁹ ‘Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. *It shall be* a statute forever throughout your generations, ¹⁰ that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean, ¹¹ and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken to them by the hand of Moses.’”

There was no prohibition, on the priests or anyone else in Israel, concerning alcohol consumption with but two exceptions. The restriction for the priests as they ministered, and for the Nazirite during the time of a vow, are the only times it is forbidden.

The pouring out of the drink offering signifies the pouring out of the life-blood of Christ for the remission of sins. There is no way God would allow the priests to consume such an offering. In this act can be seen a secondary picture of the outpouring of His love in the offering up of Himself. The three offerings of the lamb, the meal offering, and the wine produce a marvelous picture of a banquet of Christ’s life presented *to* God and *for* man.

But for Israel of old, they could only speculate on the meanings of these things. For them, the sacrifice and accompanying offerings would simply be signs of gratitude to God for His everlasting mercies. They would also be a faithful, twice-daily acknowledgment of His protective care and enduring love.

⁴¹ **And the other lamb you shall offer at twilight;**

As was noted in the last clause of verse 39, the second lamb was to be offered “at twilight” or literally, “between the evenings” at the time that Christ gave up His spirit on the cross of Calvary. As John Lang describes the two sacrifices –

“The morning sacrifice made atonement for the sins committed in the night, and the evening sacrifice expiated the sins committed during the day.”

This is true in a sense and thus it pictures a continual purification from sin for the people, day unto day and night unto night. As this was merely a picture of Christ to come, in its fullest sense it symbolizes the full atonement and complete expiation of sins for any and all who have received what His life and work offers. Along with this second lamb, there were also other offerings...

41 (con't) and you shall offer with it the grain offering and the drink offering, as in the morning,

The same procedure was to be followed for the bread, oil, and wine in the evening as was conducted in the morning. The cycle was complete in the two sacrifices each day, and the cycle of our redemption was complete beginning on that Friday morning so long ago in Jerusalem and ending at 3pm that same afternoon.

41 (con't) for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the Lord.

It should be noted that together, the two offerings are described in this one clause. In other words, the two sacrifices, though separate, actually comprise one whole. Only together do they form to make a complete offering to the Lord. Why is it noted this way?

It is for three specific reasons. The first deals with Israel. These two sacrifices combined were intended to show Israel that they were to consecrate their lives each day anew unto the Lord. So that the entirety of their lives would be included, the two offerings were made continually, both morning and evening.

As long as the law existed, the requirement was to be Israel’s reminder of their consecrated status as the Lord’s holy people. Secondly, they are mentioned together because only together do they picture the final day of the Lord’s earthly ministry before and up to His death.

And so thirdly, they now form for us what Israel only saw in the earthly sacrifices. We are to consecrate our lives each day anew unto the Lord. This is so that the entirety of

our lives will be included. The complete and finished work of Christ is to be our constant reminder, both morning and evening.

⁴² *This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations*

The words of the previous clause, “a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire” in Hebrew are masculine. And yet, combined they are called now “a burnt offering.” This is feminine and so it appears there is a gender discord, but this is what Keil calls an *ad sensum*.

This is “a grammatical construction in which a word takes the gender or number not of the word with which it should regularly agree, but of some other word implied in that word” (Wikipedia). There is a precision of thought and intent in the original which is not seen in our translations.

And now once again, the word *tamid*, or “continuously” is repeated from verse 38. The offerings were to be perpetual, but it cannot be said forever. They were to continue only as long as the law, for which they were mandated, was in effect.

As a point of doctrine then, it should be noted to those who perpetually reinsert precepts from the law into their Christian doctrine, that they are actually in violation of the law which they insist upon. If the law is in effect, then the sacrifices *must* be made. After the consecration of Aaron and his sons, this is the first point that has been considered. It is a continual, or perpetual, statute for the time of the law. If the law is in effect, in any part, then this part *must* be followed through with. Thus, it is both ridiculous and absurd to assume that one can pick and choose what parts of the Mosaic Law they will adhere to.

It is an all-or-nothing thing. To go with the “all” can only mean condemnation. To go with the “nothing” means a full and complete trusting in Christ alone, of whom each of these things only picture. If you are sticking to precepts of the law – be they tithing or not eating pork – or any other part of the law, in hopes of pleasing God, you are not only failing, you are disgracing the work of His Son and offending Him.

⁴² (con't) *at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord,*

This translation is incorrect in part. It is the door of the tent of meeting, not tabernacle. However, the KJV does even worse by calling it the “tabernacle of the congregation.” This is entirely incorrect. It is *ohel moed* – the tent of meeting.

They have made the assumption that this is speaking of the door of the courtyard where the altar is more closely placed, but this is not correct. The sacrifices are said to be “at the door of the tent of meeting before the Lord.” This is speaking of the door to the tent of meeting, even though the altar isn’t placed in that exact spot.

The door for the tent is the word *pethakh*. The gate of the courtyard is the word *shaar*. They are two entirely different words describing two different things. It is the altar before the door of the tent of meeting where the Lord would meet with the people and commune with them. This is seen in the next words...

⁴² (con’t) **where I will meet you to speak with you.**

Most translations do not give a good sense of these words because of our modern use of the word “you.” It says, *asher ivaed lakhem shammah l’dabber elekha sham* – “where I will meet with you (plural) and speak with you (singular). The reason for the wording is explained quite well by Charles Ellicott –

“This passage determines the meaning of the expression, ‘tent of meeting.’ It was not the place where the congregation met together, for the congregation were forbidden to enter it, but the place where God met His people through their mediator and representative, the high priest, who could there commune with God and obtain replies from Him on all practical matters that were of national importance. ... The fact that all communication was to be through the high priest is indicated by the change of person.”

The words in today’s passage have been exceptionally precise and take great thought and consideration to understand. If you try, you can see what is going on rather clearly. Christ is the Altar. Christ is the offerings. Christ is the High Priest. Christ is the Door. Christ is all of these things. Therefore, the Lord is saying that He will speak to us (plural) through Him (singular).

Everything about this edifice, the offerings, the exquisite wording that is used... all of it is intended for us to see the Person and work of Christ for us – both past, present, and on-going – even until forever. This is seen in the next words as well...

⁴³ **And there I will meet with the children of Israel,**

It is through the entire process of what is being described that the Lord promises to meet with the children of Israel. They meet with Him through the sacrifices and offerings. They meet with him at the altar on which they are made. They meet with him

through Aaron and the priests. There in the place, the rituals, and the people, the Lord says that He will meet with the children of Israel

⁴³ (con't) **and *the tabernacle* shall be sanctified by My glory.**

In this clause, the words “the tabernacle” are inserted by the translators for either your benefit or as an error. All it says is, *v’niqdash bikbodi* – “...and I will sanctify by My glory.” The question is, “What will the Lord sanctify by His glory?” Of 20 English translations, here are the options – “the place,” “it,” “the tabernacle,” “that place,” “the Tent,” and “the altar.” Anyone?

The answer is “None of the above.” The tent, the altar, and Aaron and his sons are all mentioned in the next verse as being consecrated. The only entity mentioned in this verse is Israel. It is *Israel* which is sanctified by the glory of the Lord that is being referred to here. This is later explained explicitly in Ezekiel 37 with these words –

“My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ²⁸ The nations also will know that I, the Lord, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.” Ezekiel 37:27-29

In the New Testament, it is Christ who is said to sanctify the people. As each implement, each rite, and each position of the tabernacle merely points to Christ, then this is speaking first and foremost of the *people* who are sanctified by Him.

This is a higher and more perfect sanctification than the law could ever provide. It is a sanctification which proceeds from the Lord Himself. It is the people who are being sanctified by His glory personally, represented by the various things around them by which they draw near to God.

*It is I who consecrates Israel
It is by My glory that this is so
And it is I who can consecrate You as well
To you My holiness I will show*

*For those who call out from Egypt’s chains
I will respond and break them free
Nothing of the previous bondage now remains
For those who have been released by Me*

*I am the Lord who sanctifies His people
It is by My glory that this is so
So let them sing their praises from under the steeple
They are mine; let the world know*

III. I am the Lord Their God (verses 44-46)

⁴⁴ So I will consecrate the tabernacle of meeting and the altar.

Only after noting that He would sanctify the people of Israel does it now mention sanctification of the list of things which allow for the ministering of the people. Further, it is in the future tense, “And I will consecrate...” It is another indication that what was said in the previous verse is wholly separate from that which is being referred to now.

This is why it is so disastrous to read and be captivated by a single translation of the Bible. Man is fallible and the insertions are man’s fallible words, often incorrectly rendered. This is perfectly evident, once again, even in this verse which the NKJV translates as “tabernacle.” Again, it is the *ohel*, or tent of meeting and the altar which are first noted as to be sanctified.

⁴⁴ (con’t) I will also consecrate both Aaron and his sons to minister to Me as priests.

After the edifice, only then are Aaron and his sons mentioned as to be sanctified by the Lord. As they are a part of the people of Israel, it is logical that they would be mentioned after the tent and the altar if the previous verse was speaking of Israel as a whole.

The separation between the clauses shows that verse 43 refers to the people of Israel. This will become fully evident in the next verse, but before going there, Adam Clarke’s words on this verse, in relation to the ordaining of men as ministers, is worthy of note –

“From this, as well as from many other things mentioned in the sacred writings, we may safely infer that no designation by man only is sufficient to qualify any person to fill the office of a minister of the sanctuary. The approbation and consecration of man have both their propriety and use, but must never be made substitutes for the unction and inspiration of the Almighty. Let holy men ordain, but let God sanctify; then we may expect that his Church shall be built up on its most holy faith.”

The lesson in Clarke’s words has been borne out thousands of times throughout the years. Man ordains, but only God sanctifies. How many pastors and preachers have

been ordained by man, but have had no sanctification by God's Spirit. Hence, it is never wise to put faith in a title such as pope, priest, pastor, or preacher.

Rather, we are to put our faith in God and inspect the man as to whether he is endowed with God's approval or not. And the only way to do that is to see if he lives in accord with the word which He has given us.

⁴⁵ I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God.

As I said a minute ago, the structure of how these verses are put together shows us that verse 43 was speaking of Israel. There is a chiasmic structure in verses 43-45 which allows us to see this –

And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and *they* shall be sanctified by My glory. So I will consecrate the tabernacle of meeting and the altar.

I will also consecrate both Aaron and his sons to minister to Me as priests.

I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God.

The Lord promises to meet with the children of Israel and to sanctify them by His glory. Therefore, He will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God. The center of the verses speaks of the tent, the altar, Aaron, and his sons. Each of these has pictured Christ.

Therefore, we can see the picture revealed for us in the church now. Through Christ, in all of His many roles, God meets with us, sanctifies us, dwells with us, and is pleased to call Himself our God. As I said earlier, the passage today is exquisitely structured and the wording is exactly precise.

Who would have thought when we started through them less than an hour ago that such marvelous treats would be seen in them! And yet, you are learning what so very few people have ever taken the time to learn. Like Israel of old, for us today, it is Christ who directs us, it is He who saves us, it is He who sustains us, it is He who enlightens us, it is He who defends us, and it is He who loves us enough to dwell among us.

In these verses, you are experiencing marvelous depths of wonder that are hardly ever plumbed. You are finding Christ through the revealed mind of God. Be pleased to revel in Him because through these words, there is wonderful assurance...

⁴⁶ And they shall know that I *am* the Lord their God,

It is through Christ who sanctifies His people that we can know Yehovah our God. It is He who dwells among us and who lives in us by His good Spirit. It is by no other name that we can identify with God in this unique, personal, and intimate way.

In the tabernacle, the people saw the working *of* God and *for* God. It was through these types and shadows that they could say, “Here is the Lord our God.” As these types and shadows look forward to Christ, then when we see their fulfillment in Him, we can – and without any reservation at all – say, “Here is the Lord our God.”

God has given us the Old only to point us to the New. Let us never squander our rightful position by deferring to the Old and trusting in our own deeds of the law in order to do what Christ has already accomplished and set aside.

^{46 (con't)} **who brought them up out of the land of Egypt,**

It is through the sanctification of Israel and all that went along with it that they would know the Lord “who brought them up out of the land of Egypt.” In other words, it is not through the tabernacle itself, nor the altar, nor Aaron that they would know this, but through their sanctification.

This is why the Lord ties this knowledge of Him in with being brought out of Egypt. Otherwise, it makes no sense. The tabernacle was replaced with the temple. The people were exiled to Babylon, the priestly line stopped its sacrifices and offerings, and yet they never forgot that it was the Lord who dwelt among them who brought them out of the land of Egypt.

Thus, we need to remember what Egypt only pictured – our life of sin. We don't have an altar; we don't have a tent; we don't have a high priest. Rather we have the Altar; we have the Tent; and we have the High Priest. All capitals there folks! We have Jesus, the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. It is He who brought us up out of the Land of Egypt and He did it for a most marvelous purpose...

^{46 (con't)} **that I may dwell among them.**

Until Christ died for us, we could not be justified. Until we received His work, we remained apart from Him and separate from the covenant promises. But when we called out to Him from our state of bondage, He made another entry on the rolls of heaven's scroll. He set another space at the heavenly banquet table, and He added on another room to the glorious dwelling where we will reside with Him for all eternity.

But He also gave us of His Spirit so that even now He dwells with us. What Israel realized in type and shadow, we realize in spirit and in truth. We have the fullness of what God offers when He said that He will dwell among us. We have the true Tent, our Lord Jesus Christ. And because we have Christ, we have the absolute fullness of our final words of the day...

^{46 (fin)} **I am the Lord their God.**

Ani Yehovah elohehem. If there is one truth which absolutely must be stated again and again and again, it is that Jesus Christ is Yehovah Elohim. He *is* the Lord God. This is so absolutely evident in Scripture that it takes the very hardest of hearts, or the very dullest of minds to deny it.

Throughout the entire chapter, we have seen literally dozens if not hundreds of pictures of Christ. In today's nine verses, we have seen countless more. God is calling out through His word to show us what was, what He has done, and what will be in what He will do.

And every single detail of it hinges on our acceptance that He personally stepped out of His eternal realm and united with His creation in order to redeem us from Egypt, our place of bondage to the devil and sin. In that act, He again becomes the Lord our God.

And as certain as any other truth found in the Bible, if we fail to accept that and to receive Him as our Savior, we remain under the devil's power. The little lambs whose life blood ebbed away at the altar of sacrifice each day make people cringe at the brutality of God who would allow such a thing.

And yet, those innocent little lives were given as a mere type and shadow of something far more precious, and infinitely more valuable. The love of God for humanity impelled Him to do what He did. This is how much He loves the work of His hands, and this is the amazing length that He would go to in order to once again fellowship with us. Through the cross of Christ, God is calling out to you. Will you respond? Call on Christ; marvelous things lie ahead if you do.

Closing Verse: *"And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.'" Revelation 21:3*

Next Week: Exodus 30:1-10 (The Alter of Incense)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

I Will Dwell among Them and be Their God

Now this is what you shall offer on the altar:

Two lambs of the first year

Day by day continually, in this do not falter

One lamb you shall offer in the morning so bright

And the other lamb you shall offer at twilight

With the one lamb shall be

One-tenth of an ephah of flour, such is the proffering

Mixed with one-fourth of a hin of pressed oil

And one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering

And the other lamb you shall offer at twilight

And you shall offer with it the grain offering, as to My word

And the drink offering, as in the morning

For a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the Lord

This shall be a continual burnt offering

Throughout your generations, so you shall do

At the door of the tabernacle of meeting

Before the Lord, where I will meet you to speak with you

And there I will meet with the children of Israel, where I abide

And the tabernacle shall by My glory be sanctified

So I will consecrate the tabernacle of meeting and the altar too

I will also consecrate both Aaron and his sons

To minister to Me as priests, so shall I do

I will dwell among the children of Israel

And will be their God, as I to you now tell

And they shall know that I am the Lord their God
Who brought them up out of Egypt the land
That I may dwell among them
I am the Lord their God, so they shall understand

Surely You are holy, O God
And this is what You expect also from us
But even now You have accepted us while on this earth we trod
Because of the imputed righteousness of Jesus

How can such a marvelous thing as this be?
That You have granted us to again fellowship with You
Thank You, O God for Jesus, the Lord of glory
Who, through His shed blood has made all things new

And so in His name to You we give our praise
And so shall it be forever and ever, even unto eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 30:1-10 (THE ALTAR OF INCENSE)

Every time we look at a new implement or piece of furniture in the tabernacle, at first we might think, “What is this even here for?” Until we look for and find Christ in them, they don’t seem to make any sense. But as soon as we open our eyes and minds to what we are being shown about Him, it all becomes so clear.

Today’s verses may not all make sense to you yet, but even before reading them, we can make a few logical deductions about what they must picture. For example, we have incense. Pretty much everyone knows what incense is and what it is for. When you light it, it smells good, it smokes, and the smoke rises up and out of sight.

If we understand the significance of the burnt offerings from previous sermons, we should at least get a hint of an idea what this incense must then be picturing. If so, then everything else should naturally begin to fall into place as well.

This is especially so if we read through the Bible and evaluate the 130 or so times that incense is mentioned. Eventually, we can form a general idea of what God is showing us. However, as incense has only been mentioned once before in the Bible, and that concerning what we are about to evaluate, it may take a bit of explaining. As an advanced clue, our text verse for today comes from Job 9 –

Text Verse: *“He is not a mere mortal like me that I might answer him, that we might confront each other in court.*

³³ *If only there were someone to mediate between us, someone to bring us together,*

³⁴ *someone to remove God’s rod from me, so that his terror would frighten me no more.*

³⁵ *Then I would speak up without fear of him, but as it now stands with me, I cannot.” Job 9:32-35 (NIV)*

Job noted that God isn’t a man. Because of that, there was no way for Him to talk directly to Him and get an answer from Him. And so he hoped for a mediator to help him out, someone who could bridge the gap between finite him and infinite God. This is what he desired.

Incense goes up from its place and eventually diffuses into the heavens. It pictures that transition which Job longed for. If his prayers could just go up and be received by a mediator who was qualified to take them in and pass them on, then all would be AOK. Likewise, if we were sure that our prayers were so handled, then we would surely know that everything is AOK.

Well, guess what. If you know Christ, then everything is AOK. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Altar of Incense (verses 1-6)

¹“You shall make an altar to burn incense on;

The altar now to be described gets its name from these words, *mizbeakh miktar qetoret* – “altar to burn incense.” The word *qetoret*, or incense, is from the same root as the word *qitor*, meaning “clouds” or “smoke.” Thus it means, “smoke, odor of (burning) sacrifice, incense.” However, the altar will also have a different name ascribed to it which we will see in a bit.

There are quite a few things about this altar which are perplexing to scholars, but if we simply take each verse, one at a time, and consider what we already know from the description of the other tabernacle furniture, we'll will have very few problems with the details.

^{1 (con't)} you shall make it of acacia wood.

Like much of the other furniture, the base material of this altar is to be acacia wood. Without going into all of the detail of the past, a short description of acacia and its properties will suffice as a good reminder. It is a very slow growing tree that would be readily available in the area where they are. Its heart wood is dark reddish-brown and is beautiful when sanded and polished. It is resistant to decay for several reasons and thus it is considered an incorruptible wood.

² A cubit shall be its length and a cubit its width

An *ammah*, or “cubit,” comes from the word *em*, or “mother.” Thus it is the mother measurement. It is the distance from the tip of the middle finger to the bend in the arm at the elbow. Thus this will be about 18 inches and...

² (con't) —**it shall be square—**

So far, we have seen that the Brazen Altar and the Breastplate of Judgment were both square. The altar carried the idea of judgment. The breastplate signified judgement and intercession. This third square piece will logically follow as intercession then. The Breastplate of Judgment is what ties the judgment of the Brazen Altar and the intercession of the Altar of Incense together. The fact that this is square, like the other two implements, signifies that the scope of the intercession reaches to the four corners of the earth without distinction or interruption; it is without limits.

² (con't) **and two cubits shall be its height.**

In total, the altar will be about a half yard square and a yard in height. It is one half cubit taller than both the Ark and the Table of Showbread. That it is two cubits in height is not without significance. Bullinger defines the number saying, “It is the first number by which we can *divide* another, and therefore in all its uses we may trace this fundamental idea of *division* or *difference*.”

² (con't) **Its horns shall be of one piece with it.**

The *qarnotav*, or “horns,” were not to be made separately and then fixed to the altar. Instead, they were to grow out of the altar, just as a horn grows out of the head of an animal. Something particular needs to be noted now. Here is a portion of the description for the Brazen Altar –

“You shall make its horns on its four corners; its horns shall be of one piece with it.” Exodus 27:2

If you noticed, the number of horns is given for the brazen altar, but the number of them is not given here. There must be a reason for this.

³ **And you shall overlay its top, its sides all around, and its horns with pure gold;**

Again, like the other wooden implements, this one is to be overlaid. The word is *tsaphah*, and it is identical to the verb *tsaphah*, which means “to look out or about, spy, keep watch.” Unlike the Brazen Altar, this one is to be overlaid with *zahav tahor*, or “gold pure.” It is the same overlay as that of the Ark and the Table of Showbread. Thus it will carry the same significance here as it did for those.

One new word introduced into the Bible here is *gag*, or “top.” It is probably by reduplication from the word *ga’ah*, which means “exalted. And so by analogy it is the top of an altar, house, etc.

³ (con’t) **and you shall make for it a molding of gold all around.**

The *zer* or “molding” was introduced with the Ark of the Covenant. One was also prescribed for the Table of Showbread. Now, a third implement is to be given such a molding. Like the Ark of the Covenant and the Table of Showbread, this molding is lacking the adjective “pure.” Although the overlay is specifically said to be pure in all three, the same adjective lacks in all three concerning the molding.

Because of the complete covering in gold, and this golden molding at the top, this altar will also be known as the “Golden Altar” in Scripture. It is first called this in Exodus 39:38.

⁴ **Two gold rings you shall make for it, under the molding on both its sides.**

Like the several other pieces, this is to have rings attached to it. And like the other gold pieces, the rings for this one are also lacking the adjective “pure.” They will carry a similar signification as the other times they were mentioned.

The word for “ring” is *tabbaath*. It means “ring,” but it comes from another word, *taba*. That is a verb which means “to sink.” This then gives the idea of a signet ring which is sunk into clay or wax in order to make a seal. From this comes the idea of any ring. Unlike the Ark and the Table, the rings for this Altar are to be under the molding. It will be carried with only the top of the Altar elevated above the priests.

⁴ (con’t) **You shall place *them* on its two sides, and they will be holders for the poles with which to bear it.**

Unlike the other furniture with rings and poles, this one has only two rings. They are made of gold and under the molding of the table. They will be used for holding the poles that bear and transport the altar.

⁵ **You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold.**

Again, exactly as has been seen in the previous instances, these *badim*, or “poles,” are to be of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. And again, just as before, the adjective “pure” is lacking from the description.

⁶And you shall put it before the veil that *is* before the ark of the Testimony, before the mercy seat that *is* over the Testimony, where I will meet with you.

This Golden Altar of Incense was to be put directly in front of the veil, in the middle of the holy place between the Table of Showbread on one side, and the Menorah on the other side. As it is said to be “before the ark of the Testimony,” it indicates that the ark and it are intricately connected.

However, it also says, “before the mercy seat.” Therefore it is also intricately connected to that. It is tied to both individually. Finally, it says that it is “where I will meet with you.” This is speaking of the presence of the Lord above the Mercy Seat, between the cherubim on it.

These three items – the Ark, the Mercy Seat, and the Altar of Incense are so intimately connected, that the author of Hebrews says that this altar is actually on the other side of the veil. Here is what he says –

“For a tabernacle was prepared: the first *part*, in which *was* the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; ³ and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, ⁴ which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which *were* the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; ⁵ and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat.” Hebrews 9:2-5

This description by the author of Hebrews is not in error. Rather John Lange explains what is intended –

“For this reason we would rather find a theological idea than an archæological error in that passage of the Epistle to the Hebrews (9:4) which puts it in the Holy of holies. For this is the altar which by its incense symbolizes the prayer of the high-priest (Rev. 5:8; Heb. 5:7).” John Lange

In this verse, there is a play on words occurring which is provided to give insights into the work of Christ. The veil, or *paroketh*, comes from the word *perek* which means

“cruelty” or “rigor.” That then comes from an unused root meaning to “break apart” or “fracture.” In this, we can see where cruelty or rigor then comes into play. The mercy seat or *kapporeth*, indicates “a satisfaction.” This comes from the word *kaphar*, which in this situation means “to appease” or “to satisfy.” The two words, *paroketh* and *kapporeth*, are spelled with the same letters, but they are simply realigned from *pe, resh, kaph, tav*, to *kaph, pe, resh, tav*. The letter *kaph* is simply moved forward. The letter *pe* means “mouth” and signifies “to blow or scatter.” *Kaph* is represented by an open hand and signifies “to open, allow, or tame.”

On one side there is cruelty and rigor; on the other side, there is mercy, or satisfaction. The only thing that would pass through this veil each day would be the *smell of the incense* as it wafted into the air.

*An altar of incense made of wood and gold
Its dimension are exacting and precise
It has a special purpose, so I am told
To know what that purpose is would be rather nice*

*There it sits in the Holy Place, before the veil it is set
But despite it being there, it does not seem obstructed at all
Even though I am not behind the veil yet
It seems that because of this altar, behind it I can call*

*Yes, there is an Altar which makes this possible
He is there receiving every wondrous puff of perfumed smoke
I believe that because of Him, to God my prayers are audible
It is as if He has heard me from the first moment I spoke*

II. Priestly Responsibilities (verses 7-10)

⁷“Aaron shall burn on it sweet incense every morning;

The Hebrew reads, *qetoret sammim*, or “smoke of spices.” The altar of incense is introduced at the beginning of this chapter. The composition of that incense will be given to close out the chapter. There it says –

“And the Lord said to Moses: ‘Take sweet spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, and pure frankincense with *these* sweet spices; there shall be equal amounts of each. ³⁵ You shall make of these an incense, a compound according to the art of the perfumer, salted, pure, *and* holy. ³⁶ And you shall beat *some* of it very fine, and put some of it before the Testimony in the tabernacle of meeting where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you.’” Exodus 30:34-36

This incense of spices shall be burnt *ba’boqer ba’boqer* or “by morning by morning.” This was the priest’s duties just as he was accomplishing another duty...

⁷ (con’t) **when he tends the lamps, he shall burn incense on it.**

When the lamps of the Menorah were trimmed at morning time, the incense was to be burned on it at the same time. This says “Aaron,” but it is the priesthood of Aaron which is implied. Whatever priest was given the responsibility could do this. We know this from Luke 1:9-10 where Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, was given this privilege.

As far as the burning of the incense, it is unknown how it was done. Some scholars see this altar as having a grating where the ashes would fall through. Nothing is said of this. Some scholars see the incense as being brought in and burnt on a golden censer. This seems more likely, but it is still only speculation. As it is not stated explicitly, it is not the focus of the details. That incense is burned on the altar is.

⁸ **And when Aaron lights the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense on it,**

As in the morning, Aaron was also to burn incense on this altar at twilight, or literally *ben ha’arbayim*, “between the evenings.” These then are at the same times that the morning and evening sacrifices were to be made on the brazen altar.

The two are being linked together in a unique way, just as this altar is linked to the Ark and the Mercy Seat in a unique way, and just as this altar and the Menorah are being linked together as well. Everything is tying together in the details of this special Altar of Incense.

As a bonus for you which is found in the words *eth hanerot ben ha’arbayim*, or “lights the lamps at twilight,” the word “LOVE,” or *hava* is found in a reverse acrostic of these

words. The first letter of each word – *aleph hey beth hey* spells a reverse acrostic *hava*, or LOVE.



^{8 (con't)} **a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations.**

The incense was to burn perpetually morning and evening for as long as the Aaronic priesthood was in effect. Every generation that came was to continue this practice, unabated, morning by morning, and each day between the evenings. The incense was to be before, or in the face of, Yehovah at all times. This mandate as I said, is tied in with the timing of the care for the Menorah each day as was seen in Exodus 27:20, 21 –

“And you shall command the children of Israel that they bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to cause the lamp to burn continually. ²¹ In the tabernacle of meeting, outside the veil which *is* before the Testimony, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening until morning before the Lord.”

⁹ **You shall not offer strange incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering; nor shall you pour a drink offering on it.**

The specificity here is given because the word for altar, or *mizbeakh*, is the same as for that of the Brazen Altar. It is an altar, it is square, it has horns, etc. just like the Brazen Altar. Even the rising of the smoke from the different offerings uses the same words for

the Brazen Altar and this one. Because of this, prohibitions were required to avoid confusion.

No strange incense was to be burned on it. This means that only the prescribed incense given later in this chapter was to ever be burnt. No burnt offering of any kind, no grain offering of any kind, nor any drink offering of any kind was to be offered on this altar.

Finally, the fact that the offerings for both of these altars was to be made at the same time is showing a special connection between them. As the smoke rises from one, so it would rise from the other. This Altar of Incense is so uniquely tied to so many other items in the tabernacle that its importance cannot be downplayed in any way.

¹⁰ And Aaron shall make atonement upon its horns once a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonement;

The ritual for this mandate is found detailed in Leviticus 16:18, which describes the Day of Atonement rituals –

“And he shall go out to the altar that *is* before the Lord, and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around.”

^{10 (con't)} once a year he shall make atonement upon it throughout your generations.

The last clause said, “upon its horns.” This clause says, “upon it.” The horns are cleansed by the smearing of blood, but after that, it says this in the following verse of Leviticus 16–

“Then he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, cleanse it, and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.”

-Leviticus 16:19

The entire altar would be considered purified from uncleanness by this annual atonement provided by the high priest.

^{10 (fin)} It *is* most holy to the Lord.”

Another connection to the Brazen Altar is revealed in these final words of the instructions. This altar was considered “most holy to the Lord,” just as that which touched the Brazen Altar was to be so considered –

“Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and sanctify it. And the altar shall be most holy. Whatever touches the altar must be holy.” Exodus 29:37

A great deal of what occurs around this Altar of Incense is inextricably linked to other implements of the tabernacle. Let’s take a short poetic break, and then come back to see what it all means...

*The Altar is most holy to the Lord
Nothing impure should ever be brought to it
Such is the warning in God’s precious word
And such is the warning I now to you submit*

*When we come to this Altar, let us be likewise holy
Let our prayers be unstained; let them be pure
This is what God asks of us, and so let them be
And in this manner, we will be heard for sure*

*When we are in our time of prayer and praise
And at all other times of this life that we live
Even throughout our lives, for all of our days
Let us to this precept all our attention give*

III. Wonderful Pictures of Christ and His Work

The placement of this passage in the Bible appears to cause some people problems. Charles Ellicott, and other noted scholars, find it rather puzzling that the description of this altar comes now instead of when the Table of Showbread and the Menorah, which were maintained in the same room, were described. Here are his words –

“Why the directions concerning the altar of incense were delayed until this place, instead of being given when the rest of the furniture of the holy place was described (Exodus 25), it is impossible to say. But there is certainly no reason to suspect a dislocation of the text.” Charles Ellicott

He was wise to say that there is no reason to suspect a dislocation of the text. In other words, it wasn't an accident being placed here. He just doesn't see the logic of why it is, in fact, placed here. Well, there are several good reasons why it is.

The first is that the earliest items recorded tell us of Christ coming to His people in order to bestow mercy and grace *on them*. However, this item now shows us what God has done in order for us to go *to Him*. This will be seen first and foremost in what the incense pictures.

Secondly, the details of the selection, ordination, and consecration of the priests was detailed in chapters 28 & 29. It would make no sense to speak of the things which the priests would daily minister to until the priests were prepared to minister. The care for the lampstand anticipated the ordination of Aaron; the daily offerings and the ministrations of the Altar of Incense, confirms that same ordination.

Thirdly, there is a lesson concerning ourselves in relation to the Altar of Incense. The Altar speaks of Christ, but in a second sense it has an application in the people of Christ. It relates to our relationship with God *through* Him and our duties to God *because* of Him.

The first and most obvious thing to do is to understand what the incense pictures. If that can be determined, then pretty much everything else will fall into its proper place. The altar is for incense, something which is burnt and rises toward heaven. The word *qetoret*, or incense, is from the same root as the word *qitor*, meaning "clouds" or "smoke." Thus it means, "smoke, odor of (burning) sacrifice, incense."

The Bible explicitly states what incense pictures. First, we saw that Zechariah was selected to offer incense at one point in his ministry. When that occurred, we read this in Luke 1 –

"So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division,⁹ according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense." Luke 1:8-10

The people were praying at the hour of incense. That gives us a clue which is explicitly revealed in both the Old and New Testament. In Psalm 141 it says –

“Let my prayer be set before You *as* incense,
The lifting up of my hands *as* the evening sacrifice.” Psalm 141:2

The incense and the burnt offering are tied together in this one verse, showing their unique connection. But the incense is *described as if prayer*. This is then repeated in Revelation 5 –

“Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.” Revelation 5:8

The burning incense pictures prayer. But prayer is intimately connected to praise, and so it has that secondary meaning adjoined to it. The next thing described is the base material for the altar, acacia. Just as before, it pictures Christ’s humanity. The wood is incorruptible, just as He is.

The square shape of the Brazen Altar, the Breastplate of Judgment, and the Altar of Incense are all tied together with the Breastplate being the interconnection between the three. There is judgment, judgment and intercession, and intercession. Thus the Altar of Incense signifies Christ’s intercessory work on our behalf. Our prayers are offered to Him, and through Him they are deemed acceptable to God the Father. This is explained in Hebrews 7 –

“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” Hebrews 7:25

“That this altar is square shows that His intercession reaches to the four corners of the earth without distinction or interruption; it is without limits.” Next, it is described as being a single cubit square. A cubit is the mother measurement. One cubit would be the basis of everything else. Bullinger describes the meaning of One –

“There can be no doubt as to the significance of this primary number. In all languages it is the symbol of *unity*. As a cardinal number it denotes *unity*; as an ordinal it denotes *primacy*.” EW Bullinger

Therefore, the prayers of intercession of Christ are unified and they hold primacy. In other words, prayers to God can *only* be offered through this One Source. No other prayers are acceptable to God without going through His chosen Mediator. So much for the RCC’s prayers to Mary.

The height being two cubits means that it is one half cubit taller than both the Ark and the Table of Showbread. It is exalted above those. The Ark is Christ embodying the law, meaning the Testimony which stands for the entire law. The Table of Showbread reveals Christ our Bread who gave His life for us. Only in the fulfilling of the law and in the giving of His life can we stand justified and acceptable before God.

Bullinger shows that two “..is the first number by which we can *divide* another, and therefore in all its uses we may trace this fundamental idea of *division* or *difference*.” There is a fundamental difference between acceptable prayers and unacceptable prayers. Only those prayers which rise above the law through the completed work of Christ can be considered acceptable to God. Those which do not, are not.

The one cubit square symbolizes that it reaches to the four corners of the earth. The two cubits in height symbolize that these prayers have overcome the world and reach to the heavens because of Christ’s intercession. This is actually made explicit in Hebrews 7:26, 27 –

“For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; ²⁷ who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.”

The *qarnotav*, or “horns,” were made to grow out of the altar, just as a horn grows out of the head of an animal. They are a symbol of power and strength and demonstrate the intercessory power of Christ to God for us. As they are one with the altar, then everything about this altar is typified by His power.

That the number of horns is not stated is a significant omission. As four is the number of creation, the Brazen Altar having four horns signified the judgment on sin throughout creation. However, because Christ’s intercessory work is in heaven, no number of horns is given. Thus there is a transcendence from the earthly to the heavenly in this omission.

The overlay of the wood with pure gold signifies Christ’s perfect purity and absolute divinity. It also symbolizes His kingly status. He is the priest-king. Therefore, it signifies Christ’s divine ability to keep watch over those He intercedes for and mediates for. Just as a king watches over His subjects, so Christ our King watches out and for us.

The gold molding, signifies the same as for the Ark and the Table, it represents His kingly status. He is, as it has been said already, our Priest-King. After this, we were shown that

unlike the other furniture, this altar only has two rings. These then picture these two things which Jesus spoke of in the Gospel of John –

“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.” John 5:39

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.” John 15:26

The word of God, given through the Holy Spirit, is represented by these two rings. They are the number of “witness.” They “speak of the Spirit’s testifying of Christ.” They testify as the seal and authority of who Christ is. The first mention of this by Jesus was when He spoke of the Old Testament Scriptures.

The second mention of it was when He spoke of what would be given to the apostles for the New Testament. Both are of divine origin, meaning from the Holy Spirit, but both have since been handled by man and therefore the adjective “pure” is not used.

They have our taint in them, even if they are the inspired word of God. Though the word of God is pure, man’s hands and his fallible interpretations have been used in the process of sharing it. The lacking adjective is no mistake. Instead, it is another picture for us to understand.

It is to these two rings into which the poles are placed. These then are the two testaments themselves, the New and Old. They speak of the God/Man, represented by the wood and gold. They are what makes Christ mobile to the world as their word carries Him, each contrasting – the law and grace, but each supporting the whole and confirming the message of Him.

As the table can only be carried by two poles, not just one, it teaches us that should either or both testaments of the Bible be removed, we would not have a proper presentation of who Christ is. Without one or the other, we would have a faulty view of Him, and without either, we would have no knowledge of Him at all.

As these poles and rings are just under the molding of the altar and not at its feet, it shows us that Christ’s intercessory work for us is near and close to us. He is our ever present help in time of need. That the Altar is directly before the veil and before the Ark and the Mercy Seat, it shows that even though we are still on this side of the veil, living in this fallen world, our prayers are acceptable to God because of the embodiment of

the law and the satisfaction of that law for us because of the torn body of Christ, which is the veil.

This unique arrangement of the Altar, Veil, Ark, and Mercy seat shows us that even though we cannot see heaven and the throne of grace with our eyes yet, our prayers are still received because of Christ's work. This is why there is that play on words concerning the Veil and the Mercy Seat – the *paroketh* and the *kapporeth*.

On our side, we walk in a world of cruelty and rigor. On the other side, where our hope lies, there is mercy, and satisfaction. As the smell of the incense would waft through this veil each day, so our prayers pass through to the throne of God. It is the incense of the altar passing through to God where mercy is made available to the sinner, and where grace is bestowed upon the believer.

The change in the letters of *paroketh* and *kapporeth* shows that our sins are scattered on one side, being blown away. This is signified by the letter *pe*. On the other side, there is an open hand, allowing our prayers to be received, signified by the letter *kaph*. If you have ever wondered if your prayers are really heard by God, these ancient pictures show that because of Christ, they are. It is there at the seat of mercy that we now meet with the Lord.

The burning of the incense at the time of the tending of the lamps shows a direct connection between the two. As the lamps picture the illumination and ministry of God by the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of Christ, it is a direct consequence of Christ's intercession for us. As we pray, He intercedes, and therefore the Spirit responds.

The perpetual burning of the incense shows that Christ ever-lives to intercede for us. We may be asleep at night, but Christ never sleeps, He never slumbers, and He is always available when our prayers rise to Him. This is why the Menorah and the Altar are so inextricably linked together. John Gills sums up the two functions represented by the two implements in regards to Christ's work. He says that –

“...when the priest looked after the one, he did the service of the other; and hence we learn, that our intercessor and lamplighter is one and the same; he that was seen amidst the golden candlesticks dressing the lamps of them, appears at the golden altar with a golden censer, to offer up the prayers of his saints.” John Gill

But there is more. The timing of the two burnings is not only connected to the Menorah, but it is the same time of day as the morning and evening offerings on the Brazen Altar.

The Brazen Altar sacrifices speak of the consecration of the life and actions of the body and soul to the Lord. They make a satisfaction for that which was displeasing to God.

The Altar of Incense offering speaks of the spiritual side of man being consecrated to the Lord. This tells of divine acceptance of what is pleasing to Him, namely our prayers because of the work of Christ.

Where the Brazen Altar sacrifices express atonement and reconciliation, the Altar of Incense offerings declare intimate fellowship with God because of that atonement and reconciliation. The two offerings both complement and complete our daily spiritual interaction with God in both act and exclamation.

And finally, the timing of the two offerings are aligned with the timing of Christ's final day in His earthly ministry. He was brought before the leaders of Israel and the Gentiles in the morning, and crucified between the evenings at the same time as these offerings. Thus they are a constant reminder to God of the work of Christ on our behalf.

It is no coincidence that the acrostic *hava*, or LOVE is found in the words "lights the lamps at twilight." This is the time of day that Christ died on the cross. The love of God, seen in the death of His Son, is what made our prayers acceptable to Him once again. This is the LOVE of God which is found in the High Priestly ministry of Christ's cross. Jesus, the Light of the world, illuminated both heaven and earth with the splendor of His work. Because of Him, we now have intimate fellowship with God through the offering of our prayers and praises.

These two altars are so closely connected to show us a single truth, and that truth is Christ. Each has its own purpose and design. One is a Brazen Altar; it is the place of sacrifice. The other is the Altar of Incense; it is the place of worship. Both together form the picture of One true Altar – Christ. The Author of Hebrews, speaking of Christ, says –

"We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. ¹¹ For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. ¹² Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. ¹³ Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. ¹⁴ For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. ¹⁵ Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name." Hebrews 13:10-15

The admonition to not offer strange incense upon this altar shows that the only prayers which are acceptable to God are those prayers which meet His exacting standards. No other prayers are acceptable except those authorized by and through His word. It is a note of exclusivity for the believer in Christ.

It is also a note that the follower of Christ is to *never mingle his prayers* with the prayers of unbelievers. That would be to mix the holy with the profane. It is an abomination to God. The admonition to offer no other offerings of any kind on this altar indicates that only through the work of Christ, which is realized in the other implements of the tabernacle, are prayers acceptable to God.

We can add no works of any kind into our complete devotion to Christ. Rather we are to trust in His sacrifices and offerings alone when we submit our prayers to God.

The final verse of the directions is that of atonement upon the altar. If our prayers offered to God go through Jesus, who is the Altar of Incense, and the yet atonement must be made upon the altar, it shows us a truth that is inescapable. Arthur Pink sums the thought up –

“Our prayers are so faulty, our praises so feeble, our worship so far below the level of what it ought to be, that even our “holy things” needed to be cleansed by the blood of atonement. How humbling this is!” AW Pink

In other words, even our prayers are defiled because we are defiled. The atonement upon the altar shows the need for Christ’s continued intercessory work for us. Though we are deemed acceptable to God because of Christ, it is only because of Christ. Without His past work, our prayers would be *unheard*. Without His on-going work, our prayers would continue to be *unheard*.

The annual atonement of the altar shows that the virtue of Christ’s intercession is fully complete by His earthly suffering, once for all time. We need nothing else, no sacrifice of any kind, to be acceptable to God. Instead, we need only our true Intercessor, Christ Jesus.

Such is the marvel and the majesty of Jesus Christ. Not only did He save us, but He keeps saving us. Not only did He purify us, but He continues to do so.

A direct example of this intercessory work is seen not long after the construction of the tabernacle. In Numbers 16, a rebellion takes place. At that time, the Lord’s anger was

aroused against Israel. But because of this altar, signifying Christ's intercession, the plague against them was arrested before it could kill the entire congregation –

“And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ⁴⁵ ‘Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.’

And they fell on their faces.

⁴⁶ So Moses said to Aaron, ‘Take a censer and put fire in it from the altar, put incense *on it*, and take it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them; for wrath has gone out from the Lord. The plague has begun.’ ⁴⁷ Then Aaron took *it* as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and already the plague had begun among the people. So he put in the incense and made atonement for the people.” Numbers 16:44-47

If you're like me, and you wonder why God doesn't just strike you dead and cast you into the pit for the things you do, now you can see why. Christ is there. He is that Altar and He is ever interceding for you, even when you blow it in a major way.

As a life application concerning what this altar signifies, we can discern from it three major precepts which we can apply to our life. The first is that it shows us just what prayer is. Incense is something that needs to be lit in order to smell. Unless the fire is kindled it just lays there, useless.

But once it is lit, it begins to smoke and to smell sweet. It then arises towards heaven. Likewise, unless we have a fire in our heart concerning our prayers, they are useless. They are vain repetitions without any fragrance. But if we are fervent in our prayers, they will rise in a smoke of wondrous joy to the Lord who is delighted to hear them and respond to them.

Secondly, the placement of the altar should be a clue as to where prayers belong in our lives. We first have to come to Christ through His sacrifice. Only then are our prayers acceptable to God. Sin must always be dealt with before our prayers can be responded to. As the altar of incense is in the Holy Place, it is before both the Menorah and the Table of Showbread.

The Menorah shows that we are to be a light to the world. That the Menorah illuminates the side where the Table of Showbread is, it indicates that we are to illuminate the work of Christ, our Bread of Life.

The Altar of Incense stands between the two. It teaches us that our light will be ineffective and our proclamation will become stale and moldy without an effective prayer life. Both are hallowed by the presence of the Altar of Incense in our lives.

As it stands before the veil, it shows that our prayers must reach into the most holy place by going through the veil. As Christ is the veil, our prayers must be offered to God through Him. When they are, they reach the Throne of Grace and the Seat of Mercy. Though we are in a land of cruelty, our prayers raise even to the seat of heaven because of Christ.

And thirdly, we are taught how to cultivate our prayers through this altar. The altar was tended to morning and evening and it burned perpetually in the Holy Place. We should prepare ourselves morning and night in the contemplation, prayers to, and praises of the Lord. With this preparation, our prayers will be constantly streaming to the Lord throughout the day and night. As Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5, "Pray without ceasing."

We can only do this if we are prepared to do so. We are on a journey, heading west and back to that wonderful land of delight promised to us by God who cannot lie. As we continue our trek, we should be ever praising, ever praying, and ever petitioning this wonderful God who has given us all things through Christ the Lord. If you have never made a commitment to Him, today is the day. Let's get that resolved so that your prayers will be heard by the One who sits on Heaven's throne, waiting to present your prayers to His Father...

Closing Verse: *"Hear my cry, O God;
Attend to my prayer.*

*² From the end of the earth I will cry to You,
When my heart is overwhelmed;
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Psalm 61:1, 2*

Next Week: Exodus 30:11-16 *This is for the people's atonement...* (The Ransom Payment) (84th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Altar of Incense

You shall make an altar
To burn incense on, so shall you do
You shall make it of acacia wood
As I am now instructing you

A cubit shall be its length and a cubit its width
It shall be square, as instructed by Me
And two cubits shall be its height
Its horns of one piece with it shall be

And you shall overlay its top
Its sides all around, no detail shall you forsake |
And its horns with pure gold
And you shall for it a molding of gold all around make

Two gold rings you shall make for it
Under the molding on both its sides, this detail you shall not omit
You shall place them on its two sides
And they will be holders for the poles with which to bear it

You shall make the poles of acacia wood
And overlay them with gold, as is understood

And you shall put it before the veil
That is before the ark of the Testimony, so shall you do
Before the mercy seat that is over the Testimony
Where I will meet with you

Aaron shall burn on it
Sweet incense every morning, this shall be
When he tends the lamps
He shall burn incense on it, sweet incense to Me

And when Aaron lights the lamps at twilight
He shall burn incense on it, at that time too
A perpetual incense before the LORD
Throughout your generations, this he shall do

You shall not offer strange incense on it
Or a burnt offering, or a grain offering; you shall pay heed
Nor shall you pour a drink offering on it
No priest shall consider such a deed

And Aaron shall make atonement upon its horns
Once a year with the blood, so shall he do
Of the sin offering of atonement
This is what shall be conveyed to him by you

Once a year he shall make atonement upon it
Throughout your generations
It is most holy to the LORD
For this altar, these are my expectations

O God, how marvelous are You in all ways
For giving the true Altar of Incense to us
And so forever, yes even through eternal days
We can petition You, through our Lord Jesus

All of these pictures from Israel's past
Have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ our Lord
And through Him and His work we can fellowship at last
Yes, through Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word

Praises, yes praises we shall eternally sing to You, O God
And forever in Your marvelous light, golden streets we shall trod

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 30:11-16 (THE RANSOM PAYMENT)

There are two words that should be explained in order for us to understand the contents of today's passage a little better. They are redeem and ransom. Both words deal with the same issue and the words can both be turned into either nouns or verbs.

For simplicity's sake, a ransom is a payment. It is a sum of money or of some other type of payment in order to obtain a prisoner's release. In the verb form, it is obtaining that release by making a necessary payment. If we think of man bound in sin, there must be a payment made to obtain our release from that.

Redemption involves regaining possession of something in exchange for payment. The ransom payment is what is used to redeem the thing. The noun form of the words differ more than the verb forms, but in all there is more involved in the word redeem than in the word ransom because the application is wider.

The reason I mention this now is that Israel is already at Mount Sinai, and yet they will be asked to pay a ransom for their souls. We shouldn't get stuck there and think that this somehow means they have earned their status. As we will see, this ransom payment only pictures the work of Christ.

It is not to be taken in any way at all that we somehow participate in our freedom from sin and bondage to the devil, with but the exception of receiving what Christ has done on our behalf. The payment here is only a type and a shadow of His work and is not to be equated with any effort on our own part in securing our release.

I will repeat this as we go through the verses to remind you of this. In the end, it is all about what Jesus Christ has done for us.

Text Verse: *"And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Mark 10:44, 45*

When I was young, we would save S&H Green Stamps in order to buy things we wanted. When we bought things at the store, we would get a certain number of stamps as a bonus. The more we spent (well, the more mom spent), the more stamps we would get.

It is the same as our bonus points for using credit cards today. Along with the stamps came a book filled with pictures of things we could buy with the stamps. The more costly the thing, the more stamps were needed. If there was a toaster mom wanted, she would save up her stamps for that. The toaster in the picture was in need of redemption and the stamps were the ransom payment for it.

When the book of stamps had enough to buy the toaster, off she would go to redeem her prize. It was an enjoyable thing to do and it was something that we anticipated with delight. This concept parallels man's plight.

There is a picture of humanity, bound by sin and separated from the Holy God who created him. In order to not violate His own holiness, a ransom price needed to be paid. The value of the thing being ransomed is very high and therefore the price to be paid was high as well.

To think of what Christ did for us is... well, it is simply astonishing. When Jesus said that he came "to give His life a ransom for many" it means just that. He gave His life to redeem us. As God's holiness is what could not be violated, the price for our redemption is an infinite one. As only God is infinite, then only the God/Man could make the payment.

The Humanity of Jesus is the payment, but the Deity of Jesus is what seals the deal. He is the bridge between the two. The payment is made for us by Him, and it is received by Him on behalf of God the Father. This is what we see pictured in today's passage. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Ransom Money

¹¹ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

This is the first time these words have been given since Exodus 25:1 when the Lord began to give the instructions for the gathering of materials for the tabernacle. Since then, it has been one long, uninterrupted set of instructions.

These words now form a new thought with a new direction, but they will only last for six verses and then the Lord will provide further instructions for the construction of more

tabernacle implements. However, even these instructions, which seem unrelated to the on-going narrative, are intricately tied into it. In Exodus 25:1, it said –

“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ² ‘Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering.’”

All of the articles of these past chapters seem to have been constructed from this willing offering of the people. But this is incorrect. We will see this as the verses continue. What seems now as an interruption in the normal, unbroken flow of the narrative is actually a logical and even essential part of it.

As the words, “Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying” are set off as their own verse, it is as if we are being asked to pause and consider them. Now that we have, we can move forward into the “what” and “why” of the coming verses.

¹² “When you take the census of the children of Israel for their number,

Not to overwhelm you with a complicated commentary from a long-dead scholar, but one of the things that I often repeat is that we need to be careful with reading commentaries and assuming they are correct. John Lange goes into great detail concerning what is being mandated in this verse with the intent of correcting other scholars. And yet, his commentary is completely inaccurate –

“The tabernacle itself was to be built from voluntary contributions (35:5), not from legally imposed taxes, and in this voluntary way more was given than was needed (36:5 sqq.). Moreover, the designation of the use of the money, **עַל-עֲבֹדַת אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד** [“for the service of the tent of meeting,” Exo 30:16], does not mean: for the work of the building, but: for the perpetual service of God in the building. This is implied also in Luther’s translation [and in the A. V.]. Moreover, it is said, that this tax is to be collected from the Israelites when the census of the adult males is taken. But such an enumeration did not take place till after the tabernacle was erected (Num. 1:1–18).” John Lange

He gives several points.

- 1) The tabernacle was to be built of only voluntary contributions.
- 2) More than enough of voluntary contributions were given and so this tax was unneeded for the construction.

- 3) The money to be mentioned in connection with this census is for the care of the tabernacle, not its construction.
- 4) The census was taken after the construction of the tabernacle.

The analysis is incorrect because he didn't consider the words of Exodus 38 which we will look at later. It is a mistake that would lead to a wholly unfounded conclusion as to *why* the Lord is now directing this money to be collected at the time of a census. Let us always be careful to not assume that a commentary is correct until we have fully searched out the matter at hand. The Lord is now, at this time, requiring a census of the people, right in the middle of the details for the construction of the tabernacle and its furniture. Why would He do this?

^{12 (con't)} **then every man shall give a ransom for himself to the Lord,**

When the census is taken, each man is to give a ransom for himself. This seems more than odd, especially when the people have already been redeemed by the Lord –

“You in Your mercy have led forth
The people whom You have redeemed;
You have guided *them* in Your strength
To Your holy habitation.” Exodus 15:13

This is now the third time that the noun *kopher*, or ransom has been mentioned in Scripture. The word comes from the verb *kaphar* which means “to appease.” It means then “a covering,” and thus figuratively, “a redemption price.”

It was first used in Genesis 6:14 in the asphalt which was used to cover the ark of Noah. The verb form was used was in Genesis 32:20 when Jacob sent a gift to Esau in hopes of allaying his anger. At that time, he said –

“I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me.” Genesis 32:20

The intent of the gift was to cover over his previous transgressions against his older brother. The required ransom payment now is tied in with the numbering of the people. Its intent was to impress upon the minds of the people that they were actually unworthy to be a part of the holy congregation.

Because of this, they would need to pay a covering for that unworthiness. The Lord had redeemed them in a state of unworthiness and now they were to pay a ransom as a personal acknowledgment of that redemption.

When the ransom is paid, in the eyes of the Lord it would be as if their unworthiness no longer existed and thus they would be kept safe from the justly deserved punishment of the righteous Judge of mankind. With this covering, they could then come into the presence of the Holy Lord without any fear of danger. This is explicitly stated in the next words...

¹² (con't) **when you number them, that there may be no plague among them when you number them.**

The paying of the ransom is directly tied into the idea of being saved from a plague. Interestingly, the word *negeph*, or “plague” has only been seen once so far in Scripture, in Exodus 12:12-13 –

“For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* the Lord. ¹³ Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you *are*. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the **plague** shall not be on you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt.”

As you can see, the Lord is making a direct connection between the shedding of the blood of the lamb and the ransom payment of the men in the census which is to be of silver. One logically follows along with the other, redemption and ransom. The terms, though similar in meaning, do differ. Redemption is wider in its application than ransom.

This noun form, *negeph*, or plague, is only used seven times in the Bible and all are in relation to the people of Israel. The final time it is used is in Isaiah 8 where it is ascribed directly to the Lord in relation to the people of Israel –

“He will be as a sanctuary,
But a stone of **stumbling** and a rock of offense
To both the houses of Israel,
As a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” Isaiah 8:14

This verse from Isaiah is then used by Paul when speaking of Christ in Romans 9, and by Peter – also speaking of Christ, in 1 Peter 2. In essence, Christ became the very plague upon Israel that the blood of the lamb and the ransom money was to protect them from. In their rejection of Him, they rejected what these types and shadows only pictured. What a mistake to underestimate and thus reject God’s provision in Christ!

¹³ This is what everyone among those who are numbered shall give:

The term “those who are numbered” is the Hebrew word *paqad*. It is not an unusual word in and of itself. It is used over 300 times in Scripture under various contexts. What is unusual is that it hasn’t been used since Exodus 20 and it won’t be used again until Exodus 32, both under different contexts.

However, it is used 5 times in verses 12, 13, & 14. It is being specially highlighted. The word means “to visit,” “to appoint,” “to attend to,” etc. The significance of numbering then is to show that a certain group out of a whole are being appointed or visited for a special purpose.

¹³ (con’t) half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary

The word for “half,” *makhatsith*, is introduced here now, and it will be used three times between verses 13 and 15. The specificity is given that it is to be *one half* a shekel. The stress though is not on half, but on shekel. We know this because the weight is then further described as “the shekel of the sanctuary.”

A shekel is a measurement of weight, not specifically a coin of a preset value. It is this weight which is required, but more than just any shekel, it was to be of the shekel of the sanctuary. It is a standard shekel by which all other weights would be compared.

The amount is not a great one. It is believed that the half shekel would equal approximately eight grams of silver. Although the value of silver in biblical times isn’t known, on the day I typed this sermon, 8 grams of .999 pure silver is worth \$4.21.

The amount is not so small as it should be treated with contempt. Even a rich person will pick up a five dollar bill on the road. On the other side, it is also not so large as to be a burden on even a poor person. A poor person will spend more than this much on a McDonald’s breakfast on any given day.

¹³ (con’t) (a shekel is twenty gerahs).

Now a half shekel is defined in another way for us, by the *gerah*. It's a new word for us which will be used five times between Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Ezekiel – all in the same context. The word comes from the verb *garar* which means “to drag away.” The *gerah* literally means “a bean” or “a kernel” which is round as if scraped. Thus it is a portion of a shekel which has been taken away. This is exactly the same idea as our modern use of “grain” when speaking of money, gun powder, etc.

A shekel is said to equal twenty *gerahs* and thus one half shekel is 10 *gerahs*. Specificity is given and so an explanation is expected. Therefore, we must again turn to Bullinger to define the number –

Ten “signifies *the perfection of Divine order* ... Completeness of order, marking the entire round of anything, is, therefore, the ever-present signification of the number *ten*. It implies that nothing is wanting; that the number and order are perfect; that the whole cycle is complete.”

¹³ (con't) **The half-shekel shall be an offering to the Lord.**

This ransom money is said to be a *terumah*, or an offering, to the Lord. The word *terumah* comes from the word *rum* which means to be lifted up or exalted. This seemingly insignificant payment was to be exalted and raised up before the Lord.

¹⁴ **Everyone included among those who are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering to the Lord.**

The age of those who were to pay included any male from the age of twenty and up. It is at the age of twenty that a Hebrew was considered as full grown. At this age, they would be considered acceptable for military service. Also, the Levites commenced their service in the sanctuary at this age. No male above this age was to be exempt from payment. The number twenty is defined by Bullinger as the number of *expectancy*. All of these, twenty and above, were to give their *terumah*, or offering, to the Lord.

¹⁵ **The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel,**

The *ashir*, or rich, are now mentioned for the first time in the Bible. The word won't be used again until the book of Ruth and it will mostly be used in the five books of wisdom.

The *dal*, or poor, are mentioned for only the second time. The word comes from *dalal* which means “to dangle.” By implication such a person dangles – he is lean, needy, and weak.

The point of this requirement should be obvious, but it is well explained by Matthew Henry –

“The rich were not to give more, nor the poor less; the souls of the rich and poor are alike precious, and God is no respecter of persons, Ac 10:34; Job 34:19. In other offerings men were to give according to their worldly ability; but this, which was the ransom of the soul, must be alike for all. The souls of all are of equal value, equally in danger, and all equally need a ransom.”

The rich man couldn’t walk up to the temple and say, “I am giving more in order to secure my own, better ransom.” The poor man could not feel that his atonement was of less importance than the wealthy man. And there is no stated provision for a man to pay for the ransom of another man. It is a tenet later written explicitly into Scripture by the sons of Korah –

“None of them can by any means redeem his brother,
Nor give to God a ransom for him—
8 For the redemption of their souls is costly,
And it shall cease forever—” Psalm 49:7, 8

¹⁵ (con’t) **when you give an offering to the Lord, to make atonement for yourselves.**

For the third time in three verses, we are told that this is a *terumah*, or a raising up of an offering to the Lord. This raising up is specifically said to “make atonement” or to be a covering for the people. A ransom is required or atonement will not be made.

The offering is equally binding on all, and thus its effects are equally realized in all. It is what saves from the vengeance of God which was sure to come on those who failed to make it, whether through pride, arrogance, or sheer neglect.

¹⁶ **And you shall take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shall appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of meeting,**

The atonement money which is collected will come out to a total of one hundred talents and one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels. This is recorded in Exodus 38 and the specific use for this silver is explained there as well –

“And the silver from those who were numbered of the congregation *was* one hundred talents and one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary: ²⁶ a bekah for each man (*that is*, half a shekel, according to the shekel of the sanctuary), for everyone included in the numbering from twenty years old and above, for six hundred and three thousand, five hundred and fifty *men*. ²⁷ And from the hundred talents of silver were cast the sockets of the sanctuary and the bases of the veil: one hundred sockets from the hundred talents, one talent for each socket. Then from the one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five *shekels* he made hooks for the pillars, overlaid their capitals, and made bands for them. ” Exodus 38:25-28

Going through the description of the tabernacle’s construction, it was seen that there were exactly 100 silver sockets to be made, each a talent in weight. The weight of these are precisely aligned with the 100 talents of silver which were collected. There were also the silver pillars, hooks, and bands. The exact amount needed for these implements was precisely received from this census ransom as well – 1775 shekels.

There is nowhere else in Scripture a note that extra was needed or that extra was left over. In other words, the exact number of people had come out of Egypt to exactly provide the exact amount of silver required for these items.

As the deliverance of Egypt was at an exact moment in time which was promised 430 years earlier, and as the travels of Jacob took them to Egypt at exactly the ½ way point of that 430 years, and as countless other exacting details had to occur in order for there to be this precise number of people at this moment in time, the collection of the silver which is now being mandated shows evidence of God’s hand on every minute detail of time, human generation, the movement of nations, even the amount of food that was available at any given moment in history.

This one verse, taken in context with these other points recorded in Scripture, shows us the absolutely sovereign nature of God over all things. In order for this to come out as it did, an *infinite* number of minute and precise occurrences were needed to align perfectly. And yet, we read verses like this without a second thought.

But the details, when understood, show us a magnificence in the word of God that is beyond our ability to properly grasp. Every chapter, every verse, and every word is intricately woven into the most marvelous tapestry ever conceived of.

As a side note, the KJV again messes up the translation here. It says *ohel moed*, or the tent of meeting, not the tabernacle of the congregation. They receive two demerits, and the NKJV gets one for calling it the tabernacle of meeting. Precision is realized in God's word; we should therefore be precise with God's word.

As another side note, every translation of this verse gives the idea of the silver being used for the ongoing "service" of the temple, but as was seen from Exodus 38, it is to be used not for its continuing service, but for its construction. This silver is for the sockets and other items. Specificity is important as the next words bear out the reason for what we are seeing...

^{16 (fin)} that it may be a memorial for the children of Israel before the Lord, to make atonement for yourselves."

The silver ransom money was to be, as it says, "a memorial for the children of Israel before the Lord." The first time a *zikkaron*, or memorial, was mentioned in Scripture was at the Passover in Exodus 12 when it said –

"So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance." Exodus 12:14

Again as earlier, the blood of the Passover is being directly equated to the silver of this ransom money. The redemption and ransom are intricately woven into one concept. The memorials brought to remembrance past deliverance, and they continued to remind them concerning that state of being. The redemption silver was used in the tabernacle construction to show us that everything about our redemption stands on Christ and is supported by Christ alone.

*A price was paid to bring us back home
Atonement came; a covering perfect and pure
And so from Your courts, never shall we roam
Our place is fixed and firm; our place forever secure*

*Through the payment of Christ there on Calvary
Ransom was made, no more is there any debt
Because of His death there on that cruel and lonely tree
Satisfaction for what we owed has been perfectly met*

*The price was paid; the life of the Man ebbd away
Our atonement came so perfect and pure
But then came an even greater day
When death was defeated; now our place is forever secure*

II. Pictures of Christ

Moses was implicitly instructed that a census was going to be taken with the words, “When you take the census of the children of Israel for their number.” No census had been mentioned to this point, but now it is a known matter. There is a specific timeframe involved in the taking of this census, even though it is not yet revealed when it will be.

A census is made in order to determine a number. The mention of numbering the people is made five times in these few verses. Thus there is a hidden stress upon this word. Further, the name of the Lord – Yehovah is mentioned six times in the passage, but only five of them are in the actual instructions. Both of these five occurrences point to grace; five being the number of grace.

The act of numbering implies ownership or authority over a thing. This is why we number the things we possess. I may know that my neighbor has \$2,000,000 dollars, but only because he first counted it and told me. He counted what he possesses. Likewise, I have counted my money and it equals \$24.37... all mine!

We can do this for any of our assets because they are ours. The Lord is calling for a census of His people because they are His. The fact that He already knows the number is irrelevant. He wants Moses, and thus us to know it. He is identifying for all to know that this total number is His. As they are His, He has authority over them and the right to align them in the manner He chooses. The stars are numbered because they belong to the Lord –

“He counts the number of the stars;
He calls them all by name.” Isaiah 40:26

Not only does the Lord number the stars, but He also names them. It is a double note of ownership. The same is true with Israel. He named them and therefore He is now expressing a double note of authority over them. The same holds true the span of our lives. In Job, we read that He is the owner and controller of all men by this concept as well –

“Since his days *are* determined,
The number of his months *is* with You;
You have appointed his limits, so that he cannot pass.” Job 14:5

The Lord is exercising His authority and demonstrating His ownership of Israel through the coming census. This is why the sin of David in the taking of a census was so great. He went out to number the people of Israel without the Lord’s direction. He was, in essence, claiming his ownership of them and excluding the Lord’s authority in the process. It was a costly lesson for David.

The account is recorded in both Kings and Chronicles in part as a reminder to us of both the sin of pride and of the mercy of the Lord at the repentant heart. The Lord will not give His glory to another, but the Lord will allow us, if we are humble, to share in the blessings of His glory.

In this, we see that there is only One rightful Person who has been given the trust of choosing, ordering, and numbering the people of God – Jesus Christ. In this position of authority, He never forgets the glory of His Father, a glory which He has shared in and will share in for all eternity.

Moses’ numbering of the people at the Lord’s command is only a picture of the Lord’s numbering of God’s people. But there is a logical order to the process before the numbering. First, there was a need of redemption. The people were in Egypt and in bondage. That is man bound by sin.

Next there is the One who can redeem. One who is powerful enough to break the bonds and overthrow the power of the devil who has bound us in sin. That is Christ. This is followed by the act of redemption itself. This was seen in the slaying of the Passover, picturing the death of Christ.

After that, the duty of the redeemed was seen in the obedience of following the Lord and His commands. Only after that then come the privileges of our redemption which are found in worshipping and serving Him. Each step has been logical and orderly.

Only when people are redeemed can they then be numbered among the redeemed. This is where we come to in this passage. No sooner is the numbering mentioned for Israel, then the note of a ransom to be paid is given. As Arthur Pink states –

“God appropriates His elect unto Himself only as a ransomed people.”

This is the same pattern as before at the Passover where the same words were used. Again, the blood of the Passover is being tied into the silver of this ransom money. And in both instances, if the people failed to meet the requirement, simple as it may be, the penalty would be a plague among them.

Both the blood and the silver picture the work of Christ. In their rejection of Christ, He became the plague upon Israel. The same is true with the world at large. In its rejection of Christ, the plagues of revelation will come upon the world. The pattern follows consistently in Scripture. This is why the Bible says in a seemingly contradictory manner–

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts,
Come to the waters;
And you who have no money,
Come, buy and eat.
Yes, come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without price.” Isaiah 55:1

The ransom money only pictures Christ. We are not redeemed with such things as silver. Peter explains this to us in his first epistle –

“...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”
-1 Peter 1:18

The precious blood of Christ is pictured in the silver metal. The blood is the mode of redemption and shows us the character of Christ’s work; its value is the means of payment and shows the very high price of the ransom.

As we have seen in the past, silver itself pictures redemption. Silver, or *kespeh*, comes from another word *kasaph* which means to “be eager” or to “long for.” Thus this redemption money signifies that which we long for. Paul explains this in Romans 8 –

“Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, **eagerly** waiting for the adoption, the **redemption** of our body.” Romans 8:23

From the fall of man onward, the expectancy of the work of Christ is pictured in the redemptive process of man. And Christ is the foundation of that redemptive process. Paul explicitly says in 1 Corinthians 3 that Christ *is* the foundation of the gospel.

The next thing noted was the word *paqad*. It is mentioned 5 times in this short passage. It signifies to visit or to appoint. A certain number were appointed out of a whole. In this a picture is being developed of the greater world at large. It is explained in the words of Luke’s description of what occurred in Acts 13:48 –

“Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”

There is a portion of a whole who are appointed to eternal life. They are those who believe in Christ and receive His work. It is this special purpose in the process of redemption that is being highlighted in this verse.

Next was mentioned the specific amount of the ransom payment. This is a beautiful picture of Christ. It is one half a shekel according to the sanctuary shekel. The sanctuary shekel pictures the divine standard by which all else was to be measured by.

The half shekel then pictures Christ’s humanity as the mode of redemption. He is the heavenly standard, but it is His humanity which must deal with the sins of man. Further, as I noted it was silver, reflecting the precious nature of Christ, but it was only a small amount. In today’s money, about \$4.21.

It was not so small as it should be treated with contempt by a rich person, but it was also not so large as to be a burden on even a poor person. Anyone who would treat this with contempt would be foolish to do so, and anyone who said they couldn’t obtain the amount would be considered too lazy to deserve what it signified. As Alexander MacLaren states about this –

“Thus there is but one Sacrifice for all; and the poorest can exercise faith and the richest can do no more.” Alexander MacLaren

In both we see the truth that Christ is available if we are willing to simply reach out to Him on one hand, and to never treat what He has done with contempt on the other. The silver pictures His work, not ours. It is only a type and shadow for us to understand.

Whether the blood of the Passover, or the silver of the ransom money, each of which pictures Christ, there is a truth which must be considered. We must personally obtain the work of the Lord, applying it by faith to our lives so that He will stand between sinful us and the holy God.

Next we saw that the half shekel was further defined as ten *gerahs*. The word *gerah* comes from *garar* which means to drag away. Ten *gerahs* are required to make full payment and thus it is this amount which pictures the dragging away of our sin. If nine were given, it would be insufficient. If 11 were given, it would be too much.

As Bullinger notes, these ten then imply “that nothing is wanting; that the number and order are perfect; that the whole cycle is complete.” There is nothing wanting and all is complete in Christ’s payment for our sins. These are, in essence, dragged away once and for all time through His work.

These ten *gerahs* picture the Ten Commandments. The price of those was paid in Christ’s fulfillment of them in His human state. It was He who kept the law and paid the penalty for it on our behalf. Thus, He is the perfect ransom. This is actually beautifully spoken of by Him in the parable of the lost coin –

“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds *it*?⁹ And when she has found *it*, she calls *her* friends and neighbors together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!’¹⁰ Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Luke 15:8-10

Our turning to God through the completed work of Christ is all that is necessary to make the angels of heaven rejoice.

Next noted was the age of those who were to give – twenty and above. Twenty signifies “expectancy.” In this, there is the note that those who give are those who are expectant of what the offering would mean. It is the hope of the believer that what Christ has done is sufficient. The number is neither arbitrary or without meaning. Rather, it is exactly what the Bible speaks of concerning our faith.

And this brings us to the next point, that it is faith in the offering. The offering, or *terumah*, as I said, comes from the word *rum*, meaning exalted, or lifted up. This is seen explicitly in the use of the same word in Isaiah 52 –

“Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently;
He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.” Isaiah 52;13

This carries over directly to the NT where Paul writes of the exalted Christ –

“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

-Philippians 2:9-11

In that this was the set amount where the rich were not to give more nor the poor less, it signifies that there is one standard, and one standard alone, by which man is redeemed. We cannot purchase our salvation through any other means, nor can we be redeemed without meeting the exact payment. Only Christ is a suitable ransom.

This is why the term “offering,” or *terumah*, is mentioned three times in three verses. It is this and no other. Only through the cross of Christ can man be redeemed. He is the offering; He alone. This offering is what was in the last verse said to be taken and appointed for the service of the tabernacle to serve as a memorial. It is that which made atonement for them. The memorial before the Lord is exactly seen in the words of Hebrews 12 –

“...looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:2

Christ is now seated, ever before the Father, as a memorial for us. His work is complete and His scars are the proof of our redemption. It is this which has made atonement for us and it is He by which we are atoned for. No passage of Scripture could be more reassuring than what is presented in these words.

As a sort of explanation for you, I want to note that the placement of this passage may at first seem abrupt and illogical. We have the description of the Altar of Incense and

the description of the Bronze Laver, and right in between the two there is this passage about the ransom money. And it is ransom money which will be used for things which have already been detailed.

But the last verse explains the placement. The silver is to be appointed for the construction of the tent, specifically for the silver implements mentioned, that it may be a memorial for the children of Israel before the Lord.

The Altar of Incense pictures Christ's intercessory work *for* us which includes our petitions and prayers. The Bronze Laver will picture Christ's sanctification *of* us, meaning our ongoing spiritual purification as well as growth.

By placing the memorial of our atonement between the two, we are instructed that it is Christ who redeemed us. Therefore, it is He to whom we pray to God the Father through, and it is He who sanctifies us before Him. In other words, it is our redemption and atonement upon which everything else stands and upon which everything else is dependent.

No prayers are heard by God apart from Christ's redemption of us, and no sanctification before God occurs apart from having first been redeemed. This passage, between those other two passages, is given as a stark reminder of this fact.

Israel brought ten *gerahs* of silver as a ransom before the Lord. We bring the fulfillment of the Ten Commandments by Christ before our heavenly Father. In this, we have been counted among His sons. Christ has acquired His rights over us. We are no longer our own for we have been bought at a price.

And that brings me to my final thoughts about this passage. I mentioned the precision of what had to occur for the amount of silver to come out exactly as was needed for the silver of the sanctuary. Literally, from the moment of creation, right up until the moment of the census, *everything* was preordained in order for these two things to line up.

And yet, there is more on the other side of the census as well because the same things that we read about in this passage were also used to show us larger pictures of the redemption of man through the greater work of Jesus Christ.

In other words, the grandiose nature of planning to have the correct number of people of a certain age come forward with a certain amount of silver to fit an exact need for the

construction of the tabernacle at a particular moment in time is only a picture of something even more precisely detailed and even more magnificent.

When we get thinking that life is out of control, or if we think that somehow God has forgotten about us, what we can do is come to this passage and see that this is the furthest thing from the truth. If He cares enough about mere grains of silver which can be lost in the sand by simply letting go of one's grip, how much more do you think He cares about you, an integral part of His heavenly temple, not built with hands?

Don't allow yourself to get sidetracked by this wearisome world! Instead, keep your eyes on the prize. Fix your eyes on Jesus. And know in your heart that God has a marvelous plan which is being worked out in such immense detail that even the hairs on your head are figured into it. Be at peace, trust in Christ, have a steady heart, and know that you are highly favored.

Closing Verse: *"Lift up your eyes on high,
And see who has created these things,
Who brings out their host by number;
He calls them all by name,
By the greatness of His might
And the strength of His power;
Not one is missing." Isaiah 40:26*

Next Week: Exodus 30:17-21 *Some tasty nuggets from the word for you to savor...* (The Bronze Laver) (85th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Ransom Money

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
When you take the census, according to my word
Of the children of Israel for their number, as I am relaying
Then every man shall give a ransom for himself to the Lord

When you number them
That there may no plague among them be
When you number them
Abide by these instructions from Me

This is what everyone among those who are numbered shall give:
Half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary
(A shekel is twenty gerahs)
The half-shekel shall an offering to the Lord be

Everyone included among those who are numbered
From twenty years old and above, as noted by Me
Shall give an offering to the Lord
Follow this directive carefully

The rich shall not give more
And the poor shall not than half a shekel give less
When you give an offering to the Lord
To make atonement for yourselves, as to you I address

And you shall take the atonement money
Of the children of Israel
And shall appoint it for the service
Of the tabernacle of meeting, that it may be a memorial

For the children of Israel before the Lord
To make atonement for yourselves, according to My word

How great are You, O God, that You have sent Jesus
To be the ransom for the weary soul
It is He who came to deliver us
And onto Him, our many cares we can now roll

For we have been redeemed unto You
Through His shed blood, redemption has come at last
The payment is made, nothing more is due
From a life of sin and bondage, into Your courts we have passed

O God, your righteous demands have been satisfied for us
Thank You, O God, for our payment of Ransom
Thank You, O God, for Jesus!

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 30:17-21

(THE BRONZE LAVER)

Jesus said in John 13 that he who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean. It's a verse we'll revisit today, but it is a simple truth. If we take a nice long shower and then work on an art project in the den for an hour or so, we don't say, "Gee, I have to go take another shower." Instead, we just go wash our hands and that's that.

In old Israel, the people wore sandals and the paths were dusty. When someone took a bath, afterwards they might go out for an evening walk. When they got home, they wouldn't go take another bath, instead, they would just wash their feet as they came into the house. It would wash off the dust and that was that.

On the surface, this is what He was referring to. One is clean after taking a bath. However, they might do something that would later make them partially unclean, even though they were still completely clean in the overall sense.

The Bible uses this same terminology as a picture of our spiritual state as well. Just like almost every other actual thing that the Bible speaks of, there is an underlying spiritual connotation. The Bible speaks of building a house on a rock, but there is an underlying spiritual meaning which is being conveyed.

The Bible speaks of anointing something with oil. That pictures something else as well. If we can understand what something physical pictures on a spiritual level, then we can understand the root of what God is showing us. Today, we will see the instructions for another piece of tabernacle furniture. It will, just like everything else, show us spiritual pictures of Christ, His work, and how it relates to us.

Text Verse: *"I will wash my hands in innocence;
So I will go about Your altar, O Lord,
⁷ That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving,
And tell of all Your wondrous works.
⁸ Lord, I have loved the habitation of Your house,
And the place where Your glory dwells." Psalm 26:6-8*

As far as taking a bath, I hope that the spiritual picture which that makes applies to everyone here. If not, you will need to correct that. If so, then the lesson of the Bronze Laver is another step for you to pursue. You've taken your bath; next you need to keep

your hands and feet clean. Let's see what this is picturing. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Bronze Laver (verses 17-21)

¹⁷ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

This is the second of three times in this chapter that these exact same words are stated, *v'dabber Yehovah el Mosheh lemor*. Each time, the words are set off as their own verse, and so it is as if we are being asked to pause and consider them.

Something new is being introduced which is calling out for Moses, and thus us, to ponder. As this has been a dialogue between the Lord and Moses, and as Moses is recording what was said, the words seem all the more remarkable. Instead of saying, "Then I was next instructed," or "Then the Lord spoke to me," it is very formal and precise.

Moses' words are recorded then, not for himself alone, but for all who would read them in the future. It is as if they are saying, "Get ready! Something new and highly important is coming to your hearing. Stop and consider what lies ahead." Now that we have so prepared ourselves, we can move forward into the "what" and "why" of the coming verses.

¹⁸ "You shall also make a laver of bronze,

The *kiyyor* is introduced into the Bible here. It is a basin, or a laver. The word comes from an unused root meaning properly "to dig through," and so it could be a variety of things that are shaped out, as if excavated, like a pot, washbowl, pulpit, platform, or furnace.

In this case, it is a washbowl which Moses is instructed to make. It is to be made of *nekhoshet*, or bronze. As we have seen, bronze mainly symbolizes judgment, but also endurance.

Concerning judgment, it can be negative, such as in the case of bronze fetters being worn by those who have been sentenced for a crime, or in a pictorial judgment such as that found in the curses of Deuteronomy 28:23 where the punishment for disobeying

the Lord is described as “...your heavens which *are* over your head shall be bronze.” That picture is one of rainless skies, heat, and anguish.

However, the judgment can also be one of purification and justification. This is seen time and time again as well. As this laver will be used for washing, we can already make the mental connection that the bronze will signify positive judgment in purification and sanctification.

18 (con’t) with its base also of bronze,

The base in Hebrew is the word *ken*. This isn’t the first time it has been used, but it is the first time it is used in this sense. It means a pedestal or station, but also a base, estate, foot, office, place, or well. It is the same as the adjective and adverb *ken* which is an especially common word in Hebrew which means, “thus,” “so,” “rightly,” and so on. As a positive response to a question, one would say *ken*.

Scholars are divided on exactly what this *ken* is. Some believe it is a base upon which the laver sat. Others find it to be a shallow trough of some sort which would receive water from the laver when a spout was opened. This is not unlikely because throughout the Middle East, this was a common means of washing hands and feet. A practice which even continues to this day. No matter what, the use of the laver is known...

18 (con’t) for washing.

No matter what the base actually is, what is unlikely is that the laver was simply a large bowl where the priests would go and dip their hands in as so many depictions show. The water would be defiled by the hands if this was what happened.

The two probable solutions to this would be either a separate bowl being dipped into the water to take some out, of which the text says nothing, or a type of spout which would allow the water to come out of the laver. The second seems much more likely, even though this is also not specified. No matter what, the laver’s use is known. It is for washing. Later, in Exodus 40, the full purpose for the laver is given –

“He set the laver between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and put water there for washing; ³¹ and Moses, Aaron, and his sons would wash their hands and their feet *with water* from it. ³² Whenever they went into the tabernacle of

meeting, and when they came near the altar, they washed, as the Lord had commanded Moses.” Exodus 40:30-32

The laver was used for purification in connection with any duties associated with the tent of meeting and the altar, meaning the brazen altar. And, notice that it included Moses in this. Despite being the mediator and the one who was to perform the consecration and ordination of Aaron and his sons, Moses still was required to wash from the laver any time he did something in connection with the tent of meeting or the altar.

Though he was used by the Lord to establish the priesthood, he was still not free from the requirements of that priesthood. He was not above the precepts of the law which he was used to initiate.

Verse 18 contains all of the instructions given for the making of this bronze laver. What is more than remarkable is that nothing is said of its size, height, width, shape, or ornamentation. It is completely devoid of any further description. Nothing about how it was transported is mentioned either. This is completely different than any other article which has been made.

Though the size of the menorah wasn't given, the amount of gold, which would determine its size, was. Concerning this laver, what is lacking in written instruction was certainly not lacking in minute detail for Moses to adhere to. As Moses has been expressly told several times, and is even repeated in Hebrews 8, we read this precept –

“According to all that I show you, *that is*, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make *it*.” Exodus 25:9

So Moses *was* aware of any and all of the details concerning the making of this laver, and yet none of it is recorded. The omission of this detail then carries as much weight as that which has been included. Further, in contrast to this laver, the bronze sea and the ten lavers, which served the same specific purpose in the temple in Jerusalem, were exactly described. They were intricately worked with elaborate designs. This detail is seen in 1 Kings 7 and 2 Chronicles 4.

The only other thing about this laver which hasn't been noted yet, but which will be seen in Exodus 38:8 is that... –

“He made the laver of bronze and its base of bronze, from the bronze mirrors of the serving women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.”

Mirrors were not made of glass at this time in history. Instead, metals which were highly polished and exactly shaped served as mirrors. The specificity concerning where the bronze for this laver came from cannot be without special significance.

The Greek translation of this verse from Exodus 38 says, “..of the women that fasted, who fasted by the doors of the tent of the testimony.” Two verses concerning such women lead us to a better understanding of who they were and why Exodus 38:8 is so specific concerning where the bronze came from –

“Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.” 2 Samuel 2:22

“Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; ³⁷and this woman *was* a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day.”

-Luke 2:37

What appears to be the case is that some of the women, at the time of the building of the tabernacle, gave up their mirrors which had been used for the earthly adorning of themselves and instead devoted themselves to the service of the Lord in the courts of the temple as a heavenly offering. In other words, what was once a means of obtaining earthly praise was given over for the purpose of receiving heavenly commendation. It seems that the offerings of these first women became a model for other women to follow during the times while the law was in effect.

¹⁸ (con't) **You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar.**

This is the logical place for the laver because it was to be used for washing when either they went into the tent of meeting or when they ministered at the brazen altar. Before doing either, they were to first come to this laver and wash. In the next section of this chapter which concerns the holy anointing oil, it will say this in Exodus 30:25-30–

“It shall be a holy anointing oil. ²⁶ With it you shall anoint the tabernacle of meeting and the ark of the Testimony; ²⁷ the table and all its utensils, the

lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense; ²⁸ the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base. ²⁹ You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them must be holy. ³⁰ And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that *they* may minister to Me as priests.”

As the laver and its base are considered most holy, and as the priests had to wash at it prior to participating in any of the duties associated with the most holy things, then this should teach us a lesson concerning holiness. There is a fount of cleansing which is needed, even for those who are consecrated and set apart for the service of the Lord.

As far as the exact placement of this laver, Jewish tradition says that it was placed between the entrance to the tent of meeting and the brazen altar, but not exactly between them. They say it was placed a little to the south. This is not found in Scripture however.

¹⁸ (con't) **And you shall put water in it,**

The details for the use of the laver are simply described here. It doesn't say how much water, it doesn't say how often to change the water or to fill it up, and so on. This is all that is given. It is completely different than, for example, the Menorah and the Altar of Incense, both of which are given almost minute detail as to their attendance.

¹⁹ **for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it.**

“Aaron and his sons” means the priestly line who would attend to the tabernacle and later the temple. This then is an explanatory statement concerning the priestly line throughout the time of the law. It is set in contrast to the verse from Exodus 40 that I mentioned a while ago.

That verse included Moses who would be the one exception to this rule throughout the entire period of the law. After Moses, the use of the laver would be solely for “Aaron and his sons,” meaning the priestly line which descended from Aaron.

It is these people alone who were to “wash their hands and their feet.” As these members picked up dirt and defilement, they needed to be washed in order to symbolize purification before the Lord. As the laver was considered most holy, then the water inside of it would be as well.

²⁰ When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the Lord, they shall wash with water,

The priests were required to make the daily sacrifices upon the altar in the morning and at twilight. They were also to tend to the Menorah and the Altar of Incense at these times. The Table of Showbread had its regular schedule, and the Ark of the Covenant was to be approached each year by the high priest on the Day of Atonement.

For each of these times, and all others which are designated by the law, the priests were required to first wash their hands and their feet at this laver. Though it is almost neglected in written detail, its use was as frequent as any implement in the entire sanctuary, even more so!

²⁰ (con't) lest they die.

These words are actually a part of the first clause. The NKJV has placed them at the end, indicating that death would be the result for not washing in any of the circumstances of this verse. However, the words “lest they die” are actually after “when they go into the tent of meeting.” The conjunction “or,” along with the words of the next verse, give us clarity.

This may seem like excessive punishment for such an infraction, but when considering the nature of the duties, the One to whom the observance was due, and the frequency of this being required, it makes good sense. As the Pulpit Commentary states it –

“Contempt of the simple and easy regulation to wash at the laver would imply contempt of purity itself; and so an entire hypocrisy of life and character, than which nothing could be a greater offence to God.” Pulpit Commentary

²¹ So they shall wash their hands and their feet, lest they die.

A second emphatic statement is made, repeating the substance of what had just been said. This brings to memory the time when Moses came to the burning bush and was told to take off his shoes. The most holy things were most holy, the ground within the tabernacle was deemed most holy because of the presence of the Lord.

In touching these holy articles with defiled hands, or in walking in the holy places with defiled feet, it would be reckoned as sin against the Lord and thus deserving of death. Their consecration did not bring them to an indelible state of holiness. Rather, they

acquired defilement through their regular lives. To ensure that they maintained purity before the Lord, they were thus required to wash. This is reflected in the words of Leviticus 11:44 –

“For I *am* the Lord who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I *am* holy.” Leviticus 11:44

^{21 (fin)} **And it shall be a statute forever to them—to him and his descendants throughout their generations.”**

The washing of the hands and feet during the ministering of their duties was to be *olam*, or forever to their generations. The word *olam* indicates that which is concealed. It is an indeterminate amount of time which simply extends on without knowing when it will end. Hence, the term “forever” is used.

In this case, forever is to be taken in the sense of the duration of the covenant which comprises the words we are looking at. As the covenant is annulled in Christ, it is no longer a requirement. But for as long as the generations of the law were to remain, the statute was in force for Aaron and his sons, meaning the priestly line who ministered before the Lord.

*There is a Laver which is available to me
And from within it comes water to cleanse and purify
I am to attend to it always, even daily
And in coming to it, the water has power to sanctify*

*In washing with it, I am able my duties to complete
And from it the water has power to cleanse my soul
Through this washing, there is again fellowship so sweet
And my life remains steady before God, always under control*

*No matter how many times I come, the water continues to pour
From the Laver, there is no end to the cleansing flow
And so I will come to it every day for sure
And in my walk I will be purified, I know*

II. The Symbolism of the Laver

This laver is the seventh implement to be described in relation to the tabernacle furniture. The first was the Ark of the Covenant, then the Mercy Seat, the Table of Showbread, the Menorah, the Brazen Altar, and then the Altar of Incense. This now is the final such implement.

However, it is actually the second one to be approached when entering the courts, immediately after the Brazen Altar. There is a great deal of difference between the two. The altar was made of wood and brass, but the laver is of brass only. The dimensions of the altar were given in detail, but no dimensions are given for the laver.

The transport of the altar is given in that it was to be covered and carried on poles placed into rings. However, nothing is mentioned about how the laver was to be moved and nothing is said about a covering for it.

The altar was used for burning with fire; the laver for holding water. Even though only the priests could work at the altar, many of the sacrifices for it came from the general population. However, the contents of the laver were solely for the use of the priests. There is thus a great difference in these two implements.

As I just said, and as verse 19 notes, this implement is solely for the use of the priests – for Aaron and his sons. But there is a truth to be found in this, if they didn't use the laver to wash, they would still be Israelites, but they would not be allowed to perform the duties of a priest. This then shows us a spiritual truth.

When we as Christians interact with the world, we won't stop being Christians. We are once and forever justified before the Lord because of what He did. However, as we become defiled by the things of this world, we lose our effectiveness to do the priestly things that we should be doing. Our fellowship with God is fractured, and our ability to minister properly to others becomes useless.

Therefore, the Bronze Laver points to Christ, just as all the other implements have. It is through the cleansing which comes from Him that we are made suitable to perform our proper priestly roles as Christians.

Concerning its composition, we have seen time and again that bronze signifies judgment. In the case of this laver, it is after the judgment on sin for justification which was seen at the altar. Therefore, this Laver is looking to judgment on defilement and thus it signifies purification. It is a picture of the continued purification of the believer because of Christ.

Despite having been justified through the altar sacrifice, we still see Christ's inflexible righteousness which tests us, judges us, and which ends close fellowship with God when we continuously violate His precepts. This is a lesson that every born again believer should heed, but which is far too often ignored.

We may not lose our salvation, but we can lose the joy of it as we continuously stray away from what Christ expects. In understanding this, we can see then what the water which is contained within the Laver signifies. Surely, it cannot be overly difficult to see what it is.

As far as the makeup of the bronze, we were told that it came from the mirrors of the serving women who assembled at the door of the tent of meeting. The Bible took the time to specifically note that, unlike almost all of the other voluntary offerings, this one was most specific.

It shouts out to us to consider what a mirror is used for. The Laver pictures Christ, as we have seen. He is the Word of God and from Him issues the word of God. Both are discerners of the hidden things. Christ is the active discerning of what is hidden in man, whereas the Bible is what passively allows man to see what is hidden in himself. The composition of the Laver being mirrors then points to what it says about the Word of God in Hebrews 4 –

“Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. ¹² For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account.”

-Hebrews 4:11-13

The bronze laver, made from these precious mirrors, points to Christ's ability to discern and judge the very thoughts and intents of the hidden heart of man. And so, if Christ is the Laver, then what issues from Him is symbolized by the water. As He is the Word of God, and the word proceeds from Him, then it is a picture of the word itself; the Bible.

So much is tied up in this because the Holy Spirit worked to ensure that we received the written word through the prophets and apostles. Jesus came and dwelt among us and spoke the word. But suffice it to say that it is the word which is pictured in the water.

As we have only one source for knowing Christ during this dispensation, then it must be that source, meaning the Bible, the written word of God which is our water of cleansing. Numerous verses in both testaments show us this. A direct one from Psalm 119 is –

“How can a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed according to Your word.” Psalm 119:9

Another from the New Testament is again explicit –

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word...” Ephesians 5:25, 26

These and a host of other verses show us that this water symbolizes the life which flows from the Word of God. And especially for us during this dispensation, it is the written word meaning the Bible. Understanding that, there is more to see in the idea of washing.

In the ordination of Aaron and his sons which was recorded in Exodus 29, they were completely washed. That was a one-time washing only for ordination. However, they are now instructed to wash their hands and their feet each time they minister to the holy things. This then shows a contrast between the two types of washing.

Further, the first was done *for them by Moses* one time and never repeated, the other was done *by themselves* frequently. This contrast is seen in what happens to believers in Christ. The first conducted for them typified regeneration – moving from Adam to Christ, once for all. The second typifies on-going sanctification and constant spiritual cleansing. This is actually seen in Jesus’ washing of the disciples in John 13 –

“Jesus said to him, ‘He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.’ ¹¹ For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, ‘You are not all clean.’” John 13:10, 11

He uses two different words there for us to understand what is meant. The first is “bathed” or *louó*. It signifies the washing of the entire person; a full washing. This signifies cleansing from sin. The second word He used was “wash” or *níptó*. This indicates a simple washing of one’s own hands. It is an on-going process of keeping something clean.

What is seen is a contrast of what the Lord does for us in regeneration, and what we receive from the Lord in our sanctification. The regeneration is actively conducted by Him. It is once for all, and its effects are permanent, meaning forever. In our sanctification, we passively receive *from* Him as we actively cleanse ourselves *with* Him.

We open the spigot and we receive sanctification and cleansing through the washing of water by the word. This then is why the Laver comes after the Brazen Altar. The Altar speaks of justification before God because of the *application of the work of Christ*. The Laver speaks of sanctification before God because of *application of His word*.

We don't need to have the blood reapplied, but we need to continuously apply the water, even to go back and minister as a priest at the altar. The holiness of God demands that in order to be in proper fellowship with Him, we must treat Him in the holy manner He deserves. Arthur Pink states this beautifully with these words –

“What is needed by the exercised believer as he is conscious of the blemishes of his service (the “hands”) and the failures of his walk (the “feet”), is to avail himself of that which the Laver and its water pre-figured—the provision which God has made for us in His Word. What is needed by us is a practical appropriation of that Word to all the details of our daily lives.” AW Pink

How sad it is to think that the water is right there for us if we desire it. The word is written, its precepts are available, and the yielding of our lives to it will bring us back into a right standing with our heavenly Father. And yet so few avail themselves of this fount of spiritual blessing.

It is there for us to draw from. Just as the priests had to go to the Laver and draw the water from it, we too have to draw from the word, using it to judge ourselves, to guide our lives, and to grow in a close and personal relationship with the Lord. Paul sums the thought up so well with these words –

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Colossians 3:16

In doing these things, we will keep ourselves from temptations, we will be kept from falling into evil practices, we will stay on the right path, and be able to resist the devil. The snares he sets for us will be evident long before we come close to them. This is the

power of the word of God to affect our lives. The water of the Laver is our written word. In pursuing it, we can fulfill Paul's admonition from 2 Corinthians 7:1 –

“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

And this perfecting comes in two ways, symbolized by the two parts of the body which were washed by the priests. The hand washing was intended to signify purity in action, whereas the foot washing was to signify holiness in how they walked and conducted their lives. Together, they signify the right-now and the on-going. Our cleansing is to be for the task at hand as well as for the steps we take which lie ahead.

In this pursuit of the word though, there is more than just keeping ourselves from harm and growing in holiness. There is an aspect which anyone who reads the Bible daily will surely comprehend – relief and reinvigoration. When Aaron and his sons washed their feet, especially before the evening work, they would be tired from the labors of the day.

When the cool water came down on them, it would have been a blessing to their soul. This is what the Bible gives us each time we pick it up, looking for a moment away from the weariness of the labors of the world. Reading David's psalms can lift even the most wiped-out soul from the pit of the most melancholy spell. Such is the power of the Word of God when we open the tap and let it flow upon us.

Having seen so far what the Laver is according to the word, we need to see what is missing concerning it according to that same word. As I noted, nothing is said of its size, height, width, shape, or ornamentation. It is completely devoid of any further description. In this, we see a picture of unlimited provision.

The Laver could have held a gallon or 1000 gallons. The omission thus tells us that we don't need to know. It holds water and water will issue from it. That is all we need to know. And so it is with Christ. He is unlimited in scope, being very God of very God. And what issues from Him is therefore unlimited in scope.

His word is fully sufficient to cleanse and to keep on cleansing. He is sufficient to sanctify and to keep on sanctifying. He is sufficient to purify and to keep on purifying. From Him, the water never ceases. Every need is met, and every desire is fulfilled in Him.

But not only was the size of the laver not given, the transport of it was not detailed either. The transport of all of the other implements is detailed, even minutely, but

nothing is said of this. No mention of it being covered is given, no words tell us of how it is moved.

This omission was purposeful in order to show us Christ once again. He is ever available for our cleansing. No matter where we move, and no matter what deplorable place we go to, there is always available to us the pure cleansing of the word. It will never depart from us. As long as we come to the tap, the water will flow. In this life, we will never search out all of the mysteries of His word, and in eternity, the water will never run dry. This is the promise of Revelation 22 –

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.” Revelation 22:1

And there is one more omission concerning the laver, at least as far as Israel is concerned. It is mentioned 10 times in the books of Moses. It is seen 9 times in Exodus and once in Leviticus. All of these are in connection with the construction and consecration of the tabernacle. After that it is not mentioned again.

Instead, only the lavers for the temple are once again described. This is probably not by accident, but is intended to show us just how far Israel departed from the word of the Lord throughout its history. They were redeemed by God. Those who participated in the Day of Atonement received His covering, but the people never lived close enough to the Lord to be considered as cleansed from their daily walk.

It is the continued theme of the Old Testament. This is certainly why they were twice exiled and it explains beautifully the words of comfort for Israel which lie ahead someday when they turn to Christ. This is seen in Zechariah 13 –

“In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.” Zechariah 13:1

The fount was opened for them, but they rejected Him. Therefore, they were exiled and God turned His focus to the Gentiles who have gladly received what is offered in these ancient types and shadows. However, Israel is being prepared for the day when the cleansing water will pour out for them.

Nationally, they will sit as chief among the nations. Spiritually, they will be purified by the water which flows from the throne there in Jerusalem. This is described in Ezekiel 47:1-12. The water will flow from the throne and be so abundant that it will even bring the Dead Sea to life. Only the swamps and marshes won't be healed.

The note that the ritual for Aaron and his sons was forever to them throughout their generations is an anticipatory look into the true and eternal cleansing in Christ. The law failed, not because it wasn't holy, but because man isn't holy. Only through Christ can that be corrected. And in Him, it is completely corrected.

What we need to do now, in our present walk, is to pursue Christ. We should fill ourselves with His word, apply its precepts to our lives, and live always in a state of purifying ourselves to honor His holiness. We can hold onto the words of the Lord from John 15:3 that say –

“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.”

But we also need to hold onto the truth that our one-time cleansing from a bath does not mean that we don't need ongoing cleansings through self-washings. One has eternal value and can never be removed, whereas the other has right-now value which can affect so much of our earthly life as well as our heavenly rewards. As I've said, the tap is there. We just need to open it and wash.

If Christ is the discerner of our inner selves, then let us use what we have from Him for our own self evaluations; let us look into the perfect law of the Lord in order to discern our faults, and let us strive to mirror the Lord until the day when He looks at us and sees as much of Himself reflecting back into His precious, purifying eyes as is possible.

And for those who have never taken the first step, not of being sanctified by the word, but of being justified by the Lord, it's time to make the decision to do so. No matter how much you wash your hands, the defilement will remain unless the sin of your soul is first washed away.

This is the problem with religion; always putting the horse in front of the cart. “I'm going to clean myself up and God will be counting me in for sure.” That's not how it works. Only Christ can clean us up to make us right before God. After that, we use what Christ offers to keep ourselves clean. Let's get it in the right order and you'll be in the sweet spot for all eternity. Call on Jesus, receive His forgiveness, and then live for Him all the days of your life. Do it today!

Closing Verse: *“But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ⁵ not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ that*

having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Titus 3:4-7

Next Week: Exodus 30:22-33 *The wonderful smells must have been so intense...* (The Holy Anointing Oil and the Holy Incense) (86th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Bronze Laver

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
These are the words He was relaying

You shall also make a laver of bronze
With its base also of bronze, for washing, as I submit
You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar
And you shall put water in it

For Aaron and his sons shall wash, as is meet
In water from it, their hands and their feet

When they go into the tabernacle of meeting
Or when they come near the altar to minister, by and by
To burn an offering made by fire to the Lord
They shall wash with water, lest they die

So they shall wash their hands and their feet, lest they die
And it shall be a statute to them forever
To him and his descendants throughout their generations
As long as this law continues, they shall cease this never

Lord, in this simple Laver, we see marvelous pictures of you
And of the word which you have spoken as well
Help each of us to do those things we should do
And purify ourselves as the pictures of this Laver do tell

Let our actions be right and acceptable each day
May our steps be free from error; walking a path which is holy
And help us to wash ourselves with your word, we pray
Until the time when we stand there before the glassy sea

For marvelous are you, O God
And worthy are You of our seeking right living through Your word
And may we forever upon the holy path trod
Until the day when comes for us Jesus Christ our Lord

We long for that day and may it be soon we pray
Until then we will continue to pursue You day by day

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 30:22-38 (THE HOLY ANOINTING OIL AND THE HOLY INCENSE)

It's pretty wonderful to be around a lady who is wearing a pleasant perfume or a guy with a nice smelling cologne on. I don't know if folks like being around me on Sundays because I douse myself in patchouli oil, but if you like that smell, the Superior Word is definitely the place to be.

Along with that, I rub a dose of olive oil into my beard after putting on the patchouli. That way my beard is shiny and the oil makes the patchouli last longer and its more pungent.

As far as incense, there isn't much more pleasing than smelling it when it burns. The air fills with a wonderful aroma and the smoke, rather than stinging the eyes and nose, actually adds to the ambiance.

Because most incense is made in the orient, and because oriental religions tend to use it for a lot of crazy things like honoring the dead, Christian's generally don't seem to burn it as much as the general populace, but there is nothing unbiblical about having it going at any and all times.

As far as today's passage, we will see both a wonderfully pleasant smelling anointing oil, and a most fragrant type of incense which was to be made and used as an offering to the Lord. As God doesn't have a nose, at least in regards to the presence of the Lord in the tabernacle, then there must be a deeper meaning behind the fragrances that are so meticulously described.

And, as always, there is. Every single detail has been chosen to show us snapshots of the coming Christ and His work. As always, I think you're in for a treat – a delight to the senses – concerning what lies just ahead.

Text Verse: *Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;
A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.
⁷ You love righteousness and hate wickedness;
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.
⁸ All Your garments are scented with myrrh and aloes and cassia,
Out of the ivory palaces, by which they have made You glad.*

⁹ *Kings' daughters are among Your honorable women;
At Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir. Psalm 45:6-9*

God is Spirit, and so who would imagine all of the detail that He created in the universe! There are aspects of creation that affect every one of our senses. In fact, our senses were designed to appreciate these various facets of the created order which surrounds us.

But because God is Spirit, the fact that we can appreciate these things shows us that He cherishes us, His creatures, enough to provide them for us in creation. And yet there is more. His word tells us, such as in this psalm, that He actually came and participated in the creation. As He did, we can see why such minute and exacting detail is given concerning those things which are to be set apart for Him alone. Think about this as we go through our verses today. It is all about Jesus and it's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Holy Anointing Oil (verses 22-33)

²² **Moreover the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:**

This is the third of three times in this chapter that these exact same words are stated, *v'dabber Yehovah el Mosheh lemor*. They were last said in verse 17. Each time, the words are set off as their own verse. This time, the NKJV translates the same words differently. Instead of "then," they say "moreover." This is not incorrect as it is translator's preference, but the words in the Hebrew are identical. They, being offset in this way, highlight that something new is coming and which will next be introduced for our waiting ears. "Get ready, something new and important is ahead!"

²³ **"Also take for yourself quality spices—**

Moses is now instructed to obtain from the gifts of the people *besamim rosh* or "of quality spices." The word *rosh* means the first, the chief, the head, etc. Thus this indicates that which is preeminent or the finest. They are to be pure in nature. The Hebrew here is especially emphatic – *v'atah qah lekha*, "And you take unto you." Although others are noted as assisting in the preparation of this oil, it can be inferred that it is Moses who would personally supervise the gathering and preparing of it.

²³ (con't) **five hundred *shekels* of liquid myrrh,**

The first spice named is *mar deror* or “myrrh of freedom.” Myrrh or *mor* comes from *marar*, or “bitter.” The name gives the sense of “distilling in drops.” It will be seen 12 times in the Old Testament. Of these, eight occurrences will be in the Song of Solomon. It will also be mentioned 3 times in the New Testament.

A specific amount is presented and therefore it has its own significance. Five hundred is most readily divided as 5x10x10. Five, as we have seen countless times, indicates GRACE. Ten is the number of DIVINE PERFECTION. “It implies that nothing is wanting; that the number and order are perfect; that the whole cycle is complete” (EW Bullinger).

The word translated here as “liquid” is introduced into the Bible. It is *deror*. It is found only eight times in the Bible. It means freedom; hence, spontaneity of outflow, and thus clear. Therefore, it indicates both liberty and purity. This is the only time it is used of a liquid. The other seven times it speaks of liberty, such as the year of liberty, or as being released from captivity.

Myrrh comes from a shrub and can be obtained in one of two ways. The first is the purest form where it naturally exudes from the plant. This is the “myrrh of freedom,” or “free flowing myrrh.” Inferior myrrh comes from the bark when incisions are made in it. Myrrh is fragrant to smell, but bitter to the taste. Looking at the uses of myrrh in the Old Testament, the prominent idea which it symbolizes is love, but more especially, love in intimate union, but not necessarily sexual in nature.

²³ (con't) **half as much sweet-smelling cinnamon (two hundred and fifty *shekels*),**

The next spice is *qinnamon besem*, or “cinnamon fragrant.” This is the first of just three times it is seen in the Old Testament and once in the New. It is from an unused root meaning “to erect.” It thus is applied to cinnamon bark which is found in upright rolls. This is to be provided in one-half the amount of the myrrh. The most basic way of obtaining the number 250 is 5x5x10.

²³ (con't) **two hundred and fifty *shekels* of sweet-smelling cane,**

The third spice is *qaneh bosem*, or “cane fragrant.” *Qaneh* comes from the verb *qanah* which means to acquire, purchase, etc. It indicates a reed as erect or a rod, especially one for measuring. Thus it is the source of the word canon which we use to

indicate the authority of Scripture – as in the canon of Scripture. This spice is also specified to be two hundred and fifty in measurement.

²⁴ five hundred *shekels* of cassia,

The last spice is *qiddah*, or cassia. It is introduced here and will only be seen one more time in Ezekiel. This comes from the same root as the word *qodqod* which indicates the crown of the head. The root is the verb *qadah* which means “to bow the head.”

From this we can see bark, as in shriveled rolls, resembling the crown of the head. This spice is said to have almost the same flavor as cinnamon, but its smell is more pungent, and it has a more coarse texture. The measurement is to be the same as the myrrh, five hundred shekels. Note the unusual forming of the numbers 500-250-250-500. In all, they equal 1500 shekels.

²⁴ (con’t) according to the shekel of the sanctuary,

A shekel is a set measurement of weight. In this case the weight required was to be of the shekel of the sanctuary. It is a standard shekel by which all other weights would be compared. This is the same terminology which was seen in verse 13 of this chapter.

²⁴ (con’t) and a hin of olive oil.

Although not certain, a *hin* is reckoned at about 3/4 of a gallon. One *hin* of *shemen zayit* or “oil of olive” is to be used.

²⁵ And you shall make from these a holy anointing oil,

The purpose for all of these ingredients is for making *miskhat qodesh*, or “anointing oil holy.”

²⁵ (con’t) an ointment compounded according to the art of the perfumer.

Roqakh mirqakhat maaseh roqeakh – “ointment compound worked perfumer.” It’s an alliterational mouthful in the Hebrew because the three descriptions are all formed from the same root, *raqakh*, which indicates “to perfume.” The *roqeakh* or perfumer indicates a compounder; a person skilled in compounding drugs, incense, etc.

²⁵ (con't) **It shall be a holy anointing oil.**

The Hebrew is literally “an oil of holy anointing.” Thus that which is anointed with it is considered set apart, or holy. It should be noted that if these proportions were simply pounded out and mixed together, it would make a thick, gooey mess.

Rather, these were softened by boiling in water to extract their essence. From this the oil and myrrh would be mixed in and boiled again in order to evaporate the water. This would be the specific job of the *roqeah*, or perfumer. We will see in Exodus 37:29 that it is Bezalel who will perform this task. The care of the oil after it is made will go to Eleazar, Aaron’s son. The responsibility for making it in the future would go to the priests (1 Chr. 9:30).

²⁶ **With it you shall anoint the tabernacle of meeting and the ark of the Testimony;**

A particular order is given for the use of the holy anointing oil. First, the *ohel*; literally “tent,” of meeting would be anointed. This is the tent which covered the *mishkan* or tabernacle. Everything associated with the structure would be included. This is seen explicitly in Exodus 40:9 where it says tabernacle instead of tent –

“And you shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the **tabernacle** and all that *is* in it; and you shall hallow it and all its utensils, and it shall be holy.”

After the anointing of the tent, the first item to be mentioned is the Ark of the Testimony. Though the details for the construction of the Ark were given before the tent, it is the tent which will enclose the Ark, therefore the implements inside are noted after the enclosure itself. The Ark is in the Most Holy Place.

²⁷ **the table and all its utensils, the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense;**

Next in order are the items in the Holy Place, the Table of Showbread, the Menorah, and the Altar of Incense. The details for the Altar of Incense weren’t given until much, much later, but because it is enclosed within the Holy Place, it is mentioned now, in its proper order according to the room.

²⁸ **the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base.**

After the interior furniture, those outside the tent are next. Of note is that in Leviticus 8:11, it says that the altar and all of its utensils were sprinkled seven times. Just because the altar was outside and closest to the people in no way diminishes its immense importance in both what it signified to them and what it pictures in Christ.

²⁹ You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy;

The anointing of the implements with the holy anointing oil consecrated them. They had been shaped by man, but they were now to be set apart to God. Only those who were also so set apart to God were, from this time forward, to touch them...

²⁹ (con't) **whatever touches them must be holy.**

kal hannogea bahem yiqdash – “whatever touches them shall *become* holy.” In other words, if a person were to touch them, they were to already be holy according to the item being touched, or they were to be given over to the Lord so that He might deal with them as He saw fit. This is certainly the intended meaning of this verse because it is explicitly seen in the tragic account of Uzzah –

“And when they came to Nachon’s threshing floor, Uzzah put out *his hand* to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. ⁷ Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for *his error*; and he died there by the ark of God.” 2 Samuel 6:6, 7

Uzzah was not holy according to the handling of the Ark and thus his life was forfeit to the Lord’s judgment because of his error.

³⁰ And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that *they* may minister to Me as priests.

After the inanimate objects were consecrated, the consecration of the men who would serve as priests is then conducted. This actually only applies at this time to Aaron. The term *mashakh* is used here which indicates smearing. He is the one to be so anointed now. The term “and his sons” must be taken in the future sense concerning the ones who succeed him in his office.

As we saw in the last chapter, some of the oil will be mixed with blood and sprinkled on Aaron, his sons, and their garments, but this verse is not referring to that. Only Aaron will be fully anointed to act as the mediator and high priest, thus picturing Christ.

³¹ “And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations.

The Lord claims this mixture of oil exclusively for Himself. Anything anointed with it was solely His and was to be set apart to Him for all the generations that the law would remain in effect.

³² It shall not be poured on man’s flesh;

The wording here is specific in that it was not to be poured on the flesh of man. However, it was to be poured on Aaron, who was a man. Therefore, it shows us that Aaron, being high priest, was to be seen in type and picture as the coming Christ.

³² (con’t) nor shall you make *any other* like it, according to its composition. It is holy, and it shall be holy to you.

The wording here should read, “after its proportion.” The word is *mathkoneth*, and it indicates a measurement, quota, or proportion. The people were not forbidden from using these same ingredients, nor were they forbidden from using the same combination of them. What is forbidden is using the same ingredients and proportions of them. The intent is that what was reserved for the Lord’s use was to be only for the Lord’s use. This particular mixture was deemed holy and therefore the proportion itself has particular significance.

³³ Whoever compounds *any* like it, or whoever puts *any* of it on an outsider, shall be cut off from his people.”

No person was to make the same compound as has been described here. Further it was never to be used on a layman. The word for outsider is *zuwr* and indicates “another.” No person who was not qualified by being chosen for the anointing was to have it put on them. The penalty for this was to be cut off from his people.

The word for “his people” is in the masculine plural. Therefore, it is being used in a particular sense. It is extremely close to the general term for people, but the specific

form of the word consistently speaks of someone of his father's kin. Any such person was to lose their rights of paternal kinship.

*Holy anointing oil with a smell wonderful and sweet
Shall be made for the service of the Lord
The exact mixture when it was complete
Was set apart for Him alone, according to His word*

*With it, the articles of service would be anointed
And with it the priest would be anointed too
These things are according to what the Lord has said
And so in each detail is Moses to exactly follow through*

*Thus, consecrated and holy were these things to be
And they would be that way throughout the time of the law
But they are only types of the coming Christ, you see
And so from these things, pictures of Christ we can draw*

II. The Holy Incense (verses 34-38)

³⁴ And the Lord said to Moses:

The words are very similar to verse 22, but they are not the same. It is as if what is said now is a continuation of what was started in verse 22, but with a different subject. The oil and the incense are being drawn together into one concept.

³⁴ (con't) "Take sweet spices,

qah lekha sammim – Take to you *sammim*. The word *sammim* has no exact word which we can use to translate. A close choice would be fragrances; "Take to you fragrances."

³⁴ (con't) stacte

It is not exactly certain what *nataph*, or *stacte* is. The word *stacte* comes from the Greek translation of the OT. However, we can find out something from the Hebrew. The word *nataph* means "drop" as in a drop of dew. This word comes from the verb *nataph* which means something which distills gradually, and thus falls in drops.

It is a resin of some sort from a plant. However, it being unknown what resin, the substance is not what is important, but the act of dropping is. The verb *nataph* means to fall in drops, and so figuratively it means “to speak by inspiration” or to “prophecy.”

³⁴ (con't) **and onycha**

Onycha or *shekheleth* speaks of the aromatic shell-fish. When burnt, its claw produces a strong odor. The word comes from the same root as *shakhal*, meaning a fierce lion. That root probably means to roar. The two words may meet in the thought of peeling off by concussion of sound.

³⁴ (con't) **and galbanum,**

Khelbenah or galbanum is only found here in the Bible, but it is apparently well known to chemists. Different plants are known to produce it. When it burns, it has a strong and pungent odor which is not nice smelling by itself, but it is used to bring out the richer smells of other spices and it prolongs their burning. The word comes from *khelev* which means fat and thus the best or finest.

³⁴ (con't) **and pure frankincense with *these* sweet spices;**

These words are reversed in the Hebrew. It says “...fragrances and pure frankincense.” In other words, the frankincense is in addition to the other spices. *Levonah*, or frankincense is introduced here. It comes from the word *lavan*, meaning “brick” and thus it gives the idea of “white,” perhaps because of its smoke. There is an adjective attached to the frankincense though. It properly reads *u-levonah zakkah* – “...and frankincense pure.”

³⁴ (con't) **there shall be equal amounts of each.**

bad b'vad yiyeh – alone by alone there shall be. The sense probably means that they were beaten separately and then mixed together. Thus, the proportions would be equal in amount.

³⁵ **You shall make of these an incense, a compound according to the art of the perfumer, salted, pure, *and* holy.**

The fragrances, combined with the frankincense, was to be compounded as a perfumer would do. Older versions then say “mixed” or “tempered together,” but the word used is *malakh*, the verb form of “salt.” Thus, the mixture was to be “salted.”

Salt was considered an integral part of offerings to the Lord. This incense was to be offered to Him by the priests with salt, just as the people’s offerings were to be. This is seen in Leviticus 2 –

“And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt.” Leviticus 2:13

Because of the ingredients and its salting, it is thus described with an adjective and a noun. It is *tahor qodesh* – pure, holy.

³⁶ And you shall beat *some* of it very fine,

The word *shakhaq* or “beat” is now introduced. It will be used just four times. It means “to pulverize.” Also, the word *daqaq*, or very fine, is also introduced. It carries the same idea of being crushed or pulverized. The incense was to be completely crushed to powder.

^{36 (con’t)} and put some of it before the Testimony in the tabernacle of meeting where I will meet with you.

The portion that was taken from the main whole, after it was beaten fine, was to be placed “before the Testimony.” What this means is that it is the portion to be burnt upon the Altar of Incense. The compound was one large mass, but a portion was taken off, pounded and burnt at the regular hours of incense offering. The idea is that it would mix better and be easier to spread on the coals. Further, it would burn more purely and ascend more quickly.

^{36 (con’t)} It shall be most holy to you.

In contrast to the anointing oil, this is considered not just holy, but *qodesh qodashim*, or holy of holies. This implies that it was set apart for the use of the Lord alone as is next seen...

³⁷ But *as for* the incense which you shall make, you shall not make any for yourselves, according to its composition. It shall be to you holy for the Lord.

This provision is similar to that of the anointing oil. No incense was ever to be made which was according to the same proportions. Instead, it was to be considered for the sole and sacred use of an offering to the Lord.

³⁸ (fin) Whoever makes *any* like it, to smell it, he shall be cut off from his people.”

And again, the same prohibition is given concerning replicating this incense as was given for replicating the anointing oil. Any person who so made it was to be cut off from the rights of the paternal kinship.

*Sweet smelling spices combined into one
Shall be used to make a holy incense for Me
And every detail points to the coming Christ, God’s Son
This is the reason for such specificity*

*The work that He will do is revealed in each sweet smell
And the salt speaks of Him and His work also
Every detail has a wondrous story to tell
And as you ponder each detail, their meaning you will know*

*And so look into the things as they are recorded for you
Ponder them and take each thing to heart
In so doing, there is a blessed reward; it is true
Marvelous things will this precious word to you impart*

III. Pictures of Christ and His Work

As always, the Lord is giving us specific instructions, not just for us to see what the priests did and what was expected of them, but to show us types and pictures of Christ and His work.

The anointing oil was first said to be of *besamim rosh*, or the first or preeminent spices. Each is a foreshadowing of the preeminence of Christ.

Myrrh, comes from the word *marar*, or bitter. As I noted, the main significance of myrrh in Old Testament passages reveals the prominent idea of love, but more especially, love in intimate union, but not necessarily sexual in nature. Understanding the work of Christ for us, nothing could be more obvious.

The myrrh here is described as *mar deror*, or the myrrh of freedom. Without a doubt this signifies the bitterness Christ was willing to go through in His earthly life to secure our freedom. It is reflective of His words, cited in a synagogue in Nazareth which were read from the book of Isaiah –

“The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to *the* poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to *the* captives
And recovery of sight to *the* blind,
To set at **liberty** those who are oppressed;
¹⁹To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” Luke 4:18

It should be noted that there are three times myrrh is mentioned in the New Testament. The first was presented to Him at His birth by the Magi (Matthew 2:11). Once it is recorded as having been used in His burial (John 19:39). The third time was in Mark 15 –

“Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take *it*.”
-Mark 15:23

Notice that the myrrh was mingled with wine to form a gall which would deaden His pain, but He refused it. Because of His love for us, He was unwilling to dilute the pure myrrh of freedom which was provided to redeem us. Our liberty, and our freedom from oppression, came at a very high cost indeed.

The *qinnamon*, or cinnamon is found four times in the Bible. Two point to Christ, two point to harlotry. The one in this chapter is used to picture Christ’s work. The one in Song of Solomon 4:14 is used of the description of the bride by the bridegroom – thus it pictures the redeemed of Christ. The two other uses are in Proverbs 7:17 where a harlot spices her bed with cinnamon and other fragrances, and in Revelation 18:13 which is connected to Mystery Babylon, the Mother of Harlots.

The word comes from a root meaning “to erect.” Thus there is a house which is being erected by the Lord for His people, and there is a false one which is being erected by the false religious system of the world for those who would pursue her harlotry. One will stand forever; the other will be forever destroyed.

The third spice is *qaneh bosem*, or “sweet-smelling cane.” *Qaneh* comes from the verb *qanah* which means to acquire, purchase, etc. It indicates a reed as erect or a rod, especially one for measuring. It is the source of the word canon, which we use to indicate the authority of Scripture – as in the canon of Scripture. Thus, this spice is used to indicate the word of God which permeates throughout the anointing oil. It is reflective of Christ, the word of God who both embodies it and reveals it. His word is that which is used as the standard measure for the acquisition and purchase of God’s people.

The fourth spice is *qiddah*, or cassia. It is derived from the same root as *qodqod* which indicates the crown of the head. The root is the verb *qadah* which means “to bow the head.” In this, we see Christ’s submission to God in all ways. This is evident throughout the gospels which record His earthly ministry and it is well summed up in Hebrews 10 –

“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
But a body You have prepared for Me.

⁶In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin
You had no pleasure.

⁷Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—
In the volume of the book it is written of Me—
To do Your will, O God.’ Hebrews 10:5-7

This word *qiddah*, is found only twice in the Bible. The second is seen in Ezekiel 27:19 as one of the goods traded by the kingdom of Tyre. This leader of Tyre is used as an allegory for Satan by Ezekiel. Samuel Ridout explains the symbolism –

“For the world would make merchandise of the excellencies of Christ, and Satan, its prince, seek to rob the Lord of that which is His alone.”

The weight of the four spices was meticulously provided. In order they were 500-250-250-500. First, four is the number of that which is created; it is the world number. Individually, they each reduce to the digits 10 and 5 or divine perfection and grace.

Cumulatively, they equal 1500 and thus reduce to 10, 5, and 3. Three signifies that which is real, substantial, complete, and entire.

Therefore, the four together point to the entirety of divine perfection and grace towards God's creation. These, not surprisingly then prefigure the four gospels. As this is so and the weight of the first and fourth are the same, and the weight of the second and third are the same, we should find a pattern in the gospels according to the spices.

The first is myrrh and is what was presented in Matthew to the newborn Child. Myrrh speaks of bitterness, as in the bitter herbs of the Passover. Thus it reflects the King who came to die for His people as the Passover Lamb.

The fourth is the same weight and corresponds to John. Its root indicates bowing the head as an act of obedience and this is what the divine Son of God, portrayed in John, came to do. He came in obedience to the Father.

The second, *qinnamon besem*, or "cinnamon fragrant," comes from an unused root meaning "to erect." It reflects Christ in the book of Mark; the Servant, the builder of the house for His people.

The third, *qaneh bosem*, or "cane fragrant," comes from the verb *qanah* which means to acquire, purchase, etc. It is the source of the word canon which we use to indicate "canon," the authority of Scripture. In it we see Christ the Son of Man who acquired His people by fulfilling the law, the rod of God's measurement.

The second and third spices were only one half the weight of the others. This speaks of lowliness. In contrast to the King in Matthew and the Son of God in John, the gospels of Mark and Luke speak of the Servant and the Son of Man – both lowly stations in relation to their counterpart.

Despite the lowly weight though of these two middle spices, only they are described by the term *bosem*, or fragrant. It is the life of the Servant, the Man – Christ – which was considered a fragrant offering to God. Though being lowly, or more rightly, *because* of the voluntary lowly station He took, there was an markedly sweet fragrance connected to it.

Each of these spices was said to be "according to the shekel of the sanctuary." In other words, His work is according to God's divine standard by which all else is compared. It is by Him and His work that all of the holy attributes of God are measured.

Next was the measure of olive oil. This is the vehicle by which Christ's work was effected. It is the anointing of the Spirit upon Him. This was seen, for example, in Acts 10:38 where it says that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power."

The spices, though differing in weight, all diffused into the oil evenly resulting in all being equally on display and none having priority over another. Thus we see in equal measure Christ the King, the Servant, the Son of Man, and the Son of God. Each radiates out equally, forever revealing the mystery of Christ.

To summarize, in the anointing oil we see Christ the King, the *Myrrh of Freedom* giving His life for our liberty; we see Christ the Servant, the builder of the house for His people; we see Christ the Son of Man who acquired His people by fulfilling the law, the rod of God's measurement; and we see Christ, the Son of God, who stepped out of His eternal realm to do His Father's will.

This oil, after it was made, was used to anoint the tabernacle, every piece of furniture, and the high priest, all of which has pointed perfectly and completely to Christ in our past sermons. The anointing of the Spirit was applied to every aspect of His life, work, and ministry – both past and ongoing – effusing out His fragrance in the great plan of redemptive history.

What is remarkable is that this anointing oil is described directly after the bronze laver. The laver was used as a means of cleansing from defilement. It signified *sanctification from* all that would hinder our walk with God. The anointing oil, is just the opposite. It signifies the anointing of the Spirit, an emblem of *sanctification for* our walk with God *forward*; propelling us *ever forward*.

After the Anointing Oil, the Holy Incense was described. Moses was told to take fragrances for this incense. The first is *nataph*, or stacte. The word means drop, but it is connected to the verb which means "to speak by inspiration" or to "prophecy." This signifies the word of Christ; the divine word of inspiration and prophecy.

The next was *shekheleth* or onycha. The word comes from a root meaning to roar, and thus signifies the power of the word of Christ. He is the Lion of Judah and His word issues forth like a roar.

The third is *khelbenah* or galbanum. This comes from the word *khelev* which means fat and thus the best or finest. It therefore indicates that the work of Christ is the finest, the epitome of all works before God the Father.

This particular spice was noted as not nice smelling by itself, but it is used to bring out the richer smells of other spices and it prolongs their burning. Thus this aspect of Christ is what was not considered nice in and of itself. His work of fulfilling the law included His atoning death under the law. And yet, it is this that brings out all of the other aspects of His work and makes them everlasting for His redeemed.

The fourth ingredient is *levonah*, or frankincense. It comes from the word *lavan*, meaning “brick.” The concept of a brick in the Bible is one of human work. At the tower of Babel, the people made bricks in order to work their way to heaven. In Egypt, the people were forced to make brick without straw and were unable to perform their duties. In both instances, pictures were being made of man’s futile attempt at pleasing God through works. Their brick-making was tainted and unacceptable.

This spice for the incense is contrasted to that. It contains an adjective so that the words properly read *u-levonah zakkah* – “...and frankincense pure.” This pure frankincense symbolizes Christ’s perfect works which *are* acceptable to God.

With the four characteristics of Christ seen in the spices, we were then given the words *bad b’vad yiyeh* – “alone by alone there shall be.” The sense is that these aspects of Christ are separate, but when mixed together the proportions are equal in amount. Once these were compiled, they were to be salted. In the Bible, no amount of salt is ever detailed. Because of this, it indicates an unlimited amount. Salt signifies covenant faithfulness, incorruptibility, and that which provides flavor. It was worked into the compound and each aspect reflects the work of Christ.

In the salt we see His covenant faithfulness, His incorruptible nature, and His adding flavor to the life which we are captured in, granting us a new taste, never before experienced. Through His word, represented by these four spices and salt, an offering can be made to God with is *tahor qodesh* – pure *and* holy.

After the incense was made, the next instructions were given which were that it was to be beaten very fine and placed before the Testimony. The incense was to be prepared so that it would diffuse in the quickest and most thorough manner.

To grasp this, the symbolism of incense needs to be understood. In both testaments, incense is directly equated with prayer, and thus the prayers of Christ in His ministry, based on His person and work, are what are being pictured Here.

It symbolizes the office of High Priest, mediating between God and man. This is why the incense was termed *qodesh qadashim*, or holy of holies. Only Christ's prayers are truly acceptable to God because only He is without sin. Therefore, as our Mediator, our prayers are only acceptable to God through Him. But when we belong to Him and our prayers reach to God through Him, they are holy of holies; acceptable to God.

Finally today, in both the Anointing Oil and in the Holy Incense, there were similar prohibitions concerning making either in the same proportions and/or using them in an unauthorized manner. These carry the same connotation.

There is one Lord, one Christ, and one path to God, which is through what He has done. The Spirit of God does not reside on any outside of Christ, and people's prayers are not heard by God outside of Christ. We are never to mix our worship of God, or our prayers to God, with those who are not of God in Christ.

This does not mean that we can't have unsaved people in a church; that should be expected. Nor does it mean we can't walk into a religious service of another faith to learn what they are up to or to perform a necessary function. The example of Naaman the Syrian performing his duties in the temple of Rimmon shows us this.

What it does mean is that we are not to participate in religious services with others who are not of the faith. Our worshipping with them is mixing the holy with the profane.

If we publically pray with Mormons, Buddhists, Muslims, etc. We are implicitly condoning their faiths in their own eyes. We are demonstrating, openly and publically, that the Spirit which anoints us, and the Christ who mediates for us, is on the same level as their false god. This is not to be condoned.

As we have seen today, everything about these two mixtures points to Christ and His work. The amazing thing is that because of Him, we too are now authorized to share in what these picture. We are anointed with the same Holy Spirit because of Him, and we are given the same right to offer our prayers to God through Him.

Who here has never called on Jesus and yet prays to God? I tell you now that the symbolism of these things, and the words of the rest of the Bible, show that your prayers are unheard by His ears. The only prayer God wants to hear from you is the

prayer of accepting Jesus. Should you choose to do that today, you too will be anointed with the Holy Spirit and your prayers will then be holy and acceptable to the Lord. Choose life; choose Christ; do it today.

Closing Verse: *“Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. ¹⁵ For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?”*

-2 Corinthians 2:14-16

Next Week: Exodus 31:1-11 *What they will build is no prefab...* (Bezalel and Aholiab)
(87th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Oil and the Incense

Moreover the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
These are the words He began relaying

Also take for yourself quality spices—
Five hundred shekels of liquid myrrh
Half as much sweet-smelling cinnamon
Two hundred and fifty shekels, for sure

Two hundred and fifty shekels of sweet-smelling cane
Five hundred shekels of cassia also
According to the shekel of the sanctuary
And a hin of olive oil, as you now know

And you shall make from these
A holy anointing oil, one set apart
An ointment compounded
According to the perfumer’s art

It shall be a holy anointing oil, so you see
Follow these directions ever so carefully

With it you shall anoint the tabernacle of meeting
And the ark of the Testimony; as I to you tell
The table and all its utensils
The lampstand and its utensils as well

And the altar of incense; you shall anoint too
The altar of burnt offering with all its utensils
And the laver and its base, so shall you do

You shall consecrate them
That they may be most holy
Whatever touches them must be holy
These things are set apart to Me

And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, you see
And consecrate them
That they may minister as priests to Me

And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying
This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me
Throughout your generations, as I am now relaying

It shall not be poured on man's flesh
Nor shall you make any other like it
According to its composition
It is holy, and it shall be holy to you, I submit

Whoever compounds any like it
Or whoever puts any of it on an outsider
Shall be cut off from his people
You shall stand by this instructive divider

And the Lord said to Moses:
Take sweet spices, stacte and onycha, as to you I teach
And galbanum, and pure frankincense with these sweet spices
There shall be equal amounts of each

You shall make of these an incense
A compound according to the art of the perfumer
Salted, pure, and holy will be its contents

And you shall beat some of it very fine
And put before the Testimony some of it
In the tabernacle of meeting
Where I will meet with you, as I now submit

It shall be most holy to you
Following these instructions you shall do

But as for the incense which you shall make, this I tell
You shall not any for yourselves make
According to its composition as well
It shall be to you holy for the Lord, only for His sake

Whoever makes any like it, to smell it
He shall be cut off from his people, so I now submit

Wonderful pictures of Christ and His work for us
Are revealed in the holy oil and incense of Israel
Every word shows us more hints of Jesus
And of His marvelous works each does tell

Thank You, O God, for such a wonderful word
Thank You for the mysteries which are hidden there
Each that we pull out speaks of Jesus our Lord
Thank you that in His goodness we too can share

For all eternity we shall sing to You our praise
Yes, from this time forth and for eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 31:1-11 (BEZALEL AND AHOLIAB)

The contents of today's passage are significantly different than that which we have seen for quite a while. Instead of directions to make things or to perform certain tasks, the focus here will be on those who are going to do the actual work.

In particular, and by name, the Lord has selected two men who will be in charge of seeing that it gets done. In calling them by name, it indicates that He is both aware of their capabilities, and that He will use them in pictures of Christ. Were this not so, then there would be no need to name them.

Many others are noted as helping out in the tasks, but their names aren't given. However, none of them are unknown to God. Though we will look at the details of the passage from a historical and literal perspective, and also from a perspective which points to Christ, we shouldn't overlook the moral and personal characteristic of the verses.

The Lord is having a sanctuary built. It requires materials, instructions, leaders, workers, time, energy, and so on. Every detail of this process demonstrates a need to be fulfilled. Jesus said this during His ministry –

“For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has *enough* to finish *it*—²⁹ lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see *it* begin to mock him,³⁰ saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish’?³¹ Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?” Luke 14:28-31

It is unfathomable to think that the Lord would direct Moses to build this sanctuary and not have calculated that every detail of it could be met. Each person who participated, in whatever way, was a part of what the Lord had already figured into the job. If this is so with an earthly sanctuary that was to take up a limited amount of space, and which would take less than a year to complete, how much more carefully do you think the Lord has considered every detail of His heavenly sanctuary, of which we are a part!

As this is so, and as you are a part of that equation if you have called on Christ, then it means that the Lord knows you intimately, He is using you exactly, and He will complete His good work in you perfectly.

Considering that the workers of the tabernacle could have made little flaws in their work and not said anything about it, such as scratching a piece of wood and saying, “Oh, it will be covered with gold anyway, I don’t need to sand it down,” it means that the Lord allowed the workers to decide the quality of their work.

If Moses, or one of the men mentioned today didn’t approve of what was handed to them, they could refuse to use it. Instead, it would be discarded, burnt, used for something else, or whatever, but they decided what was acceptable and what wasn’t.

The same is true with us. The Lord will look at our work for Him and decide whether it is worthy of reward, or whether it will be burned up. It is up to us how we conduct our duties for His coming kingdom. For this reason, I have to tell myself (and the Lord) often, “What I am doing right now counts forever.” You should have the same attitude. Let yourselves be used up for the Lord now. When we stand before Him, it will have been well worth it.

Text Verse: *“I, wisdom, dwell with prudence,
And find out knowledge and discretion.” Proverbs 8:12*

Jobs need to be done, and if they are important to the Lord’s plans, they will, in fact, get done. We have a little church here, but there are jobs that need to get done. To me, some days are overwhelming, but apparently the load is what I am to be given. If I couldn’t take it and the job didn’t get done, it would either mean that it wasn’t a needed part of the Lord’s plans, or that the Lord was ready to send someone else to help in the tasks. JFB says –

“When God has any special work to be accomplished, He always raises up instruments capable of doing it;” Jamieson-Faucett-Brown

I would hope the things we are doing at the Superior Word are a part of His plans. And I would also hope that the Lord will raise up helping instruments for some of the tasks that will need to be done. When they walk through the door, it will be a welcome relief. Until then, “Use me up Lord. This life is yours.”

This is the moral lesson I’d like to give you today. Have this attitude. Christ is coming soon enough. Now let’s get into the literal and pictorial aspects of today’s passage. It’s

all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Bezalel (verses 1-5)

¹Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

v'dabber Yehovah el Mosheh lemor – And spoke (the word) Yehovah to Moses saying. This is now a new thought which is introduced into the discourse and so the words are offset from what is to come. Moses has his pen out and he is awaiting a new set of instructions from the Lord. Likewise, as the recipients of the word, we are being prepared for something and are being asked to get ready as well.

The chapter will logically be divided into three sections. The first is verses 1-11. This will be followed by verses 12-17. Finally, a closing thought concerning this most important time on the mountain will be given in verse 18.

²“See, I have called by name

In the Bible, it is a high honor when the Lord calls someone by name. It indicates that they have been chosen for a specific reason and to perform a particular task or mission. This is especially so in regards to redemptive history.

In Isaiah 43, the Lord told the people of Israel that He had called them by name and for His sovereign purposes in the conduct of redemptive history. Two chapters later, He says the same thing about a pagan king, Cyrus, who the Lord called by name in order to fulfill His will concerning Israel's release so that redemptive history could continue on the course purposed by the Lord –

“Thus says the Lord to His anointed,
To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—
To subdue nations before him
And loose the armor of kings,
To open before him the double doors,
So that the gates will not be shut:
² ‘I will go before you
And make the crooked places straight;
I will break in pieces the gates of bronze

And cut the bars of iron.

³ I will give you the treasures of darkness

And hidden riches of secret places,

That you may know that I, the Lord,

Who call *you* by your name,

Am the God of Israel.

⁴ For Jacob My servant's sake,

And Israel My elect,

I have even called you by your name;

I have named you, though you have not known Me." Isaiah 45:1-4

Here in Exodus, after the Lord has given all of the many details concerning the gifts of the people, the design of the sanctuary, including the tabernacle and its furniture, the courtyard, the garments for the priesthood, and the making of the special anointing oil and holy incense, the Lord is calling someone by name for a particular purpose. And that person is...

² (con't) **Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur,**

The name Betsalel is formed of three parts. The *el* at the end means "God." The "b" at the beginning signifies "in." and the middle part comes from the noun *tse/*, meaning shadow. Thus his name means "In the Shadow of God." As shade is considered a protection in the Bible, such as from the heat of the sun, it thus is a metaphor for "In the Protection of God." This idea of the shadow being protection is seen several times in Scripture, such as these memorable words from Psalm 91 –

"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High

Shall abide under the **shadow** of the Almighty.

² I will say of the Lord, '*He is my refuge and my fortress;*

My God, in Him I will trust.'" Psalm 91:1, 2

It is even used to speak of the Lord Himself, such as –

"The Lord *is* your keeper;

The Lord *is* your shade at your right hand.

⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day,

Nor the moon by night." Psalm 121:5, 6

He is the son of Uri, whose name means probably something like either “My Light” or “Light of Yehovah.” The name of Uri’s father is Hur which means “White.” This is Hur who was already seen in Exodus 17 along with Moses and Aaron atop the hill during the battle with Amalek. He was also mentioned in Exodus 24 as being left in charge of the camp, along with Aaron, when Moses ascended the mountain to receive this law.

Although not in the Bible, Josephus says that Hur was the husband of Miriam and thus Bezalel would then be the son of Moses’ nephew. If so, then the Lord is keeping the authority of the camp and the making of the sacred implements very close in regards to relationship with Moses.

This Bezalel is considered so important to the artistic work of the sanctuary, that he is mentioned first by Moses in the calling of the people to their tasks in Exodus 35 & 36, but he is even mentioned alone as some of the separate portions of the work are accomplished in Exodus 37.

Bezalel, and his contribution to Jewish culture is regarded in such high honor, even to this day, that Israel’s national school of art is named after him. It is the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design which was established in 1906, making it the oldest institution of higher education in Israel. It is located at the Mount Scopus campus of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

In the personal naming of Bezalel as the chief builder, all grounds for any type of discontent or jealousy would be removed. Nobody could feel that they had been overlooked despite the merits they possessed. And with the amount of labor to be done, it is certain that anyone with suitable ability would have plenty of opportunity to show his skills under the authority of Bezalel.

² (con’t) **of the tribe of Judah.**

l’matteh yehuda. *Matteh* means a rod or staff. It was first used in the Bible in Genesis 38 when Tamar asked for Judah’s staff as a pledge of future payment for services rendered. There it said –

So she said, “What will you give me, that you may come in to me?”

¹⁷ And he said, “I will send a young goat from the flock.”

So she said, “Will you give *me* a pledge till you send *it*?”

¹⁸ Then he said, “What pledge shall I give you?”

So she said, “Your signet and cord, and your **staff** that *is* in your hand.” Then he

gave *them* to her, and went in to her, and she conceived by him. ¹⁹ So she arose and went away, and laid aside her veil and put on the garments of her widowhood. Genesis 38:16-19

After that, it became a very common word in Exodus as Moses' *matteh*, or staff, was used to work the many miracles *for* the Lord and *against* Pharaoh leading up to and including the time of the Exodus. However, this is the first time the word *matteh* is used of a tribe rather than a physical rod.

To understand the connection, a staff is something used for chastening and correction, as a symbol of rule, and as something one would lean on for support. Therefore, the staff of Judah symbolizes those things in the tribe which issue from him. He is their support, their line of rule, and their authority for chastening as well. Therefore, his staff symbolizes the tribe of people who descend from him.

The staff is even figuratively used as the support of life itself, and thus it is used to speak of bread. Hence we get the basis of the expression, "Bread is the staff of life." As you read through the Bible, think on how this word is used in relation to both the tribe of Judah and the One who descended from Judah, but from whom Judah originally came – Christ the Lord.

Bezalel is specifically, the seventh from Judah. In line, his genealogy reads Bezalel, Uri, Hur, Caleb, Hezron, Perez, Judah.

³ And I have filled him with the Spirit of God,

The term *male* or "fill" was used in the directions for the consecration of Aaron and his sons. The term was specifically "fill the hand." It meant that they would be set apart as acceptable concerning the offerings which filled their hands *from* the people and *to* the Lord. Thus, the term "fill the hand" indicated their acceptability and hence their consecration.

Now the term is used again concerning Bezalel – *va'amale otow ruakh elohim*. He is said to be *filled* with the *ruakh elohim* or "Spirit of God." This means that his work will be acceptable concerning the things which are required for him to accomplish.

A question arises concerning this verse as to whether this was a direct infusion of the Spirit of God, or if it was simply who he was as a person, created by God. It is more

sensational to speculate that he was especially infused with the Spirit, but that has to be read into this as much as the opposite view.

Looking at it as an external filling also gives those who lean to the charismatic side a chance to claim they also are somehow externally filled with the Spirit of God. But when Paul instructs believers to be “filled” with the Holy Spirit, the word is passive, not active.

It is God who fills, not us. So how can we be “filled” with the Holy Spirit? The answer is, “By yielding ourselves to God.” Bezalel, and indeed all who are filled with the Spirit are filled by God as they yield to Him. Therefore, it is more than probable that the gifts which Bezalel possessed were used in this way. As James says –

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”

-James 1:17

Like Bezalel, we all have gifts which are unique. Our makeup, and indeed all things, originally stem from God. He has filled us all with wisdom according to His purposes. What we do with it will either glorify Him or not, but the intelligence and wisdom we have certainly came from Him.

If He supplemented Bezalel directly through external inspiration, that was His prerogative to do so, but if He simply chose him, knowing that his makeup was such that he could accomplish all these tasks, it doesn’t diminish His hand in the process at all.

Bezalel was a son of Adam who was created by God, just as we all are. He submitted to God’s will in order to accomplish the tasks set before him. We too have the ability to perform wonderful things. When those things are done to glorify the Lord, they find a true purpose that is lacking in any other such endeavors.

^{3 (con’t)} **in wisdom,**

The word is *khokmah* and it was first seen in Exodus 28:3 –

“So you shall speak to all *who are* gifted artisans, whom I have filled with the spirit of **wisdom**, that they may make Aaron’s garments, to consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest.” Exodus 28:3

The word signifies wisdom in a good sense. It is a common word, but it is used a great deal in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. It refers to understanding which is rightly applied in a wise, prudent, or beneficial way.

3 (con't) in understanding,

The word is *tebunah*. It indicates discretion, reason, skillfulness, understanding, and wisdom. Again, it is mostly used in Proverbs and it indicates an ability to comprehend. A man may read a sentence and understand its surface meaning, but he may not comprehend the deeper meaning that goes along with it, such as in a pun or an idiom. There were a bunch of pillows at the store. I got one, but my wife got the rest.

3 (con't) in knowledge,

The word is *daath*. It was first seen in Genesis 2:9 when speaking of the tree of the **knowledge** of good and evil. It indicates knowledge in the general sense. One is either aware of something or they are not. If they are, then they can use that for understanding or even in wisdom. In this we can think of empirical, experimental, or experiential knowledge.

3 (con't) and in all manner of workmanship,

The word is *melakah*. It is the same as the word *malak*, or angel. It thus signifies employment in a task or job, but never in a servile way. Rather it would be in an industry or occupation. Just as an angel or a messenger has his duty to carry out, this indicates the ability to accomplish the task at hand by employing the knowledge, understanding, and wisdom one possesses.

In these aspects of workmanship, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, we again see Bezalel as a type of Christ who possesses the Holy Spirit without measure, and “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3).

4 to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze,

The first category is *lakhshov makhshavot*. The words come from the same root and carry the idea of considering or contemplating. In other words, it could be paraphrased, “to think-out thoughts,” “to prepare proportions,” “to devise devices,” (YLT), “to create

constructions,” “to sculpt schemes,” shall I go on? “to wisely work works,” “to fashion forms,” etc. Thus, “to design artistic works” fits the description well.

These would be those things which needed to be shaped according to the instructions of Moses based on the patterns he was given. These would be in the metals for which each was specified. The gold for those which were to be gold, the silver for those designated as silver, and the bronze for those called to be bronze.

John Gill says that “it is not to be supposed there were either goldsmiths or brasiers among the Israelites; only masons and bricklayers, and brickmakers, and such sort of manufacturers.” That is an assumption based on no facts at all.

Just because the people were noted as brick makers in the early Exodus account doesn’t mean that all of them were such. Nor does it mean that people didn’t do other jobs on their own time. And it also is known that a vast multitude of others came out with Israel. As they had met the requirements of Exodus 12:48, they were now included in the collective people of Israel. The Lord has already said in chapter 28 that people with such skills were, in fact, available for these tasks.

⁵ in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all *manner of workmanship.*

The word for both cutting and carving is the same. It is *kharosheth*. In this noun form, it is only found four times, here and twice again in Exodus 35:33. It indicates mechanical work such as carved or cut. Despite being a noun, almost all translators make it a verb. Several commentators note that instead of carving wood it should instead read “cutting.” The Pulpit Commentary says, “The word is the same as that used of the stones. And no ornamental ‘carving’ of the woodwork was prescribed.”

This may not be correct. Unless the horns of the altars were very basic in form, there was carving to be done on them. Also, there is no reason to assume that the actual pattern Moses was shown didn’t include other carved details as well. It very well may be that all of the wood was cut only, but that cannot be known for sure.

*In the shadow of God, I find my rest
There under His wings all of my troubles cease
I am safe and secure, no longer oppressed
I have found safe refuge and a place of peace*

*Here I will stay, I have found my home
Under His wings, where all my troubles cease
Never from this safety will I roam
Here in this place I have found my peace*

*Thank You, O God for Christ my rest
Because of Him, all troubles now cease
In this home, I am more than just a temporary guest
Here in this home and as a son, I have found eternal peace*

II. Aholiab (verses 6-11)

⁶“And I, indeed I, have appointed with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach,

By name, the Lord chose a second person to perform the necessary tasks required for the overall job. His name is Aholiab. The name comes from *av*, which means “father,” and *ohel*, which means “tent.” Therefore, the name means “Father’s Tent.” The word *ohel* is used to describe the “Tent of Meeting” which has been noted time and time again in these last chapters.

It is not a coincidence that the names of Bezalel and Aholiab are so similar in meaning. Bezalel means “In the Shadow of God” and Aholiab means “Father’s Tent.” When considering Christ, the two come more clearly into focus.

However, the name Aholiab has a second meaning. The word *ahal* is used once in the Bible, in Job 25:5. It means “to shine.” Thus the secondary meaning of his name is “Father’s Shine.” Considering that the name of Bezalel’s father is Uri, or “My Light,” we have either an amazing coincidence, or we are being shown a picture because both speak of the Father’s radiance. This Aholiab is the son of Akhisamakh. His name means “My Brother has Supported.”

⁶ (con’t) of the tribe of Dan;

It is of note that this person is of the tribe of Dan as was the main artificer for the Temple of Solomon. We see this in 2 Ch 2:13, 14 –

“And now I have sent a skillful man, endowed with understanding, Hiram my master *craftsman* ¹⁴ (the son of a woman of the daughters of Dan, and his father

was a man of Tyre), skilled to work in gold and silver, bronze and iron, stone and wood, purple and blue, fine linen and crimson, and to make any engraving and to accomplish any plan which may be given to him, with your skillful men and with the skillful men of my lord David your father.”

⁶ (con't) **and I have put wisdom in the hearts of all the gifted artisans,**

The Hebrew literally reads, “...in the hearts of all of the wise hearted I have put wisdom.” Again, it appears that the wisdom they possess was already possessed by them. It was there because God designed it to be there when He designed them. This fits perfectly with the idea brought out in the words of the Lord to Jeremiah –

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you;
Before you were born I sanctified you;
I ordained you a prophet to the nations.” Jeremiah 1:5

There is no need to assume that this wisdom came at the time of their appointment in the stream of time, but rather, it was a wisdom that they possessed at the time of their appointment by God in His eternal mind and which was given to them at birth.

⁶ (con't) **that they may make all that I have commanded you:**

All of the people, those named and those who are unnamed, are filled with the wisdom necessary to accomplish all of the tasks that the Lord has laid down for Moses to fulfill.

⁷ **the tabernacle of meeting, the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat that is on it, and all the furniture of the tabernacle—**

Although the details for the Ark were given first, the tent (not the tabernacle!) is mentioned first here. The word for “tent” is *ohel*, and it is the same word as the root of the name Aholiab. It is, again, not a coincidence that he was introduced in the verse preceding this one. A stress is being laid on the word *tent* for us to consider. Only after the tent is named is the Ark with its Mercy Seat detailed. These are found in the Most Holy Place. From there “all the furniture of the tent” is next named...

⁸ **the table and its utensils, the pure *gold* lampstand with all its utensils, the altar of incense,**

These are the three implements found in the Holy Place, east of the veil. The Table of Showbread was on the north of the room. The Menorah was opposite it on the south. And the Altar of Incense was to be further west, before the veil.

The word used to describe the lampstand is *tahor*. It means “pure,” and it is the same adjective used to describe the gold of the Ark, Mercy Seat, etc. However, only this item is called *tahor* in this list, not the others. Therefore, it is probably not speaking of the gold used in its making, but rather it is being used to describe its function. It is resplendent brightness.

⁹ the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base—

These are the two bronze items which were located in the courtyard. The altar was furthest east by the entrance, and the laver was further west, closer to the tent itself.

¹⁰ the garments of ministry, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, to minister as priests,

Two most enigmatic words are introduced here – *bigde ha’serad*, translated as “the garments of ministry.” The NKJV brushes over them by ignoring the next word which is “and.” In other words, it reads, “...the garments of ministry, **and** the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons...”

By ignoring the “and” it makes it look like the second clause is simply explaining the first, but it isn’t. These *bigde ha’serad* are only mentioned four times, and all in this same context. One possibility is that the term is speaking first of Aaron’s garments alone. It is then followed by an explanation of the garments which belonged to him and his sons alike. This really doesn’t explain the “and” between the clauses though.

Another explanation is that they are the coverings which will be placed over the sacred things when they are transported from place to place. Those are described in Numbers 4. This is very likely because they are described with the same word, *beqed*. Just because they have not yet been detailed, doesn’t mean that they cannot be noted now. On several occasions, we have already seen other things mentioned in advance of their details. For this reason, I would personally go with this explanation.

¹¹ and the anointing oil and sweet incense for the holy *place*.

The last two items mentioned before this chapter are noted now, and in the same order. If you remember, every detail of everything we have seen in all of these past 20 sermons concerning these implements has pictured Christ. The number probably reaches above a thousand. All of this is now instructed to be made...

^{11 (fin)} **According to all that I have commanded you they shall do.”**

Moses’ notebook is full of notes. He has been given extremely detailed instructions, and they have followed amazing patterns of intricacy and design. The wisdom behind the words is reflective of the wisdom of God in Christ. Receiving and then analyzing these instructions of the past chapters which were given to Moses has personally been one of the most memorable experiences of my life.

*I will dwell with the Lord for all eternity
Here in His tent I have found my home
At peace and at rest by the glassy sea
Never shall I from this marvelous spot roam*

*In the tent of my Father, no cares can be found
I am at peace in this spot, dwelling in His glory
Listening to the marvelous, beautiful sound
Of the eternally unfolding, matchless story*

*In my Father’s tent all troubles have ceased
I am at peace in this place Christ prepared for me
And with the redeemed, from the greatest to the least
Here we will dwell for all eternity*

III. Pictures of Christ

As soon as the introduction was made, the Lord noted that He had called Bezalel. His name means, “In the Shadow of God.” Thus it is the place of closeness, fellowship, and protection. This is seen for example in Psalm 63:7 –

“Because You have been my help,
Therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice.” Psalm 63:7

The shadow of the wings indicates being right up against the body of the bird, covered by it, and protected by it. That, in turn, describes Jesus who is described in the same close relation to God the Father –

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*. John 1:18

There He rests in the shadow, or close relation to His Father. Bezalel is next said to be the Son of Uri. Uri, as noted, means either “My Light” or “Light of Yehovah.” In this context, they both have the same end signification – that of Jesus, the Light of the world. The same wording of the name Uri, or “My Light,” is used by David when speaking of the Lord in the 27th Psalm –

“The Lord *is my light (ori)* and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?” Psalm 27:1

After naming Uri, his father Hur is then named. The name means “White.” In Exodus 17, he pictured Christ the King. The same picture is given again. Each name is intended to show us Christ. He is the King, He is the Light, and He is the One who is in the bosom of the Father.

Finally, it is said that he is from the “staff” or “tribe” of Judah. The line was specifically selected to show us types of Christ who likewise descended from this royal tribe of Judah. Judah means “Praise.” This again shows us Christ, the One who brings God praise through His work. This is made explicit in Hebrews 2 –

“For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,¹² saying:
‘I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.’” Hebrews 2:11, 12

Next, Bezalel was said to be filled with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all *manner of workmanship*. Isaiah could not have made a more perfect match of this to the coming Christ –

“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,
And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

²The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him,

The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.” Isaiah 11:1, 2

Paul follows up with a similar, but shorter description of Christ in the New Testament –

“For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” 1 Corinthians 1:22-24

This workmanship that Bezalel was endowed with was in order to build the Lord’s sanctuary; His dwelling place; His temple. This is an exact type of Christ who likewise is the One to build the Lord’s temple. This is noted in both testaments, such as in Zechariah 6 –

“Behold, the Man whose name *is* the BRANCH!
From His place He shall branch out,
And He shall build the temple of the Lord.” Zechariah 6:12

It is also seen in Ephesians 2 –

“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” Ephesians 2:21

In these verses, Bezalel, or “In the Shadow of God,” of the tribe of Judah – all picturing Jesus – is called by name to show us a most fitting picture of the coming Christ. After this, the many materials were noted, each as we have seen in previous sermons picture Christ. The gold, His deity; His divine glory –

“And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” John 17:5

The silver, His work of redemption –

“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” Galatians 4:4, 5

The bronze, His judgment. First of judgment *on* sin –

“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:20, 21

And also of His judgement *of* sin –

“I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:” 2 Timothy 4:1

The stones to be cut, as we saw, signify the mediatorial role of Christ. They were to be on the shoulders and on the breastplate of the high priest. The true stone is Christ mentioned throughout Scripture as the stone rejected by men, but chosen by God, and precious. We are thus lesser stones, supported by Him through His role as our Mediator to God.

In all, five specific materials were mentioned here – gold, silver, bronze, stones, and wood. Five is the number of grace. It thus signifies the grace of God in the building of the temple, prefigured by the artificer Bezalel.

After this, Aholiab was introduced. His name means “Father’s Tent.” This is speaking of the incarnation of Christ as is seen in the words of John –

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt (tented) among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

-John 1:14

However, the name also has a secondary meaning of “Father’s Shine.” Thus it signifies the glory of the Father. He again is a type of Christ. The glory of the Father is revealed in the glory of the Son. This is seen in the book of Hebrews where it speaks of Christ in relation to the Father –

“...who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person...”

-Hebrews 1:3

As I said earlier, the two names, Bezalel and Aholiab, are both connected in two specific ways. The first is that Bezalel means “In the Shadow of God” and Aholiab means “Father’s Tent.” They are showing us a picture that Christ is the one who resides in the Godhead with the Father.

But even more both names are connected directly to the radiance of the Father. Bezalel’s father is Uri or “My Light,” and Aholiab has the secondary meaning of “Father’s Shine.” Both names are given to show us that the glory of God the Father shines or radiates out in the Light of Christ. This can be no mistake.

Aholiab was next noted as the son of Ahisamach, meaning “My Brother has Supported.” This reflects the words of Hebrews 2 –

“Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.” Hebrews 2:17, 18

Notice that the name of the Ahisamach’s father isn’t given. Instead of three generations like Bezalel, only two are given here. This shows us that the Lord uses names only when they will make a type of Christ for us to see.

Aholiab is said to be from Dan. Dan means “Judge.” The sanctuary being built isn’t just a place of praising God as the name Judah implies. It is also a place of Judgment as the name Dan implies. Both purposes are seen in the selection of these two men.

Further, the two tribes are not without another important meaning. When the tribes broke down and moved from place to place, they always broke down in a specific order. Judah always travelled first, Dan always travelled last. This is seen in Numbers 10 –

“The standard of the camp of the children of Judah set out first...” Numbers 10:14

“Then the standard of the camp of the children of Dan (the rear guard of all the camps) set out according to their armies...” Numbers 10:25

The two men from the two tribes shows the totality of the work of Christ – from beginning to end and everything in between. All of God’s people are included in the

work Bezalel and Aholiab, and all of God's people are included in the grouping of Judah to Dan. None are missing. The two sets represent the whole. In Christ, praise forever goes first, because judgment forever goes behind.

After the naming of Aholiab, the words "that they may make all that I have commanded you" are given. This is followed up with a list of all of the implements for the tent and outside of the tent. Each of these has been described in detail and each, if you remember, pictured Christ minutely. Following the naming of those things a second admonition is given, "According to all that I have commanded you they shall do."

These two men, picturing Christ and His work in such specific detail, were to do everything according to the word of the Lord. This is perfectly reflected in Jesus' words –

"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." John 6:38

Christ performed the task set before Him, according to all that He was given to do. And He did it perfectly. As I said at the beginning of the sermon, we have been given tasks as well. Or we have the opportunity to assume tasks that need to be done. When we go about these things, let us say, "Not my will, Lord Jesus, but Thy will be done."

Let us allow the Lord to use us up now so that He can lavish wonderful rewards upon us in the future. Let us do this to the glory of God and in the spirit of honoring the greater work already accomplished through the giving of His Son for us. And lastly, if you have never taken the step of receiving Christ Jesus, you really need to get that done now. Eternity is forever and we will all spend it somewhere. In Christ, it is a very good end; without Him, not so much. Let me tell you what you need to know...

Closing Verse: *"For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6*

Next Week: Exodus 31:12-18 *It is for the end of the week's path...* (The Law of the Sabbath) (88th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Bezalel and Aholiab

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
These are the words that He was relaying

“See, I have called by name
Bezalel the son of Uri
The son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah
Yes, he has been called by name by Me

And I have filled him with the Spirit of God
In wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge too
And in all manner of workmanship
There are many things for Me he shall do

To design artistic works
To work in gold, in silver, in bronze also
In cutting jewels for setting
In carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship –
It is so

And I, indeed I, have appointed with him
Aholiab the son of Ahisamach; of the tribe of Dan
And I have put wisdom in the hearts of all the gifted artisans
Special wisdom according to each man

That they may make all that I have commanded you
The tabernacle of meeting, so shall it be
The ark of the Testimony
And the mercy seat that is on it, as directed by Me

And all the furniture of the tabernacle—
The table and its utensils, all of these
The pure gold lampstand with all its utensils
The altar of incense, for a sweet burning aroma, Me to please

The altar of burnt offering with all its utensils
And the laver and its base, as you know
The garments of ministry
The holy garments for Aaron the priest, let it be so

And the garments of his sons
To minister as priests, yes before My face
And the anointing oil
And sweet incense for the holy place

According to all that I have commanded you
These are the things they shall do

Thank You, Lord for the wonderful detail we see
Every word is precious for us to ponder
And all of it points to Jesus ever so marvelously
Thank You for sharing with us such splendid wonder

Hear our thanks as we praise you for all of our days
Forever and ever we shall sing to You with joyous praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 31:12-18

(THE LAW OF THE SABBATH)

We have already had several sermons on the Sabbath. It is a theme which one would think would simply dry up so that all we would be doing is repeating the same thing. However, today's passage is completely different than those of the past, such as Ex 16:22-26, where the Sabbath was introduced into Scripture, or Exodus 20, which dealt with the Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath.

This passage today takes us in an entirely different direction, and yet it fully supports those, and all the other passages which deal with the Sabbath. It is a temporary institution which finds its true meaning in Christ. In Him, the picture made by the Sabbath is fulfilled, and thus the Sabbath requirement is ended. Along with the new information comes a marvelous chiasm which I discovered while doing the sermon.

I will lay it out for you now, and at times we will refer to it in the sermon. Chiasms give us hidden structures which reveal what God is thinking. They help us to properly analyze difficult passages and theological concepts and they reveal what their true meaning is. This one is no different –

Exodus 31:13-17 - The Sabbath Rest
A Sign between the Lord and Israel (7/11/2016)

- a. Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep
- b. For it is a sign between Me and you
- c. Throughout your generations,
- d. You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you
- e. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death
- f. For whoever does any work on it
- x. Work shall be done for six days,
- but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord
- f. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day
- e. He shall surely be put to death
- d. Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath
- c. Throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant
- b. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel
- a. On the seventh day He rested and was refreshed

As we read the sermon text, maybe you thought, “Why is the same thing being repeated again and again?” Now you know. The Lord is revealing truths about this most important weekly day which occurred in the lives of Israel of old.

Text Verse: *“Today, if you will hear His voice,
⁸ Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
In the day of trial in the wilderness,
⁹ Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me,
And saw My works forty years.
¹⁰ Therefore I was angry with that generation,
And said, ‘They always go astray in their heart,
And they have not known My ways.’
¹¹ So I swore in My wrath,
‘They shall not enter My rest.’” Hebrews 3:7-11*

Before we even start with the sermon, we need to be reminded that the Sabbath was a part of the Law of Moses. The Law of Moses is, according to the book of Hebrews, obsolete, annulled, and set aside. It is, according to Paul in Colossians, “nailed to the cross.” We are not Sabbatarians here. We don’t observe an annulled precept from an annulled law in order to be pleasing to God.

Instead, we trust in the work of Christ, and we rest in His finished work – plain and simple. Working deeds of the law in order to attempt to be right with God will lead to only one sad end, separation from God. It is a self-condemning act. This truth, and quite a few others, are poignantly highlighted in today’s verses. Let’s pay heed to what is revealed there... in His Superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Sign Between Me and You (verses 12-14)

¹² And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

v’yomer Yehovah el Moshe lemor – “And said the Lord to Moses saying...” These words introduce the second major section of this chapter. The first began in verse 1 with a very similar phrase. With just a single word of difference, this second section now opens. What is most notable about it, is that it will close out the Lord’s discourse concerning the instructions of the tabernacle and the priestly ordination which began in verse 25:1.

In all, these 6 chapters have comprised 22 individual sermons which have discovered hundreds, if not thousands, of pictures of Christ. There has been an amazing amount of information revealed in this 40-day trip up the mountain by Moses. Even 3500 years later, new insights continue to come out of these 6 chapters of 243 verses, such as our chiasm which finally came forth at this time.

¹³ “Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep,

This final section of the instructions to Moses seems to be completely out of place. Everything to this point concerning his time on the mountain has been in regard to the building of the tabernacle and its associated rites and services. Suddenly, the law of the Sabbath is reintroduced. As I said, it was already mentioned in chapter 16 where it was first introduced.

It was then next mentioned in the giving of the 10 Commandments, specifically it being the fourth of them. Those two incidents would seem to suffice concerning this particular observance, and yet, before closing out His highly detailed discourse, these six verses are given.

After them, will be one more verse concerning the tablets of the Ten Commandments and the chapter will close. Because of this seemingly unusual placement of these seemingly out of context verses, several reasons have been suggested for their inclusion now.

- “The law of the Sabbath held a particularly prominent place” in the Ten Commandments, and so it is highlighted before they are given to Moses. (Kurtz)
- “That the holy service in the tabernacle could not supersede the observance of the Sabbath, but derived from that observance its true value.” (Kalisch)
- That the “penal edict was especially introduced as a caution in reference to the construction of the tabernacle, lest the people, in their zeal to carry on the work, should be tempted to break the divine law for the observance of the day.” (Barnes)
- “Hitherto the Sabbath had been, in the main, a positive enactment intended to test obedience (Exodus 16:4); now it was elevated into a sacramental sign between God and His people (Exodus 31:13). Having become such a sign, it required to be guarded by a new sanction, and this was done by assigning the death-penalty to any infraction of the law of Sabbath observance (Exodus 31:14-15). (Ellicott)
- None of the above (Charlie Garrett)

The first reason, that the Sabbath held an especially prominent place in the Ten Commandments, is wholly unjustified. Elevating the Sabbath above the other nine has led to both heresy and the establishment of aberrant cults. That is neither stated in, nor can it be inferred from, Scripture.

The second reason, that the service in the tabernacle could not supersede the observance of the Sabbath, would mean that the rites of the tabernacle would have to be suspended every Sabbath. And yet the directions for the service of the tabernacle mandate that they be conducted, without interruption, every day of the week. Even the ordination of Aaron and his sons was to continue on through Sabbath days.

The third reason, that of the people neglecting the Sabbath to work on the tabernacle, is just wrong. The Sabbath law *has been given*. For them to assume that they could work on the tabernacle in order to get it finished was not mentioned by the Lord during the instruction of these 6 chapters. In other words, the Sabbath requirement was named at the giving of the Ten Commandments. It was mandated and expected to be kept, just as all ten were.

The last view, that it was because it was elevated to a sacramental sign between God and the people is a correct precept, but that doesn't explain *the placement of it here* along with the instructions for the tabernacle. It simply provides an explanation for the penalty of death for a violation of the Sabbath and goes no further.

The issue is, "Why has the Sabbath been placed here, at this time, after giving minute instructions for the building of the tabernacle, and just prior to the physical handing over of the Ten Commandments?" *That* is the relevant question.

The answer is that if you survive to the end of this sermon, you will be told the reason. In the meantime, you can chew on it as we go through the rest of the verses, and see if you can come to the correct answer.

As far as the use of the word *Shabbat*, or Sabbath, here, it is the first time that the term *shabbatotay* or "My Sabbaths" is found in Scripture. First, it shows the personal nature of the Sabbath in relation to the Lord. In observing the Sabbath, there is a direct connection to God's rest which is recorded in Genesis 2 –

"Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. ² And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the

seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.” Genesis 2:1-3

Second, the word is in the plural, “Sabbaths,” because they were a regular occurrence, each week throughout the year. This is why Paul uses the same term when speaking of the “Sabbaths” in Colossians 2:16. They are many, and they are personal to the Lord. This “rest of God” is so important to Him that it will bear several unique connotations and requirements. The first is...

13 (cont') for it is a sign between Me and you

The Sabbath is to be *a sign* between the Lord and His people. The word for “sign” is *owth*. It comes from the verb *avah*, which means “to sign, mark, [or] describe with a mark.” Thus this type of sign is something that points to something else.

It can point back to a memorial which represents a particular occurrence; it can point forward to something anticipated; and it can reflect something that exists which is only highlighted by the sign itself. In other words, a signature on an important document highlights the authority of the one signing the document.

The Sabbath then is merely *a sign* intended to highlight a reality which exists already, or which is to be anticipated at some point in the future. Further, this sign is not a temporary thing. Rather, it was intended to remain...

13 (con't) throughout your generations,

This exact same phrase, *l'dorotekem*, or “throughout your generations,” has already been used nine times. Looking at those earlier instances will hopefully reveal a truth to you concerning the reason for the placement of this passage.

So far it has been used when speaking of the sign of circumcision which was given to Abraham in Genesis 17. It was used when speaking of the Passover in Exodus 12. It was used concerning the keeping of an omer of Manna in Exodus 16. It was used in the passage concerning the daily offerings at morning and between the evenings in Exodus 29.

It was used in connection with the burning of incense on the Altar of Incense at morning and between the evenings in Exodus 30. And finally, it was used concerning the use of the Holy Anointing Oil in Exodus 30.

Of these nine references to something being done “throughout your generations,” what is the common element? Well, let us ask ourselves, “Are we still required to be circumcised?” No! In fact, Paul says that if we do that in order to be justified by the law, then we are debtors to the whole law. It is a self-condemning act. Circumcision only pointed to the coming Christ.

Are we required to observe the Passover? No! “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7). Are we still holding on to a golden jar of Manna? No! Why? Because Christ has come! He said –

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰ This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” John 6:47-51

What about the daily sacrifices? What about the offering of incense or the Anointing Oil? What is the common element? The common element is Christ. None of these previous things which were to be *l’dorotekem*, or “throughout your generations,” was permanent. They were given in anticipation of Christ.

¹³ (con’t) **that you may know that I *am* the Lord who sanctifies you.**

The Sabbath was a sign, to be observed throughout the generations of Israel, to point to something else. It was given as a sign for the people of Israel to know that it was Yehovah who sanctified them. Just as he blessed and sanctified the seventh day after His creative effort in Genesis, the people of Israel were to know that they were sanctified by that same God. In observing His rest, they were intimately connected to Him and sanctified by Him.

In the words of the Bible connected to the Sabbath, we find a most important truth. First, the Sabbath is given in Exodus 20:11 based on the God’s creative efforts. In Deuteronomy 5:15, the Sabbath is given based on God’s act of redemption. And in this verse, it is tied into God’s work of sanctification.

In other words, the work of all three members of the Trinity are tied up in the Sabbath. God the Creator, God the Redeemer, and God the Sanctifier. Matthew Poole notes –

“...the sabbath owns the Lord as our Creator, and as our Redeemer, and as our Sanctifier; and therefore it is no wonder God so severely enjoins the sanctification of the sabbath, and punisheth the neglect of it, it being a tacit renouncing or disowning of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”

¹⁴ You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for *it is* holy to you.

Of these words, Joseph Benson says –

“...it is designed for your benefit as well as for God’s honour; it shall be accounted holy by you.” Joseph Benson

It is the Lord who sanctifies Israel. The Sabbath is the property of God. For Israel it is the inheritance of God. Therefore, Israel was instructed to keep the Sabbath. The directions for the construction, services, and rites of the sanctuary were based on works. They were to work towards the Sabbath each week, and then rest in honor of the works which were performed, even though the priest’s works continued during Sabbath days.

^{14 (cont’t)} Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death;

To profane the Sabbath means to defile it. That which would defile the Sabbath was defined in the Ten Commandments –

“*In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates.” Exodus 20:10

Violating these, and any other prohibitions which will be given, would then be considered profaning the Sabbath. However, as we saw in a recent sermon, the priest’s continued to work on the Sabbath and yet they were held guiltless. They did not profane it.

^{14 (cont’t)} for whoever does *any* work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people.

A distinction is especially made between being put to death and being cut off from the people. A person could be cut off from the people without being put to death. The two

are not synonymous. A person who offended in such a way as to put himself out of the covenant was considered an outlaw. He was to be cut off from his people. When the offense affected the nation as a whole, then the person was to be put to death.

When a person defiled the Sabbath, they actually caused more harm than may be realized. If nothing was done about his actions, it might spur others to jealousy who were not making the same money as the one who profited from the Sabbath. Further, it would then spur them on to profane the Sabbath as well, knowing that nothing would be done about their actions.

Eventually, the infection would spread, and the people in general would come to this same conclusion. What was a sign to the people would cease being a sign. They would no longer know that it was the Lord who sanctified them, they would no longer fear the Lord, and they would quickly turn from Him to profane worship. This will be noted later today in a passage from Nehemiah.

*I am the Lord who sanctifies you
In Me you shall find your rest
What I look for is faith that is true
And in this, I shall put you to the test*

*I am the Lord, pay heed unto Me
For I will give you a Day of rest
If you will simply trust, you will see
That in My presence you will be eternally blessed*

*Come unto Me, you who are weary
And in My presence there will be peaceful rest
Come unto Me, leave your life so dreary
If the land of Paradise-restored is your hope-filled quest*

II. A Sabbath of Rest, Holy to the Lord (verses 15-17)

¹⁵ Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord.

These words of verse 15 form the middle of the chiasm. The term *Shabbat Shabbaton*, or “rest of restfulness,” gives the idea of complete restfulness. The Pulpit Commentary translates this as, “but in the seventh is complete rest.”

These words, *Shabbat Shabbaton*, are a particular term used only seven times in Scripture. It is applied to the Sabbath here and two other times – to the Day of Atonement twice in Leviticus, and to the Sabbatical year in Leviticus. Each of these is only a prefiguring shadow of the work of Christ. That the term is mentioned seven times shows us the spiritual perfection of Christ’s work.

The repetition of Shabbat in *Shabbat Shabbaton*, using an abstract form of the fixed noun, gives the idea of that which is superlative. Thus, the term “high Sabbath” is used of it in John’s gospel. There he says –

“Therefore, because it was the Preparation *Day*, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away.”

-John 19:31

It was a Sabbath, but it also occurred in conjunction with another feast day. Thus John highlighted the day. It truly was the Lord’s Sabbath as He was secreted away in a cave to rest after His great time of work culminating in what we know as the Passion.

In this, it needs to be noted that the life of Israel was working towards a Sabbath. As the verse says, “Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh *is* the Sabbath of rest.” Israel worked and then rested. Just as God worked, and then rested – six followed by one, Israel was to work and then rest – six followed by one.

15 (cont’t) Whoever does *any* work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.

With these words, the chiasm begins its backward descent from the high point of the previous words. This clause forms two separate parts of that chiasm. The first is that of working on the Sabbath; the second is that of being put to death.

The sequence of thought is 1) The infraction – working on the Sabbath; 2) The penalty – *mowt yumat*, “dying he shall die.” Think about the structure of the chiasm. Line **d** is an

explanatory sentence. Line e is the penalty for the infraction. Line f is what the infraction is.

The first half of the chiasm explains the requirement. It then gives the naming of the punishment first and then the reason for the punishment. The second half of the chiasm does the opposite. It gives the reason for the punishment, then the naming of the punishment, and then the explanatory basis for the sequence.

The middle is the anchor of the two halves.

What is the Lord showing us? If it is about Christ, as we know it is, then there is a reason for the chiastic structure. Keep thinking. The sermon is half over. Until we finish, let's continue analyzing... The severity of the punishment which is mandated brings a few thoughts to mind. The first is, "Was this punishment ever meted out?"

The answer is that, "Yes, it was." It is common for a precept to be laid out in the Bible and then an example of punishment for violation to be noted. For the Sabbath, the punishment is recorded in Numbers 14 –

"Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. ³³ And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation. ³⁴ They put him under guard, because it had not been explained what should be done to him. ³⁵ Then the Lord said to Moses, 'The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.' ³⁶ So, as the Lord commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died.'" Numbers 14:32-36

The second question is, "Are all violations of this standard which are noted in Scripture handled with the same punishment?" The answer is, "No." In Nehemiah 13:15, we read–

"In those days I saw *people* in Judah treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all *kinds of* burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned *them* about the day on which they were selling provisions."

The third question is, "Are we today required to observe the Sabbath?" If so, what are we doing in church on Sunday instead of Saturday? That will be answered later.

The fourth question is, “For those who claim that the Sabbath is still in effect, meaning the Jews and aberrant cults like the Seventh Day Adventists and various messianic groups, why are they *mandating* the word of the Lord concerning the Sabbath, but not *upholding* the word of the Lord by putting their Sabbath breakers to death?” Is their disobedience in this any less damaging than failing to adhere to the requirement of the Sabbath itself?

¹⁶ Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath

These words correspond to line **d** on the chiasm. The word “therefore” simply says “and” in the Hebrew. The sentence, although explanatory, is more a reaffirmation of the importance of the requirement than being an overall explanation of what has thus far been said.

Israel is again commanded to keep the Sabbath and to observe the Sabbath. The repetition is a stress in itself. The honoring of the Sabbath was to be as important to them as was life in the day itself. We cherish Today because it is the day we are in. It is the moment in which we exist. The observance of the Sabbath was to be just as important and cherished as that state of existence.

To understand this, I can give the example of what Jim and I do on Saturday. Every Saturday, the two of us, along with Tom Alley, do mission work in the projects. At times, people come along with us. It is not *their* Saturday except for the Saturday that they come. However, for Tom, Jim, and me – it is *our* Saturday. *To not be there* is the exception for us. For any others, *to be there* is the exception for them. Israel’s Saturday was to be *their* Sabbath, without exception. And it was to be...

^{16 (con’t)} throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.

These words correspond to line **c** on the chiasm. Again, the idea of the Sabbath was to continue on for the generations to come. However, as we saw earlier, the idea of something continuing throughout the generations does not mean eternally. There is a point where the practice of these generations was to end.

As long as it was in force, it was however, to be a *berith olam*, or a covenant perpetual. As long as the generations to whom this requirement was assigned were in existence,

the requirement stood. The covenant was made at Sinai and it remained in effect until it was superseded by the New Covenant.

The word *olam*, or perpetual, gives the idea of “to the vanishing point.” Whatever that point was, it was to continue to it. The same term *berith olam*, or covenant perpetual, was given to Abraham concerning circumcision, something no longer required.

¹⁷ It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever;

These words correspond to line **b** on the chiasm. We continue to move away from the middle anchor verse, but the precept remains the same. The rest of the Sabbath is to be an *owth*, a sign. A sign, as I said, points to something else. It is not the thing itself, but stands as *representative of the thing*. The rest was to be this sign and it was to be so until the vanishing point.

^{17 (cont't)} for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth,

This is not included in the chiasm, but it explains the final line. In order for there to be rest, there was first work. As God worked six days in creating, Israel was to work six days with the creation. The six days were intended to lead to the anticipated seventh...

^{17 (con't)} and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.”

On the seventh day, the Lord rested. Without a doubt, the Lord, meaning Yehovah, has been seen countless times already to be Jesus. He is the incarnate Word of God. He is the Lord in the flesh. In His creative efforts, He made the heavens and the earth, and then He rested. And along with that, it says He “was refreshed.”

The word is *naphash*. Literally, “He took breath.” This is the only time the word is used in this remarkable way in the Bible as being ascribed to the Lord. After the immense work of creation, the Lord took time to catch His breath and to admire the handiwork which He had so marvelously brought into existence.

The connection between this line of the chiasm and the first line is that it is the Sabbath which the Lord claims as His, and it is the seventh day on which He took His rest. The two are intimately and intricately tied together.

*A time of rest for the weary soul
A time to stop and contemplate Jesus
Our Lord, Our God – our Aim, our Goal
The longing desire for each of us*

*To rest in Him, sweet and sublime
To be still in His presence, safe and secure
For the ages of ages; for all time
Blessed assurance – holy and pure*

*Oh! To know Christ and to seek Him more
To ponder His majesty as together we rest
Come to Him all you weak, weary, and poor
Find peace and joy, in His comfort be blessed*

III. The Tablets of the Testimony (verse 18)

¹⁸ And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony,

Everything that has been presented since Exodus 25:1 has been for the reception of these two tablets. After the call for the people to provide materials, the very first thing that was described to Moses was the construction of the Ark of the Testimony and then the Mercy seat. In verse 25:16, after the details for the construction of the Ark, it said, “And you shall put into the ark the Testimony which I will give you.”

Then again in verse 25:21, after the details were given for the Mercy Seat, the Lord said, “You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you.” Every single thing after that was described for the purpose of building a tabernacle and a sanctuary for these stone tablets and then for the conduct of the services and rites associated with that sanctuary. With that speaking for instruction now complete, it says that the tablets were then given to Moses. These tablets were...

¹⁸ (con’t) tablets of stone,

lukhot eben, “tablets of stone.” The fact that they are stone is to give the idea of permanence. What is written on them is fixed and is unchanging. That there were two

tablets shows something more though. Two in the Bible is the number of difference. In the number, there is a contrast, and yet there is a confirmation.

The precepts of the Ten Commandments fall under two distinct categories. The first five follow a basic pattern of filial obedience, as children to their parents. The first four were directed to God, but in them and in keeping them, they were as children honoring their heavenly Father. The fifth was specifically in honoring of one's parents. The second set of five deal with interpersonal relationships between man and his fellow man. The contents contrast, and yet they confirm God's expectations for man.

These two tablets, which are made of stone and which are to be secreted away in the Ark also have another defining characteristic. These were...

^{18 (fin)} **written with the finger of God.**

The tablets themselves were made by God, and the writing upon them, which was set in stone, was written by God. They are the law of God which is set and unchanging. Once written, they are set, fixed, and complete. There were 172 words which detailed God's expectations for man to live in His presence.

However, that they were stone also showed that they could be broken. The words would still be there, but they would be violated if broken. And in fact, Moses will break the first set. And so a second set will need to be made. However, the second set will be made by Moses. This is recorded in Exodus 34:1 –

“Cut two tablets of stone like the first *ones*, and I will write on *these* tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke.”

Later, in the same chapter, the Lord writes on those new tablets –

“So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.” Exodus 34:28

In this we are given a picture of our spiritual state. The laws are permanent, but are capable of being broken. And in fact, God knew that man would break them. God created Adam, pictured by the first set of tablets, and Adam broke God's law.

Moses made the second set, picturing Christ, coming from the stream of humanity, and yet He never broke God's law. In both, the law was written by God, but only in Christ

does the law remain unbroken. Adam Clarke, at least partially picked up on this when he wrote concerning the giving of these tablets to Moses –

“It is evident therefore that this writing was properly and literally the writing of God himself. God wrote now on tables of stone what he had originally written on the heart of man, and in mercy he placed that before his eyes which by sin had been obliterated from his soul; and by this he shows us what, by the Spirit of Christ, must be rewritten in the mind.” Adam Clarke

The giving of this law, at the end of the directions for the sanctuary, is the fulfillment of what the sanctuary anticipated. All of the details looked forward to Christ, but without the law which Christ fulfilled, there would remain an eternal disconnect between God and man. Only when this law was placed in the Ark and covered by the Mercy Seat, could there be a restoration of that fellowship which was lost in Adam.

In the pages of the Bible, we are hardly there yet, but in type, shadow, and picture, we are getting there with each new passage which speaks of Christ, and which is leading us to Him. And so this passage and the chapter close out with these final words. But we are still missing something. We have not yet correctly answered the question which has eluded those great scholars we cited earlier.

“*Why* was the seemingly disconnected subject of the Sabbath placed here, in the overall theme of the preparation for the Sanctuary? John Lange came very close to answering the enigma when he said –

“It should also be observed that in 35:1 sqq. the command respecting the Sabbath recurs again, and this time precedes the order concerning the erection of the tabernacle. The Sabbath belonged as essentially to the tabernacle and the temple as the Christian Sunday to Christian worship.—**A sign between me and you.**” John Lange

Just after receiving the details of the sanctuary from the Lord, the subject of the Sabbath is brought up. And then, just *prior* to Moses conveying the details of the sanctuary which he received, he will say this to the people –

“These *are* the words which the Lord has commanded *you* to do: ² Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh day shall be a holy day for you, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord. Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. ³ You shall kindle no fire throughout your dwellings on the Sabbath day.” Exodus 35:1-3

The Sabbath is being intricately and intimately tied into the sanctuary. The sanctuary is where the Lord is to reside. It signifies that He is dwelling among the people. The greatest punishment of all for Israel was exile from the presence of the Lord. But this is exactly what was promised for disobedience. In that promise the Lord states the following in Leviticus 26:33-35 –

“I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you;
your land shall be desolate and your cities waste.

³⁴ Then the land shall enjoy its sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you *are* in
your enemies’ land;
then the land shall rest and enjoy its sabbaths.

³⁵ As long as *it* lies desolate it shall rest—
for the time it did not rest on your sabbaths when you dwelt in it.”

The reason for the Sabbath’s inclusion here is because it, like every other detail which has been given in the past six chapters, ultimately points to Christ – His Person and His work, for us. The chiasm itself hints at this.

In the Old Covenant, man worked and then rested. In the New Covenant, man rests and then works. A picture is made of the process of salvation in the two dispensations. Israel worked six days and then rested on the Sabbath. It was an anticipation of the time of rest which lay ahead when all things would be restored.

With Christ’s coming we rest on the first day of the week in honor of His finished work, and then we conduct our work week. This is why in the first half of the chiasm, line **e** gives the penalty – death, and then line **f** gives the reason for the penalty – working on the Sabbath.

Whereas in the second half of the chiasm, the order is reversed. First is noted the reason for the penalty – working, and then is given the penalty – death. Our rest is in Christ and what He has done. We have died to the law; we now live in Christ.

If we work in an attempt to please God, we are cut off from God. But if we accept Christ’s work, we are saved by grace and through faith. Works are excluded. They can only condemn, not save. The book of Hebrews explains the *rest* of God in great detail. In Chapter 4 we read these words –

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. ² For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard *it*. ³ For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said:

“So I swore in My wrath,
‘They shall not enter My rest,’”

although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴ For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh *day* in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works”; ⁵ and again in this *place*: “They shall not enter My rest.” Hebrews 4:1-5

Speaking of those who had been disobedient, the word says that “They shall not enter My rest.” But for those who have believed, verse 3 says, “For we who have believed do enter that rest.” Everything about the sanctuary centers on Jesus.

All of it points to our return to Eden and into God’s rest which is from the foundation of the world. Now, by faith in Christ *we do enter that rest*. Like the sanctuary itself, the Sabbath is obsolete because Christ has come. This then explains why the Sabbath is included in these sanctuary instructions. It is a part of the rites of the law; the law is fulfilled; it is set aside.

Because of this, works are excluded. And for those Jews who have missed the grace train, to this day they are still working, having failed to trust in Christ. They exist in this new dispensation, that of grace, and thus are cut off from His provision.

However, the Bible tells us of their coming day of restoration. They will finally, after 2000 years, call on Him as a nation. They will be brought into the covenant, and they will enter their time of rest. This is what we call “the millennium.” In this, we see that the Sabbath is a sign between the Lord and Israel.

The great Sabbath is coming in the final dispensation of time as we know it. The world has been at war and in strife for six thousand years, but when the nation of Israel calls out for their Messiah, He will return to them. The Sabbath is a sign between the Lord and Israel because it pictures something else. It pictures that truly wondrous time on earth when wars will cease, where –

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
The leopard shall lie down with the young goat,

The calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little child shall lead them.

⁷The cow and the bear shall graze;
Their young ones shall lie down together;
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

⁸The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole,
And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.

⁹They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord
As the waters cover the sea." Isaiah 11:6-9

This then explains the rare term of verse 18, *naphash*. Literally, "He took breath." The Lord will sit on His throne in Jerusalem and will take His breath. His work will be fully complete in the restoration of all things for that marvelous millennial period.

This, however, also explains why the priests were held guiltless, even when working on the Sabbath. It pictures Christ's continued role, at all times, as our great High Priest. The priests of Old, only pointed to the true Priest – Christ. Insightfully, Matthew Poole shows that the Sabbath of Israel was a fivefold sign to Israel –

1. Commemorative, of God's creation of and dominion over them and all other things.
2. Indicative, showing that they were made to be holy, and that their sanctification can be had from none but from God.
3. Distinctive, whereby they owned themselves to be the Lord's peculiar people.
4. Prefigurative, of that rest which Christ should purchase for them.
5. Confirmative, both assuring them of God's good will to them, and that as he blessed the sabbath for their sakes, so he would bless them in the holy use of it with temporal, spiritual, and everlasting blessings. Matthew Poole (amended)

He noted that it was only prefigurative of Christ and the rest that He would purchase for them. We are still awaiting the day when they will see this, but maybe one of you has yet to receive it as well. He has already done the work. All we need to do is simply reach out by faith and grab it.

If you are here and feel that you have to somehow merit God's favor by some work or another, the Bible shows that you have missed the mark. God has done the work in Christ. Trust in that and be found pleasing to God by simple belief in His mighty deeds, accomplished by Christ and just for you...

Closing Verse: *So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. Colossians 2:16, 17*

Next Week: Exodus 32:1-10 *Worshipping anything but the Lord will leave you baron...* (The Golden Calf – The Testing of Aaron) (89th Exodus sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Law of the Sabbath

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
These are the words He was relaying

Speak also to the children of Israel, saying:
Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, so shall it be
For it is a sign between Me and you
Throughout your generations, as commanded by Me

That you may know that I am the Lord
Who sanctifies you, and so pay heed to My word

You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore
For it is holy to you
Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death
This is what you are to do

For whoever does any work on it
That person shall be cut off from among his people
So to you I submit

Work shall be done for six days
But the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord
Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day
He shall surely be put to death, according to My word

Therefore the children of Israel
Shall keep the Sabbath, so shall they do
To observe the Sabbath throughout their generations
As a perpetual covenant; a covenant between Me and you

It is a sign between Me
And the children of Israel forever; thus we are enmeshed
For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth
And on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed

And when He had made an end
Of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, no more could Moses linger
He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony
Tablets of stone, written with God's finger

O God, again we come to Your word
To search it out for what You would of us expect
And in so searching we find our precious Lord
And in Him, only grace and mercy can we detect

For those who have trusted in Jesus
We have the surest hope of all
Magnificent, wondrous things He has done for us
Because upon His precious name, we did call

How can such love be, O God?
Surely it exceeds heaven's highest height
And so for sending Jesus we joyously applaud
Because through Him, all things are new –
Once again all things are right

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 32:1-10 (THE GOLDEN CALF – THE TESTING OF AARON)

Starting with verse 1 of this chapter, a chiasm begins which will span every verse until Exodus 34:17 – 8 sermons. However, it is a rather unique chiasm because it not only conveys individual thoughts in individual verses, but it also contains examples which comprise entire passages. It is truly a marvel of wisdom and beauty which eyes had not rested upon until the 31st of August 2011.

When it came to light, I was so very excited. Each time a chiasm is revealed, it sheds new light on what God is thinking and what He wants us to know. I have printed off copies for you so that you can keep them in your Bible and follow along with it as we go through these next three chapters. Let's review it now...

Exodus 32:1-34:17 – The Glory of the LORD (8/31/11)

A Call to Holiness

a 32:1-35 Example of idolatry.

b 33:2 And I will send *My* Angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.

c 33:3 for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you *are* a stiff-necked people

d 33:7-11 Moses meets the Lord in the Tent of Meeting.

e 33:12 You have said, "I know you by name."

f 33:12 You have also found grace in *My* sight

g 33:13 Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in *Your* sight, show me now *Your* way, that I may know *You* and that I may find grace in *Your* sight.

h 33:13 And consider that this nation *is* *Your* people

i 33:14 And He said, "My Presence will go *with you*, and I will give you rest."

x 33:15 If *Your* Presence does not go *with us*, do not bring us up from here.

i 33:16 For how then will it be known that *Your* people and I have found grace in *Your* sight, except *You* go with us?

h 33:16 So we shall be separate, *Your* people and I, from all the people who *are* upon the face of the earth.

g 33:17 I will also do this thing that you have spoken

f 33:17 You have found grace in *My* sight

e 33:17 I know you by name

d 33:18-34:8 Moses meets the Lord on Mt. Sinai.

c 34:9 O Lord, let my Lord, I pray, go among us, even though we *are* a stiff-necked people

b 34:11 Behold, I am driving out from before you the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.

a 34:12-17 Warning against idolatry.

As you can see, the center of the chiasm is verse 33:15 – “If Your Presence does not go *with us*, do not bring us up from here.” The people were prone to idolatry and they were stiff-necked in their demeanor, but Moses knew that unless the presence of the Lord went with them there would be no true way of knowing that they had received His grace.

In type and picture, the Presence of the Lord being with Israel is realized in the giving of the Holy Spirit to those in the church. He is the seal and the guarantee of God’s presence in our lives. Sometimes we may feel He is distant or has left us. But this is more often than not because we have fallen back into some type of sin, highlighted by the idolatry of Israel. That thought goes well with our text verse of the day...

Text Verse: *“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ²all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. ⁵But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.” 1 Corinthians 10:1-5*

Let us remember that the Lord is with us, and that we should act in accord with that knowledge at all times. Let us be pleasing to God and stand firm on the commands, exhortations, and prohibitions which are given to us for right living. Such is what we are told to do in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. This is Your God, O Israel (verses 1-4)

For the sake of context, we need to remember where we are in the history of the book of Exodus. Using Moses as their leader, the Lord had brought Israel out of their bondage in Egypt. On the way to Sinai, and even at the foot of Sinai, He had shown them great and marvelous proofs of His abilities to care for them, as well as His affections directed towards them.

At Sinai, He had come down in their presence and verbally pronounced to them the Ten Commandments. After that, because of the terror of the meeting, they had asked that the Lord not speak to them. Therefore, towards the end of chapter 20, Moses ascended Sinai and received the Book of the Covenant. This went all the way through chapter 23.

After receiving the Book of the Covenant, Moses went back down, and the covenant with the people was cut. The agreement was made, and the people committed themselves to obedience. This was followed by the covenant meal between the Lord and the leaders of Israel.

After this, towards the end of chapter 24, Moses and Joshua ascended Sinai again where Moses would be presented with the details for the construction of the sanctuary and all of its furniture, the ordination of the priests, the details for the sacrifices and offerings, and the law of the Sabbath. At the end of chapter 31, the very last thing that was recorded was –

“And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.” Exodus 31:18

The two tablets of the Testimony, written by the finger of God which contained the Ten Commandments, was handed to Moses. The words which had been uttered at the beginning of chapter 20 by the Lord, were written down by Him and presented to the leader of the people. This then is the context of where we are now.

¹Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain,

The words *ha'am* or “the people” are certainly used in a general sense. In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul says that “some” of the people were involved in the depravity of the idolatry to be described here. Regardless of this though, these things will normally start with a few and eventually permeate the entire body.

Whether few or many then, they are regarded as a single group. They had been brought out of Egypt and had been promised to be brought back into the land of their forefathers. But after an extended period of sitting idle, they are restive and unable to endure any more delay.

The word used concerning Moses which is translated here as “delay” is *bosh*. It is a verb which means “ashamed,” but the primary meaning is “to fall into disgrace, normally through failure, either of self or of an object of trust” (HAW). The word has only been used once so far and it gives us a clue as to the entire flavor of the coming account. It was first seen in Genesis 2:25 –

“And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not **ashamed.**”

In Eden, there was no shame; no disgrace. There was peace between God and man. But that quickly changed when sin entered the picture. It is sin which causes shame and brings about disgrace. The people imply that Moses has let them down, just as God was disappointed in Adam. A classic use of this word, and one which resembles the events which lie ahead, comes from Isaiah 44:9 –

“Those who make an image, all of them *are* useless,
And their precious things shall not profit;
They *are* their own witnesses;
They neither see nor know, **that they may be ashamed.**” Isaiah 44:9

Due to the delay, it seemed that Moses has failed and fallen into disgrace. Either he had died in the fiery inferno on the mountain, or he had packed up and left without letting the people know, or some other unknown event had occurred. Whatever their thoughts about Moses were, it included the idea that he had fallen into disgrace.

Thus the irony of what is about to occur centers on this word, given to us in the first sentence of the account. Rather than Moses, it is the people who will fall into disgrace. Moses, or “He who draws out” will have to draw them out of the wrath of God which will be directed towards them.

We were told in Exodus 24 that Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights. This means that what we are seeing here occurs somewhere around five weeks after his ascent. We know this because the details of what we will see took at least a few days, or maybe even a week, to transpire.

The Lord selected this period of forty days for a reason. According to Bullinger the biblical meaning of forty is –

“Forty has long been universally recognized as an important number, both on account of the frequency of its occurrence, and the uniformity of its association with a period of *probation, trial, and chastisement*—(not *judgment*, like the number 9, which stands in connection with the punishment of enemies, but the chastisement of sons, and of a covenant people). It is the product of 5 and 8, and points to the action of *grace* (5), leading to and ending in *revival* and *renewal* (8). This is certainly the case where *forty* relates to a period of evident *probation*.”

The forty days are rightly defined by him as a time of evident probation. The people had been given the law and now they were being tested with that law without their chief

leader there to supervise them. How would Aaron fare as their designated representative? How would they fare?

There are eight such great forty day periods recorded in Scripture. One of them corresponds to this period in a marvelous way. Israel was given these forty days of testing and they are now shown to have failed. Jesus was given forty days of testing and He prevailed.

^{1 (con't)} **the people gathered together to Aaron,**

The Hebrew reads, *v'yiqahel ha'am al aharon* – “And assembled the people *against* Aaron.” Aaron and Hur were appointed as the leaders during Moses’ absence. Being the prominent leader, the people have come against him in a forceful way. It is what we could consider the possible beginning of a mob scene.

^{1 (con't)} **and said to him, “Come,**

The word is *qum*. It means to arise. They are tired of waiting and they are adamant that Aaron now arise and take action. And so they demand that he get up and act.

^{1 (con't)} **make us gods that shall go before us;**

The word for “gods” here is *elohim*. It can mean either “god” singular or “gods” plural. Different translations say one or the other. However, in this verse the word for “shall go” is *yeleku*. It is in the plural, and therefore they are demanding visible gods to lead them. In these words then, multiple sins are seen.

The first is a violation of the first commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me.” The second is a violation of the second, “You shall not make for yourself a carved image.” They have also devolved from monotheism to polytheism. Regardless of what Aaron actually makes, they have requested “gods.”

The mentioning of the Lord handing the Ten Commandments to Moses after his long discourse on the mountain is not without significance then. There are several purposes for it. First, it came at the end of the directions for the sanctuary as the fulfillment of what the sanctuary anticipated.

All of the details looked forward to Christ, but without the law which Christ fulfilled, there would remain an eternal disconnect between God and man. Only when this law

was placed in the Ark and covered by the Mercy Seat, could there be a sort of restoration of that fellowship which was lost in Adam.

Secondly, it was given to show us that a willful, open, and united act of disobedience against these laws had taken place. The people had forgotten the words of the covenant, but the Lord had not. They had agreed openly and publically to it, and they had openly and publically violated it.

And so thirdly, we will see the just due for violating God's law and the mercy and grace which is granted when God's mediator stands between the Offended and the offenders. Moses, as a type of Christ, will be seen to do just this in the verses ahead. Without his intercession, the people would have been destroyed.

^{1 (con't)} **for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."**

The words here show double contempt. The first is upon the unnamed Lord. Instead of relying on He who had already shown Himself reliable on numerous occasions, they completely ignore Him in what they say. It is as if He isn't even a consideration.

Instead, they turn their contempt towards the human instrument of their situation, Moses, by saying *ki zeh Mosheh* – "for this Moses." The words again imply that he is a failure. "Yeah, whatever happened to that guy?" It reflects a quickly-faded gratitude for all he had done. Especially concerning their acknowledgment that he was "the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt."

What is even more incredible, is that they are right there at the base of Sinai. All they had to do was send someone up to see what was going on in the cloud and fire. But they were too cowardly to even do this. They were warned to not do this thing. It is an acknowledgment that they knew, very well, that the Lord was there, but instead of coming to *face* Him, they would stay below and *disgrace* Him.

And yet even more, they continued to receive their daily portion of manna and their stream of water from the rock. Exodus 16:35 tells us that the manna continued unabated for forty years. Joshua 5:12 tells us that the manna finally ceased only when they had eaten of the produce of Canaan, exactly forty years later.

Instead of the unseen Lord, who would care for them by His effort, they sought a visible god which would embolden them in their own effort. And thus pride has stepped into

the minds of the people. They have fallen into the same sin as their first father. And in defiance of God, they intended to work their way into the promised land apart from Him.

It is the same pattern which all false religions follow. They use what God offers to sustain them – just as Israel continued to eat the manna, but they ignore His leading and His counsel – just as Israel set out to fashion their own gods. But Matthew Henry shows us that this is not how it should be –

“While Moses was in the mount, receiving the law from God, the people made a tumultuous address to Aaron. This giddy multitude were weary of waiting for the return of Moses. Weariness in waiting betrays to many temptations. The Lord must be waited for till he comes, and waited for though he tarry.” Matthew Henry

² And Aaron said to them, “Break off the golden earrings which *are* in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring *them* to me.”

What Aaron should have done was to stand and defend the honor of the Lord and the keeping of His commands. He was entrusted with the care of the people after having been included in the meal with the Lord on the mountain. He had seen the Lord prove faithful time and time again, but he was also a weak and fallible person, unwilling to sacrifice himself in the defense of the Lord.

And yet, he knew that the right thing to do was to not obey the demands of the people. In hopes of deterring them from this course of action, he goes to what he supposes is their greatest source of affection by asking them to “break off the golden earrings.”

The word translated as “break” is *paraq*. It means to break off or tear away. It is a rather rare word, being used just ten times. Instead of saying, “take them off,” he uses this stronger word which almost gives the idea of violence. It is a challenge to the people. “All right, if you want me to do this thing, then you will have to do this other thing.”

The word for earring is *nezem* – a ring. It can be an earring or a nose-ring or some other type of ornament. Here, it is specifically noted as on their ears. Genesis 35:2-4 makes it apparent that the wearing of these *nezem*, or rings, was in and of itself a source of some type of idolatry –

“And Jacob said to his household and to all who *were* with him, ‘Put away the foreign gods that *are* among you, purify yourselves, and change your

garments. ³ Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone.’ ⁴ So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which *were* in their hands, and the earrings which *were* in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which *was* by Shechem.”

They had probably gotten these as a part of the plunder when they left Egypt. They would be considered a valuable and deserved blessing. But now Aaron was telling them that if they wanted a corporate idol, they would have to give up their personal ones.

It seems he was betting that they would not be willing to make such an exchange and would prefer their own most valuable possessions. Even more, he specifies those that belong to the wives, sons, and daughters. He probably felt that the people would be as weak towards their families as he was towards them.

The sentiment of what occurs here in defiance of the Lord, is actually something that He later sets down as a precept in His word. In Malachi 2, we read this –

“If you will not hear,
And if you will not take *it* to heart,
To give glory to My name,’
Says the Lord of hosts,
‘I will send a curse upon you,
And I will curse your blessings.
Yes, I have cursed them already,
Because you do not take *it* to heart.” Malachi 2:2

This in fact is what will occur with these cherished possessions of the people. The blessings of their departure from Egypt will become a curse.

³ So all the people broke off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and brought *them* to Aaron.

If it was Aaron’s intent to keep the people from their plans, he failed. It says that “all the people” did as he asked. Again, this doesn’t necessarily mean all the people of the camp, but it at least means all of the people who had conspired against the Lord. They tore away their earrings and they brought them to him.

⁴And he received *the gold* from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf.

The words here are so difficult to translate that there are a multitude of possibilities as to what occurred. Some say that instead of receiving the gold and fashioning it, he received it and bound it in a bag. The same thing occurs in 2 Kings 5:23.

Some say that the order is reversed, and that he made a molded calf and then fashioned it with an engraving tool. But that is not how cast images are handled after they have been cast. What is possible is that it mentions the receiving of the gold first to show that Aaron was now compelled to fashion a god for the people.

After this, he fashioned the thing from wood with the chisel. And then next, he had the gold melted and poured out on it. The reason this is likely is that in Deuteronomy 9:21, it says this –

“Then I took your sin, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it *and* ground *it* very small, until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that descended from the mountain.”

That it was burned seems to imply that its core was wood. Only after the wood was burned away, did he crush and grind the gold into dust. This seems likely from the words used. First, the word for “fashioned” is *yatsar*. So far, it has only been used three times in the Bible. The first two are seen in these words –

“And the Lord God **formed** man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

⁸The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had **formed**.” Genesis 2:7, 8

After this, it was used one more time in God’s forming of the beasts of the earth. Now, it is seen *in opposition* to those uses. Instead of the Lord forming man, and beasts for man’s use, it is man forming a god in the form of a beast in defiance of the Lord. The word for “engraving tool” is *kheret*. It is used for the first of just two times. It comes from a root meaning “to engrave,” and so it indicates a chisel or a graver. In Isaiah, it is used to indicate a pen for writing.

The word for “molten” is *masekah*. This is its first use in the Bible and it comes from *nasak* which means to pour out, as a libation, and thus to cover. Thus, if a wood form was made, it would then have been covered with the gold which had been melted and then applied over it. From this, they formed their false god, a calf.

The word for “calf” is *egel*. Again, it is a new word in Scripture. It is the same as the adjective *agol* which means circular, or round. The reason is that a calf, especially one nearly grown, will frisk around, dancing and twirling. The mental imagery of this is beautifully seen in Malachi 4:2 –

“But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture.” NLT

Why a calf is selected is not agreed upon. Many scholars tie this calf in with the calf-worship of Egypt’s god Apis, the god of strength and fertility.

Others disagree and claim that Egypt’s worship was of living animals, not images. If they wanted a god to follow, they could have just taken one of their own calves and sacrificed to it and followed it where it led. Thus they tie the calf all the way back to the Babylonian times prior to Abraham.

What is correct is that they were relying on a god of Egypt. Many ancient images of Apis have been found in Egypt. Acts 7:39, which I will cite in a moment tells us that it was to Egypt that they had turned their hearts. They had left the Lord and what He had revealed to them. This is evidenced in the next words...

⁴ (con’t) **Then they said, “This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!”**

The Hebrew reads, *eleh elohekha* – “These are your gods...” It is plural. Again, people argue what the intent here is by the use of the plural. Some see it as being the many earrings of the people being combined into one form, thus the plural is used.

Others see the plural being used for the singular. In other words, the sign of the thing represents another thing. This seems likely based on Aaron’s words of the next verse. He will call for a feast to the Lord, implying that the calf stands *in place of the Lord* as their recognizable image of Him.

But even this is in direct violation of the Ten Commandments and it shows that regardless of Aaron's intent, the hearts of the people had rejected the Lord. His chosen leader was long gone, and they had closed their eyes to His past mercies and their hearts to His future promises. This is attested to by Stephen in Acts 7 –

“This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and *with* our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us,³⁹ whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt,⁴⁰ saying to Aaron, ‘Make us gods to go before us; *as for* this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’⁴¹ And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.” Acts 7:38-41

*What will we do in our times of distress?
How will we deal with the unseen Lord?
When our lives devolve into a horrendous mess
Will we hold fast to the promises in His word?*

*Or will we turn to another god, which is no god at all?
Will we forget what Christ has already done for us?
Through His cross, He has reversed our fall
This came through the blood of our Lord Jesus*

*The unseen Lord is a hard concept to follow, it's true
But this is what He would ask of us; faith to display
By remembering what He has done in the past, for me and for you
We can have strength to continue in Jesus, day by day*

*And so let us never forget His gift, His holy word
Which reminds us of the faithfulness of our Lord*

II. A Stiff-necked People (verses 5-10)

⁵So when Aaron saw *it*, he built an altar before it.

With the handiwork of the workman accomplished, Aaron now provides full assent for the continued path of apostasy by building an altar before the Lord. After the giving of

the Ten Commandments, the people asked Moses for the Lord to not speak to them anymore. After that, Moses ascended the mountain to receive the Book of the Covenant. The very first thing mandated at that time was the law of the of the Earthen Altar. This is what that passage says –

“Then the Lord said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘You have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. ²³ You shall not make *anything to be* with Me—gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves. ²⁴ An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you. ²⁵ And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it. ²⁶ Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it.” Exodus 20:22-26

In direct violation of the law of the altar, Aaron approved the work of man’s hands and built an altar to the *abomination*. And in addition to that, in further disobedience to that law he next makes a *proclamation* ...

^{5 (con’t)} **And Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord.”**

Not only did he approve of an image formed by man’s hands, and not only did he build an altar to it, but he ascribed to it the character of Yehovah by claiming a feast to Him. The self-existent One who proclaimed to Moses, and through him to the people of Israel, I AM THAT I AM, had been reduced to an image of wood and gold.

And that image was merely an image of something else which had been created by God, having been formed by Him as He desired. Now a mere image of His handiwork, that of a brute beast, had been exalted by Aaron as a representation of His infinite being.

The disgrace of what he has done is literally incomprehensible, and yet it is something that almost every human has done countless times in his own life. We form a god in our image. Whether it is through physical idols, or active disobedience to His word, we form our own god, suitable to our own liking.

Whether we decide that God is wrong in forbidding abortions, or whether we ignore His word concerning the order of the family unit, or whether we refuse to acknowledge that Christ is Lord – to the glory of God the Father, we recreate a god in our image and for our glory. The difference between Aaron and us is that Aaron’s *deed* happens to be

recorded for all of us to *read*. The evil we have done may be *out of sight*, but it is recorded by God and *it will be brought to light*.

⁶Then they rose early on the next day,

The idea we get here is that the people were too excited to sleep. The tedium of the previous five plus weeks had become too much for them. The thought of a feast day was as exciting to them as the thought of a coming wedding day. No sooner had the sun risen, then they went forward for their day of feasting.

^{6 (con't)} offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings;

The one offering that they needed the most, the sin offering, is noticeably missing from this verse. Instead, they made burnt offerings to appease their false god, and they brought peace offerings as a sign of fellowship and intimacy with him, but they were blinded to their sin and never considered such an offering.

^{6 (con't)} and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

Along with the sacrifices came feasting and drinking. As with most of such things when conducted in an unholy manner, it led to something worse. The words *v'yaqumu letsakheq*, "and rose up to play," probably include fornication, adultery, and the like. It is the same word which was used concerning the accusations against Joseph by Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39:14.

Paul cites this verse in 1 Corinthians 10 along with a list of other things which brought about the wrath of God upon the people of Israel. After citing them, he then followed up with these words of warning, assurance, and relief –

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*."

-1 Corinthians 10:12, 13

The lessons of the past have been given to us as examples for us to learn by. God is not contained in a box, and He is not represented by an animal or a man, except in the person of Jesus Christ who alone is the image of the invisible God.

As servants of the Lord, we are to refrain from idolatry, and we are to refrain from sexual immorality, both of which are ever more prevalent in society, and both of which are therefore all the more easy to fall into.

⁷ And the Lord said to Moses, “Go, get down!

The Lord uses the same term now that He did in Exodus 19:24, *lek red* – “Go, get down.” It is a highly emphatic expression implying an *emergency*, and expecting *urgency*. Moses didn’t understand the urgency in Exodus 19. In this chapter, he isn’t even aware of it. It is such a forceful expression, that it even affects him...

^{7 (con’t)} For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves.

The term *ammekha*, or “your people,” carries one of two possibilities. The first is that the Lord is telling Moses that the people have sinned and they require a mediator to intercede for them. The second is that the Lord has disavowed them as His people. The covenant which united them is broken and they are no longer His.

What appears from the coming verses and chapters is a mixture of both. The Lord has distanced Himself from the people, but he understands that the tie of Moses’ blood relationship is permanent. As we will see, He will offer a new beginning through Moses, promising to make him a great nation, but because of Moses’ faithfulness to his people, in Chapter 34 the Lord will continue the covenant between Himself and Israel.

The greatness of Moses the man is seen in both how the Lord deals with him, and how he deals with his people. No matter what though, at the present time, the people have broken the covenant and the Lord is rightfully offended at their actions. Concerning what they have done in relation to modern idolatry, Adam Clarke provides wise words of counsel –

“This is one pretense that the Roman Catholics have for the idolatry in their image worship. Their high priest, the pope, collects the ornaments of the people, and makes an image, a crucifix, a madonna, etc. The people worship it; but the pope says it is only to keep God in remembrance. But of the whole God says, Thy people have corrupted themselves; and thus as they continue in their idolatry, they have forfeited the blessings of the Lord’s covenant. They are not God’s people, they are the pope’s people, and he is called “our holy father the pope.” Adam Clarke

⁸They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them.

The words here show that whether the people thought Moses was gone a long time or not, the Lord saw it as a *very short span*. They turned away from Him and they were in a hurry to do so. Because of this, the guilt of their actions was all the more visible and intense. He had commanded, telling them the proper way in which to live before Him; and no sooner had He done so, than they had turned aside to the false path. As Arthur Pink describes this –

“Man must have an object, and when he turns from the true God, he at once craves a false one.” Arthur Pink

^{8 (con't)} They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, ‘This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!’”

His words here confirm the analysis of Adam Clarke concerning the idolatry of the RCC. The Lord says that not only had they made a molded calf, but they had worshipped and scarified to it. The Lord deems such actions as worship not of Him, but of the object itself, regardless of what the verbal expression of the people claim.

⁹And the Lord said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and indeed it *is* a stiff-necked people!

The Lord was fully aware of the people before He ever created them. Certainly for this reason, as much as any other, He chose them. This might seem contradictory, but it is not. When making an example of something or someone, you choose that which fits the type the most perfectly.

The Lord chose Israel knowing the hardness of their hearts and their rebellious nature so that they could be an example to all people, carefully recorded in His word. And the metaphor He uses to describe them now is one which will be used numerous times of them in Scripture, and countless more throughout history. He says they are “a stiff-necked people.”

The word is normally explained as being obstinate, but it is more than that. It signifies a perverse people who want to behave in a way which is both unacceptable and unreasonable, even in spite of the consequences they will face.

It is a metaphor which finds its source in an animal which will not submit itself to yoke or bridle. He stiffens himself against the pull of the rein, even if it hurts. Thus Israel is being described as the very animal they have shaped and worshipped, a twirling calf. It is as if in history we are viewing a rodeo and Israel is the twirling obstinate animal.

They failed to submit to the yoke of God's law, right in the sight of the burning mountain and just after a breakfast of manna provided by the Lord which formed on the ground upon which they now danced. This term for them will be used again and again to remind them of their infancy in the wilderness where they bowed their hearts away from God and turned their necks, rather than their faces, to Him.

In their defiance, the Lord now displays His anger at them. The dread and horror which was on display at Sinai in the giving of the Ten Commandments can now be expected to be released on them for violating those very same laws. It is a pattern which will be seen time and again in their history. The first is promised, and it is promised *right now...*

¹⁰ Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them.

The Lord now states to Moses the words *v'atah hanikhah li* – “And you let alone Me.” This appears to be a command, but it is not. It is the beginning of another test. Aaron was tested and he failed. Now a new test is being introduced. This becomes clear with the next words, *v'yikhar api bahem v'akalem*, “...and my wrath will burn hot against them and I will consume them.”

His burning wrath and His promised destruction is merely an exercise in revealing *the character of Moses*. This is what occurred with Jacob when the Lord wrestled with him in Genesis 32:24-28 –

“Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. ²⁵ Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. ²⁶ And He said, ‘Let Me go, for the day breaks.’

But he said, ‘I will not let You go unless You bless me!’

²⁷ So He said to him, ‘What *is* your name?’

He said, ‘Jacob.’

²⁸ And He said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.’”

The Lord tested Jacob, not for His own learning, but for Jacob's. Now we see the same thing occurring again. The Lord has told Moses to leave Him alone, not "that" or "so" his anger may burn against the people, but "and" His anger will burn against them. If Moses agrees, the action will occur. And the test is made greater with our final words of the day...

^{10 (fin)} **And I will make of you a great nation."**

v'e-e-se owtkha l'gow gadol – It is almost an exact repeat of the words spoken to Abraham over 430 years earlier. "And I will make you a great nation." The mettle of the man is being tested. The love of his people, the faithfulness to his duties, and the desire for recognition are all being established.

As noted earlier, the number forty speaks of a time of evident probation. Aaron failed, the people failed, but Moses' character is yet to be revealed. He has gone forty days and forty nights without food or water. Will he remain steadfast in His love for his people, his faithfulness to God, and his ability to withstand temptation?

He is being used as a picture of Christ who endured the same testing almost 1500 years later. Next week we will pick up with the account of this memorable incident which we can turn to in order to learn valuable insights into how we ourselves should be willing to act when faced with our own temptations and human limitations.

We, like Israel, like Aaron, and like Moses, have been brought up out of Egypt, the land of sin. The Lord has promised to take us back to the land we originally came from; the Land of Promise. In the meantime, we are to live by faith and not by sight.

We cannot replace our affections and devotions to the Lord with inanimate objects like statues of Mary, or false gods of gold and silver. We cannot trust in money or IRAs to keep us secure as we go. We cannot make sex, work, or wealth our god. Instead, we are being asked to trust the Lord and to pursue Him alone.

I met some nice people as I travelled the US in 2010 who fell into a bad patch. It involved the courts and confinement for the husband, and real distress for the wife and children. They become exceedingly pious and seemed to hold fast to the Lord through what happened, but not long after his confinement ended, he went back to his profession and the money started coming in.

She became a body builder. They stopped posting about the Lord and instead they make posts about the empire they are building. It is an empire built on sand, I assure you. Any such god that we put our trust in will fail us. The money will fade, the looks will disappear, the bodies will tire, and only emptiness will be left. What a sad price to pay for the temporary pleasures of this life.

Let us put away our golden calves and fix our eyes upon the high mountain where the Lord dwells. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Let us be resolute in our stand upon God's sacred word, and let us never be willing to forsake our love and devotion to our most honored Lord.

If you have never called out to Him to be your Savior, please do it today...

Closing Verse: *"They made a calf in Horeb,
And worshiped the molded image.*

*²⁰ Thus they changed their glory
Into the image of an ox that eats grass.*

*²¹ They forgot God their Savior,
Who had done great things in Egypt,*

*²² Wondrous works in the land of Ham,
Awesome things by the Red Sea." Psalm 106:19-22*

Next Week: Exodus 31:11-24 *It's always exciting to see what the Bible shows us...* (The Golden Calf – The Testing of Moses) (90th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Golden Calf

Now when the people saw
That Moses delayed instead
Coming down from the mountain
The people gathered together to Aaron, and to him said

"Come, make us gods that shall go before us
For as for this Moses, the man who brought us up, also

Out of the land of Egypt
What has become of him, we do not know

And Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings
Which are in the ears of your wives, so let it be
Also your sons, and your daughters...
And bring them to me

So all the people broke off
The golden earrings which were in their ears
And brought them to Aaron
Of the Lord God, they showed no fears

And he received the gold from their hand
And he fashioned it with an engraving tool
And made a molded calf
Aaron truly acted like a fool

Then they said
"This is your god, O Israel
That brought you out of the land of Egypt
As you know very well

So when Aaron saw it
He built an altar before it, disobeying God's word
And Aaron made a proclamation and said
"Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord

Then they rose early on the next day
Offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings
And the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play

And the Lord said to Moses "Go, get down!
For your people whom you brought out
Of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves
They have performed great wickedness, no doubt

They have turned aside quickly
Out of the way which I commanded them, as I did tell

They have made themselves a molded calf
And worshiped it and sacrificed to it as well

And said, 'This is your god, O Israel
That brought you out of the land of Egypt
This to the people they did tell

And the Lord said to Moses, who was paying heed
"I have seen this people
And it is a stiff-necked people indeed

Now therefore, let Me alone
That My wrath may burn hot against them in my consternation
And I may consume them
And I will make of you a great nation

Lord God, we sure know how to strive against you
It is in our nature to stiffen our necks in this way
Grant us wisdom to do what is right to do
And to be pleasing in Your sight; this we pray

Help us to follow closely what is written in Your word
And be a light on our path, guiding each of us
Help us to be obedient to the things we've heard
Concerning what You have done through our Lord Jesus

Lead us to Your place of rest, in eternal glory
That which is promised in the gospel story

For this we pray, and to this help us to attend
And surely we shall praise you forever; days without end

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 32:11-24 (THE GOLDEN CALF – THE TESTING OF MOSES)

Exodus 32 is logically divided into three main sections, with several subsections. Today's passage fills the second main section and has three individual subsections. Last week we saw the testing of Aaron and his failure to stand fast against the pressures of the people. The hint of Moses' testing was then introduced in anticipation of today's passage.

He was entrusted with an office, he has faithfully carried it out so far, but he has not been placed in a position which could truly lead to pride, arrogance, or greed for more than what he has. Will he accept the fading glory of temporary fame at the expense of his people, or will he, through humility and love of his people, seek the glory of the Lord alone?

The lesson of Moses is one that we all should pay heed to. Fame is a great temptation and quite often it leads people to go from bad to worse. Humility among the famous is rare, and yet we all are said to have at least ten minutes of fame. Will those ten minutes prove us humble and gracious, or haughty and self-aggrandizing?

It's probably good to continuously evaluate ourselves, just in case that ten minutes comes along when we aren't expecting it. And should it last for more than ten minutes, we can always look back to the life of Moses. He was a man who had so much and yet he was willing to set aside the thought of more, and defer to that which is for the Lord's glory and for the sake of his people.

Text Verse: *"They made a calf in Horeb,
And worshiped the molded image.*

*²⁰ Thus they changed their glory
Into the image of an ox that eats grass.*

*²¹ They forgot God their Savior,
Who had done great things in Egypt,*

*²² Wondrous works in the land of Ham,
Awesome things by the Red Sea.*

*²³ Therefore He said that He would destroy them,
Had not Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach,
To turn away His wrath, lest He destroy them." Psalm 106:19-23*

Greatness and humility are not opposed to one another. Rather, they are intricately connected. And there is a difference between false humility and true humility. It isn't always evident, but the true colors normally shine forth enough for those who have discernment to be able to tell which is which.

Moses was a humble man, a faithful mediator, and a great leader. To this day he is revered by both Jew and Gentile for his amazing qualities. Today's passage is one which highlights his greatness. He was willing to speak openly and frankly to the Lord about what was right and proper. He was tested and his test is set forth for our instruction. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Pleading of Moses (verses 11-14)

¹¹ Then Moses pleaded with the Lord his God,

The word for "pleaded" in this verse is *khalah*. It is just the second time it has been seen in the Bible. It is normally translated as being afflicted or put to grief, even regarding an infirmity. In this case, it means to beseech, but it is a petition which is certainly one of grief or anguish.

The very last words were those of the Lord speaking to Moses. They closed out our sermon verses last week. In them, there was a two-fold aspect to the Lord's words. The first was that the Lord was ready to destroy Israel, and the second is that the Lord would then make Moses a great nation –

“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘I have seen this people, and indeed it *is* a stiff-necked people! ¹⁰ Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation.’”

The resolve of Moses is being tested. Will he yield to human ambition, or will he demonstrate the leadership qualities of humility and fidelity to those he leads? The word *khalah* shows that the test has afflicted him in his soul and he is looking to the Lord for the remedy to that affliction.

Further, in the Hebrew of these words it says, *v'khal Mosheh eth pene Yehovah elohav* – “And beseeched Moses the face of the Lord his God.” To seek the face of someone is to

seek their favor. Moses is seeking the favor of the Lord while in a state of distress. From these few words, we can already glean a clue as to how Moses will respond to the test. And even more, the emphatic use of the words “the Lord **his** God” shows that even though Israel had lost their interest in seeking the true God, and had sought another through false worship, Moses had not. He still sought the Lord **his** God.

The Lord had said, “Let me alone,” but Moses was unwilling to do so. Instead, like his forefather Jacob, he entered into the wrestling match. One was by a river, this is on a mountain, but the dust begins to fly as Moses seeks to obtain a blessing, not for Himself, but for his people Israel.

Their destruction is promised, but Moses stands in the gap between the Lord and them. On the surface, the words “Let me alone” seem to be an order for Moses to depart and let the Lord take out His vengeance, but the actual intent is far different. It is to spur the man in a different direction; one Moses is faithful to follow.

11 (con’t) and said: “Lord, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people

The word “wrath” here is the same word that was used in verse 10. It is *aph*, and it means a nostril or nose, and hence it speaks of the face or even the whole person. It is translated as “wrath” because when a person is angry, their breathing becomes rapid in passion. The mental imagery is clear. The Lord’s anger is so evident in His words to Moses that it is as if His nostrils are fuming with rage.

Moses’ question to the Lord concerning his wrath is ingeniously phrased. “Lord, why does Your wrath burn hot against **Your people.**” In verse 7, this we read this –

“And the Lord said to Moses, “Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted *themselves.*”

The Lord had distanced Himself from Israel, calling them “your people” when He spoke to Moses. Moses now returns that sentiment to the Lord. He will use this relationship with the Lord as an argument for their continued favor in His sight.

11 (con’t) whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

Again, this goes back to verse 7. The Lord said to Moses that **he** (meaning Moses) brought them up out of the land of Egypt. However, Moses defers again to it as the Lord's work, and he explains it by saying that it was done with *bekoakh gadol ubeyad hazaqah* – “by power great and by hand mighty.”

Moses may have been the human leader, but his actions were accomplished by the power and might of the Lord. Again, Moses shows his humility. He was, in essence, offered the right to boast of having brought Israel out of Egypt and he refused it. Instead, he magnified the greatness of the Lord.

¹² Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, ‘He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth’?

Moses has established first that Israel is the Lord's people. He demonstrated that through their miraculous deliverance. He now gives a second reason why He should turn from His anger. It is for the sake of this people who bear His name.

The reproach of the Egyptians against Israel would thus become a reproach against His name. It would show that He was fickle in choosing them and then destroying them. Moses is first and foremost concerned with the honor of the Lord, even above the state of his beloved family in the flesh.

This implicitly goes to another point which is not readily discernible, but which is evidenced throughout the pages of the Bible. As the Lord is the only God, then His honor is necessary not just for Israel's sake, but for the sake of all people.

If God's people are destroyed, even if it is justly deserved, in turn it would lead to the destruction of all people on earth. If there is no hope for the fallen and wayward people of God, then there could truly be no hope for those who were not called as His. There is much more tied up in the preservation of Israel than simply that which is seen at the surface.

The same is true with Israel of today. Although Christ has come and the nations are saved through Him, God's faithfulness to His unfaithful people named Israel still bears on His name and on His ability to preserve that which He has committed to.

¹² (con't) Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people.

Verses like this one often bring a charge that the God in the Bible cannot be the true God. How could God change His mind? This is the same sentiment that is seen at other times in Scripture. It appears that He is going in one direction and then changes and goes in another. This is not the case.

The idea of God's relenting or repenting of an action is not the same as a human doing so. The record of Scripture indicates that God is working towards an ultimate end. When He does something, it is to accomplish meeting that end. In the case of what is occurring here, there are at least two reasons for the verbiage employed.

The first is that which we have already seen. Moses is being molded and tested for his learning and growth, not the Lord's. The second is that Israel will learn that they cannot assume to be the Lord's people and not be subject to the Lord's wrath. If they are His people, they are more subject to it, not less. To those whom much is given, much is required.

¹³ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit *it* forever.'"

Another reason is now given by Moses for the Lord to turn from His anger. It is based on the covenant He made with his fathers before Him. The promise was made, and for Israel to be destroyed would at least delay this promise. It would also make Moses, not Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, appear to be the true source of this peculiar people of God.

Further, Moses also sees that if this occurs to them now, then it would be that much easier to repeat it in the future. Even if the Lord promises to make Moses a great nation, how could that promise be any more reliable than what was previously spoken to the fathers? And so his words indicate that the Lord swore by His own self. As there can be no greater vow than this, then it must stand. This is reflected in the words of Hebrews 6—

“For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, ¹⁴ saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.” ¹⁵ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. ¹⁶ For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute. ¹⁷ Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel,

confirmed *it* by an oath, ¹⁸ that by two immutable things, in which *it is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*.” Hebrews 6:13-18

¹⁴ So the Lord relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.

The word “relent” or *nakham* comes from a primitive root which means “to sigh.” Thus by implication it gives the idea of letting up or giving in to a matter. The Lord has tested Moses concerning the situation, which He was fully aware of all along, and He in essence gives a sigh... “Ok Moses, you have convinced me.” But in reality it is Moses who has changed and grown, not the Lord.

In the process of what has occurred, the Lord gave an intended action, but it was conditional. After His purpose in giving that was met, He then announced another action. There is not fickleness; rather there is wisdom in what has occurred.

*Remember Your promises, O God
Remember what You have said in days of old
When we stray from the correct path which we should trod
From the holy path of which you have told*

*Remember Your word to Your servant
Upon which You have caused me to hope
Help me again to be observant
And towards Your precepts help me always to cope*

*Forgive my transgressions, those of my youth
And of my failings even in later days
Help me to walk in sincerity and truth
And to abide in Your precepts now and always*

II. The Sound of Singing (verses 15-18)

¹⁵ And Moses turned and went down from the mountain,

Moses, having received the assurance that Israel will not be destroyed, turns to go. The delay from the admonition of verse 7 could not have been a long one, but it was one

which resolved a great deal concerning Moses and how he would continue to lead Israel in the future.

¹⁵ (con't) **and the two tablets of the Testimony were in his hand.**

This goes back to the last verse of chapter 31 –

“And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.” Exodus 31:18

The detail given here that Moses had these tablets is not unnecessary. In fact, it is critical to understanding the nature of the word of God, the Person of Jesus Christ, and man's relation to both. This will be seen as the account progresses.

At this time it says they are in Moses' hand, singular. Later it will say they were in his hands, plural. There is no problem with this. The singular here stands for the plural. Having something in one's hand means having possession of it, regardless of whether it is in one hand, both hands, or neither. This is seen, for example, in Genesis 39:3, when speaking of the exceptional work performance of Joseph where the same term, *b'yadow* is used –

“And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand.” Genesis 39:3

¹⁵ (con't) **The tablets were written on both sides; on the one side and on the other they were written.**

The words here are highly debated among scholars. Some say that this means the words were deeply carved, through the stone. In this, they would be visible from both sides. However, this would mean they would be in reverse on the back. Further, certain letters which form a full enclosure like our modern “o” would fall out.

Others believe that this means that some of the commands were on the right on one tablet and on the left on the other, not on both sides of each tablet. It is known that Assyrian and Babylonian tablets were written on both sides, but Egyptian tablets rarely were. The specificity here tends to favor that it was written on both tablets and on both sides.

In that they were written on both sides, it would prohibit anyone adding to them in the future. What was written filled the tablets and thus formed the basis of the law. It was from God, and man could not add to it.

¹⁶ Now the tablets were the work of God,

What this means is that the tablets themselves were made by God. This may seem obvious, but when a second set is made, they will be made not by God, but by Moses. The specificity is given for a reason because specificity will be given later for the second set –

“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Cut two tablets of stone like the first *ones*, and I will write on *these* tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke. ² So be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself to Me there on the top of the mountain. ³ And no man shall come up with you, and let no man be seen throughout all the mountain; let neither flocks nor herds feed before that mountain.’

⁴ So he cut two tablets of stone like the first *ones*. Then Moses rose early in the morning and went up Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him; and he took in his hand the two tablets of stone.” Exodus 34:1, 2

The first set was made by God; the second set will be made by man. However, both sets will be consistent in another area...

¹⁶ (con’t) and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets.

The word “writing” is a noun, *miktav*. It will be used just nine times in the Bible and it means “writing” as in “a thing written.” It comes from the more common verb *kathav* which is the act of writing. The writing here however is defined by a verb, *kharath*, meaning “to engrave.” This is the only time it is used in the Bible. There is a marvelous contrast to what occurs here and what happens in the Gospel of John 8:2-11 –

Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. ³ Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, ⁴ they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. ⁵ Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But

what do You say?" ⁶ This they said, testing Him, that they might have *something* of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with *His* finger, as though He did not hear.

⁷ So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." ⁸ And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ Then those who heard *it*, being convicted by *their* conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest *even* to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. ¹⁰ When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

¹¹ She said, "No one, Lord."

And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

The same God who wrote with His finger on the stone, engraving it so that it could not be erased, also wrote in the sand that which was soon swallowed up by footfalls and wind. We know what was written in the stone and it is what condemns us. We have no idea what was written in the sand, but it freed a sinner.

On Mount Sinai, God made the first tablets, and He also wrote the law on them. Later, Moses will make the second tablets like the first, but God will still be the One to write on the second set.

It should be especially noted that the term "Lord," meaning Yehovah, is used 14 times in this chapter. The term "Elohim," meaning "God," and referring to the true God, is used only four times. However, two of those times it is in connection with the term "Lord." In other words, Yehovah Elohim, or "the Lord God."

Only in verse 16 does it say, "Elohim" when speaking of the true God, but without the term "Lord." One might think it would say both the tablets and writing were done by the Lord, but it doesn't. Instead, it says only "Elohim." There is obviously a reason for this.

¹⁷ And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp."

Joshua has not been mentioned since Exodus 24:13 –

"So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. ¹⁴ And he said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we come back to you.

Indeed, Aaron and Hur *are* with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them.”¹⁵ Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain.” Exodus 24:13-15

This was over seven chapters and twenty-four sermons ago, and yet, enigmatically, they both left the camp together, to go up the mountain, but then only Moses is mentioned as going up into the mountain. Now, Moses has turned to go back down the mountain, and enigmatically, Joshua is there with him once again.

Joshua is mentioned only seven times in Exodus, five of those times, the verse in which he is mentioned includes the concept of war or fighting in battle. The book of Joshua continues with this theme of him being the one who fights the Lord’s battles. His name means “Yah is Salvation.” The question is, why is he mentioned out of the blue once again, just as he was in Exodus 24? It goes back to what was said in Exodus 17 –

“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Write this *for* a memorial in the book and recount *it* in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.’” Exodus 17:14

Moses, or “He who draws out” has pictured Christ, the one who has drawn out the law; having received the law from God while on the mountain. Joshua is now reintroduced here because the spirit of Amalek has infected the camp.

The name Amalek is derived from the word *am*, or people, and from the word *malaq* which “...means to nip or wring off the head of a bird with or without severing it from the body.” (Abarim)

Thus, they are the “The People Who Wring Off.” They are those who are disconnected from the body and strive to disconnect the body. Aaron has been led astray by this same deceiving spirit by those who would sever the head from the body. However, Joshua, or “Yah is Salvation,” is returning to the camp with Moses where this will be corrected.

Moses, or “He who draws out,” is the one to receive and in turn give the law to the people. Joshua, or “Yah is salvation,” is noted as the one to defend the law and to save his people from the consequences of violations of the law. Both then are pictures of Christ in redemptive history. Joshua’s enigmatic introduction is no mistake. Instead, it is given to form a picture for us.

However, in the historical context, he has been with Moses the entire time, but he was not privy to the conversation which the Lord had with Moses concerning the idolatry which was taking place in the camp below. Because of this, the noise to him is disturbing in that he assumes that a battle is taking place.

¹⁸ **But he said:**

***“It is not the noise of the shout of victory,
Nor the noise of the cry of defeat,
But the sound of singing I hear.”***

Two new words are introduced here, *geburah* or “might,” and *khalushah*, or that of “being overcome.” The second will only be used this one time in the Bible. A battle has its own sound. Some men are on the advance and their sounds rise in strength. Others are on the retreat or worse, and their voice is that of anguish as their strength fades and their lives come to ruin.

In the final clause, the word rendered as “singing” is a repeat of the same verb as in the previous two clauses. The word is *anot*, and it means to sing, shout, or testify. A literal translation would say, “It is not the voice of them who raise the **cry** of victory, nor is it the voice of them who raise the **cry** of defeat – the voice of them who raise a **cry** do I hear” (Pulpit Commentary).

A reason for translating it as “singing” is because Moses had stood above the battle which Joshua engaged in against the Amelekites, and he was familiar with what such a sound was like. He had also been on the shores of the Red Sea after Pharaoh and his armies were defeated, and he had listened to the sounds of Israel as they sang the song he had penned for them.

The sound he now heard was the latter. And yet, a war was also being waged in the camp, but the inhabitants didn’t know it. Instead, they sang as if their victory was complete. The silence of the enemy, however, did not mean his defeat, but theirs. Moses’ words here show us that the voice of those who raised a cry were certainly confused.

What a sad picture of all who would depart from the word of the Lord to that which is false. It appears that there is freedom and victory, but in fact, there is only temporary joy followed up with great anguish. What is perceived to be a point of jubilation turns out to be a point of shame and folly.

*How great are Your deeds O Lord our God!
Wonderful! Splendid! Majestic! We cry to You
Our eyes have seen glory as our feet have trod
You have brought us out to a life brand new*

*But we have turned aside from our pure devotion
And have let our hearts be seduced away from You
To false gods we have danced with emotion
Turn our hearts back to the path that is true*

*And in the place, O Lord, which You have furnished
For Your own dwelling we too shall dwell, leaving never
The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established
The Lord shall reign forever and ever*

III. So Great a Sin (verses 19-24)

¹⁹ So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf *and* the dancing.

The calf and the dancing are both specifically noted, as if being singled out. The last time that *mekholah*, or dance, was mentioned was in Exodus 15 when the people danced before the Lord, celebrating His victory over the armies of Pharaoh.

Here they are dancing to an idol, a calf. The mountain smoked where the Lord had descended, but their eyes were turned away from Him and toward the work of their own hands. It would have been evident, even from some distance, that the Lord was the last thing on their minds. Because of this, the anger which the Lord had previously exhibited before Moses now fills him...

¹⁹ (con't) So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

Later in Deuteronomy 19, Moses will tell the people that he threw the tablets and broke them before their eyes. They must have seen him coming at some point, and jointly looked towards him. At this time, and because of his anger at what he saw, he threw them down in their sight.

This signifies the annulment of the covenant. It was a lesson that in their breach of the words they had uttered, the word of God was made of no effect. But just as important, the breaking of the tablets demonstrated that Moses did not see the law as a law of curses. If he did, he would have brought it to them and held it over them, showing them where their punishment lie. Instead, the law was a gift from the Lord to the people. They were found unworthy of the gift and thus the law was broken.

However, that the law is not a law of curses, it does not mean that the law doesn't *bring* a curse. Paul explains this in Galatians 3. The breaking of the tablets here is never mentioned in the negative by God later. In other words, it is to be considered as an act of justifiable emotion by Moses.

However, and as I have explained in a previous sermon, a picture is being made in the breaking of these tablets. It is a picture of our spiritual state. The laws are permanent, but are capable of being broken. In this, God knew that Moses would break them.

This first set of tablets pictures Adam. The tablets were made by God and engraved by God. Adam was created by God and he was given a law by God, but he broke that law.

The second set pictures Christ. They were made by Moses, but the words were still engraved by God. Jesus came from man, and was born under God's law. He never broke God's law. In both, the law was written by God, but only in Christ does the law remain unbroken. This is why the term "God" was used twice in verse 16. God's law was broken by Adam; it remained unbroken by Christ.

²⁰ Then he took the calf which they had made, burned *it* in the fire, and ground *it* to powder;

This verse logically comes after verse 24 in time, but in terms of importance it logically comes now. The tablets were broken and the next thing to be highlighted is the destruction of that which caused the offense. And so it notes now that the calf was burned and then ground down.

The word "ground" or *takhan*, is introduced here. It will be used eight times and it signifies the act of grinding. What probably is the case is that after the calf was burned, millstones were used to grind up the gold into the finest of powder.

That which was supposedly a "god" was reduced to powder in a common grinding device that was used by the women of the house, the lowest of slaves, or even as in the

case of Samson, a lowly prisoner. After that, it was dispersed where it would not quickly be overlooked.

²⁰ (con't) **and he scattered *it* on the water and made the children of Israel drink *it*.**

Deuteronomy 9:21 tells us that he cast the powder into the brook that descended from the mountain. Their source of drinking water would become the reminder of their sins. Each time they went there, it would be as if they were drinking in a reminder of what they had done to offend the Lord.

The Lord their God, their true Source of life, was at the top of the mountain in smoke and fire. Their false idol, and the source of their shame, was there at the bottom of it drowned in the water they had to come to daily in order to drink and stay alive. What a remarkable contrast between the two!

²¹ **And Moses said to Aaron, “What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?”**

The words of Moses to Aaron show that he holds Aaron as chiefly responsible for what occurred. He was left in charge of the people, and he failed in controlling them. However, there is a hint of excuse allowed for Aaron by asking what the people did to him.

The words “What did this people do to you” are to be taken in a negative sense. Moses knows, before hearing the facts, that Aaron was not the initiator of what has happened. However, if he was weak, he was still responsible, if he was threatened, he was still responsible. But, the fact that Moses asks for a reason allows that Aaron can yet be forgiven of his offense.

²² **So Aaron said, “Do not let the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people, that they *are set on evil*.**

There is a slight note of commendation for Aaron here, not much, but there is a little. He doesn't argue. Rather, he submits to the authority of Moses. Further, he calls him – his younger brother Moses – *adoni*, or “my lord.” This is the only time he is recorded as saying this, and it shows that he knows he is in the weaker position and is liable for the full measure of the consequences to come.

However, that is as far as commendation can go. He next does exactly what Adam did when he was faced with his sin. First Adam blamed the Lord directly and then he kicked the can down the road to Eve. When she got the can, she just kicked it further –

“And He said, ‘Who told you that you *were* naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?’

¹² Then the man said, ‘The woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.’

¹³ And the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What *is* this you have done?’

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”” Genesis 3:11-13

Aaron is found to be no different than his first parents. He even implicitly blames Moses for what occurred. He proceeds with two separate excuses for what happened. The first is not sufficient for the outcome, and the second will be an outright lie which is absurd on the surface.

The first is *ha’am ki bera hu* – “The people, they are in evil.” He says it as if it is their defining characteristic. Not only are they intent on evil, they dwell in evil. It is their nature. So how could he be blamed for this? He implies that Moses already knew this and he shouldn’t have expected any less. The failings of Adam are found reoccurring in Aaron, 28 generations later.

²³ For they said to me, ‘Make us gods that shall go before us; *as for* this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’

This is almost word for word what was said to him by the people. Aaron is precise here, even to the fact that they gave the credit of bringing them out of Egypt to Moses, rather than to the Lord. However, our verses today finish on a sad note; Aaron’s second, and highly lame, excuse...

²⁴ And I said to them, ‘Whoever has any gold, let them break *it off*.’

Aaron fails to give the specifics here. In verse 2, he asked for the golden earrings of the wives, sons, and daughters. As these were the precious items which he thought they would never part with, it shows that he was afraid of admitting that he had misjudged the situation entirely.

In order to not look like even more of a failure than he already was, he omits these words and simply makes it look like a general appeal for gold was made. However, he still uses the rather rare word for “break” which is *paraq*.

Instead of saying, “take them off,” he uses this stronger word which almost gives the idea of violence. He takes credit for challenging the people, but not in the same degree as that which really took place when he was approached by them.

Finally, in verse 2, after asking for the gold, he told them to bring it to him. Here, it says they simply gave it to him. It is as if he had tried to get them to make their god, but they forced the job on him. Poor Aaron... With each step of his excuse, he digs himself a little bit deeper into trouble with the Lord.

^{24 (fin)} **So they gave *it* to me, and I cast it into the fire, and this calf came out.”**

This is the most ridiculous aspect of all. First, he notes that the people brought the gold to him, as if he was now made responsible for it. But being the noble and faithful soul he was, he simply threw the gold into the fire, knowing that nothing could ever come out of it except a blob.

But lo and behold! A calf came out. Thus, Aaron has shown himself to be free from guilt because forces beyond his control fashioned the thing. However, as was seen in verse 4, it was fashioned with an engraving tool. The absurdity of his claim is seen in what was there before him as the people worshipped.

His weakness, disrespect for the Lord, suppression of the truth, and his outright lies have angered the Lord to great measure. In Deuteronomy 9, we will read this –

“And the Lord was very angry with Aaron *and* would have destroyed him; so I prayed for Aaron also at the same time.” Deuteronomy 9:20

Aaron was tested and he failed. Even after his failure, he proved himself unworthy of being restored through his continued negative behavior. However, where his sin did abound, grace towards him will abound much more. Thank God for the grace of God in Christ.

The ongoing lesson of this incident is that each of us is susceptible to failure, but each of us can overcome it as well. Aaron succumbed to it, Moses has thus far prevailed. These

people and the things that they have done have been given to us as examples of what is right and proper to do.

The record of their achievements and failures has been given to us as goals – goals to attain the good, and goals to rise above the bad. How many churches have gone the way of Aaron and have succumbed to the pressures of their surroundings, eventually bowing to the golden calf of idolatry.

As we will see with Aaron, the Lord is gracious and will provide forgiveness, but His patience is not without limits. The seven letters to the seven churches of Revelation give commendation, encouragement, and hope, but they also give warnings and rebuke.

Let us individually, and as a congregation, pay heed to the Lord, be attentive to His word, and never allow anything but the worship of the true God to permeate our gatherings. Let us lift our eyes to the Lord and fix them there so that when He comes, we will stand approved and rewarded for the lives we have lived.

And should there be a person who is listening today that has never discerned the difference between the false gods of the world and the true God who transcends the world, please give me a moment to introduce Him to you...

Closing Verse: *“I will lift up my eyes to the hills—*

From whence comes my help?

² My help comes from the Lord,

Who made heaven and earth.” Psalm 121:1, 2

Next Week: Exodus 32:25-35 *Their test is next, will they score high?* (The Golden Calf – The Testing of the Sons of Levi) (91st Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Testing of Moses

Then Moses pleaded with the Lord his God
And said: “Lord, why does Your wrath burn

Hot against Your people whom You have brought
Out of the land of Egypt, of this help me to learn

With great power and with a mighty hand
This I surely wish to understand

Why should the Egyptians speak, and say
He brought them out to harm them in this place
To kill them in the mountains
And to consume them from the earth's face

Turn from Your fierce wrath; do not let it be spent
And from this harm to Your people, please relent

Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel
Your servants, to whom You swore and did not lie
By Your own self, and said to them; you did tell
I will your descendants as the stars of heaven multiply

And all this land that I have spoken of
A promise that I will not sever
I give to your descendants
And they shall inherit it forever

So the Lord relented from the harm; He bid it adieu
Which He said to His people He would do

And Moses turned, as we understand
And went down from the mountain
And the two tablets of the Testimony were in his hand

The tablets were written on both sides, words so pure
On the one side and on the other written they were

Now the tablets were the work of God, as we understand
And the writing was the writing of God
Engraved on the tablets; given from God's hand

And when Joshua heard the noise
Of the people as they shouted

He said to Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp
Of this he could not have doubted

But he said, in frustration complete
"It is not the noise of the shout of victory
Nor the noise of the cry of defeat
But the sound of singing is heard by me

So it was, as soon as he came near the camp
That he saw the calf and the dancing too
So Moses' anger became hot
And he cast the tablets out of his hands
Yes, out of his hands the tablets he threw

And broke them at the foot of the mountain
His anger came forth as a streaming fountain

Then he took the calf which they had made
Burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder
And he scattered it on the water
And made the children of Israel drink it like golden calf chowder

And Moses said to Aaron
"What did this people do to you?
That you have brought so great a sin upon them?
What was going on in the mind of you?

So Aaron said, yes even so
"Do not let the anger of my lord become hot
Surely these people as you know
That they are set on evil; it hasn't changed in this spot

For they said to me, even thus
"Make us gods that shall go before us

As for this Moses
The man who brought us out of Egypt the land
We do not know what has become of him
Of where he has gone we just do not understand

And I said to them
"Whoever has any gold, let them break it off, so I did shout
So they gave it to me
And I cast it into the fire, and this calf came out

Lord God, the failings of others are the same as our own
Facing our sin is a most difficult thing to do
Help us to each and every sin bemoan
And to walk on the path which is holy and true

Keep us from the offenses which divide
Our devotions to You, turning them aside
Help us to walk always in stride
With Your precepts only, never in haughtiness or pride

Lord God, we thank You for your guiding hand
We thank You for Your Spirit, which You have given to us
Thank You for the promise of a heavenly land
Granted because of what was done by our Lord Jesus

Until the day we are there, O God
Keep us from turning aside from the holy path we should trod

And on this path we will give You all of our praise
Seeking Your face throughout all our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 32:25-35 (THE GOLDEN CALF – THE TESTING OF THE SONS OF LEVI)

Three sets of testing are found in Exodus 32. The first was Aaron's testing. He did poorly. The next was Moses' testing. He did well. The final note of testing is that of the sons of Levi. What is unknown is how many of them participated in Aaron's failure at first. The Bible is silent on this.

However, what is known is how they responded to their testing when confronted with the need to stand up and act on behalf of the Lord. They will do well. In Matthew 21, Jesus gave us this parable –

“But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go, work today in my vineyard.’²⁹ He answered and said, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he regretted it and went.³⁰ Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, ‘I go, sir,’ but he did not go.³¹ Which of the two did the will of *his* father?”

They said to Him, “The first.” Matthew 21:28-31

A shadow of this thought is seen in today's verses. Regardless of what the sons of Levi did at first, they did what was right in the end. They were willing to stop and evaluate the situation around them and then go about doing that which was right to do.

Because of their actions in today's passage, they will be bestowed an honor which singled them out as a special tribe, dedicated to the Lord throughout all their generations. In the Song of Moses, their deeds at this time were remembered –

Text Verse: *“And of Levi he said:*

*‘Let Your Thummim and Your Urim be with Your holy one,
Whom You tested at Massah,
And with whom You contended at the waters of Meribah,
⁹ Who says of his father and mother,
‘I have not seen them’;
Nor did he acknowledge his brothers,
Or know his own children;
For they have observed Your word
And kept Your covenant.’” Deuteronomy 33:8, 9*

Each one of us is bound to falter in our daily lives at one time or another. But this doesn't mean that all is lost. What we do with ourselves after our initial failings often overshadows what we initially messed up. This is true in family matters, in our work environment, and in our walk as Christians before the Lord as well.

Sometimes our failings may even highlight our successes. And so we shouldn't be too hard on ourselves, unless our failings remain failures. If not, then let us use the lessons we learn to continuously improve ourselves and to do that which is morally right as we walk in the presence of the Lord each day.

The lesson of the golden calf is one which still hangs over Israel to this day. A friend of mine was reading this very passage at the same time that I was typing these sermons. She said, "How could they have done this after all the Lord had done for them; after all they had seen and experienced."

My answer was that Israel is just a microcosm of the world at large. We have seen God's hand do the miraculous both in His word and in our lives. We have seen the ancient promises fulfilled, even during our lifetime, and yet we fail just as Israel failed. But we can overcome our failures if we look to the Lord and to His honor in our lives. This is a lesson which is to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Testing of the Sons of Levi (verses 25-29)

²⁵ Now when Moses saw that the people *were* unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to *their* shame among their enemies),

The word for "unrestrained" which is found twice in this verse is *para*. It is from an unused root meaning "to loosen." One can get the mental picture that the people were simply loosed, like wild oxen, to dance about in a completely unrestrained manner. They were running amok and out of control.

This word is found only 16 times and 6 of them, more than any other book in the Bible, are found in the Proverbs. One proverb which fits what occurs here at Sinai is found in Proverbs 29 –

"Where *there is* no revelation, the people **cast off restraint**;
But happy *is* he who keeps the law." Proverbs 9:18

Solomon may have been reading this account in Exodus and contemplating what occurred here when he wrote this particular proverb. This word is variously translated here. Other versions say running wild, out of control, broken loose, were naked, were stripped, and unbridled.

Those translations which say “stripped” or “naked” may be taken literally, as if the people had actually torn off their clothes and committed outright indecency, or it may be taken figuratively in that they left themselves naked and exposed. If so, then their enemies would have the ability to overtake and destroy them. This is most likely the true sense as the same word is used that way in 2 Chronicles 28 –

“For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he **had made** Judah **naked** and had completely rebelled against the LORD.”

-2 Chronicles 28:19, 20

Sounds like our president today! Judah’s morals degraded so greatly that they became naked and exposed to their enemies. Such is the pattern of rebellion against God. We have failed to learn from the past, and we now face the same state of moral decline and nakedness.

As seen in the last passage where Joshua was noted, the enemies of God, represented by Amalek, would be the most likely to take advantage of this naked state. Whether it was the spirit of Amalek within the camp, or the actual group of Amelekites who could view the open and exposed flanks of Israel, the people had left themselves in a state which was unacceptable.

The word translated as “to their shame” is a verb, *shimtsah*. It is only found here in the Bible, and it means scornful whispering (of hostile spectators), and thus “shame.” It is the same as a rare noun, *shemets*, meaning “to whisper.”

The idea is that God’s people had so degraded themselves that their enemies had opportunity to scornfully whisper about them. In turn, their actions would then reflect on the Lord. To bring shame upon self is to bring shame upon one’s God. This is evident every time a pastor, preacher, priest, or pope acts in a disgraceful manner. The God they profess is maligned along with them.

But this is not limited to clergy alone. Anyone who claims to be a follower of the Lord will bring disgrace upon Him when they act in an unrestrained manner. We need to

remember always that our actions don't just harm us. Family, friends, congregations, and above all the name of our God, all are affected by our immoral behavior.

²⁶ then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp,

In the Bible, the *shaar* or "gate" of a camp, town, or city, was the place of judgment. It is where the elders would congregate to decide matters and to determine laws and their enforcement. This camp, despite being just that – a camp – was set up as a city, with a makeshift barrier around it and points of access. It is certain that there were at least two, and maybe several, points of access from the wording of the next verse.

This was probably the principle gate where Moses now stood, maybe the camp was aligned to face Sinai. Whatever the case, a judgment was now to be rendered at the place of judgment.

^{26 (con't)} and said, "Whoever *is* on the Lord's side—*come to me!*"

The Hebrew basically says, "Who for Yehovah? And come to me!" In verse 5, upon seeing the golden calf, Aaron had said, "Tomorrow *is* a feast to the Lord." He thus equated the golden calf with the Lord, and the people had acknowledged it as such. Now what is happening is that a divide is being set. Those in the camp who were feasting to the calf had set up their standard of who the Lord was to them. Moses now sets up the unseen Lord in opposition to them. By standing in the gate of the camp, he was calling out for those who were faithful to come outside the camp as an act of declaring themselves sanctified for the service of the Lord. This is similar to the thought of Hebrews 13 –

"Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. ¹³ Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach." Hebrews 13:12, 13

Were there any in the camp who were willing to sanctify themselves to the Lord by acknowledging that He was not reflected in the idol, but rather in the commandments which had preceded the idol? This is what he calls out for.

^{26 (con't)} And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him.

As was seen in verse 3, and at many other times throughout Scripture, not every "every" means every and not all "all's" mean all. In the case of "all the sons of Levi," it is

speaking of a greater portion of them. It can be inferred from verse 27, that there were Levites who didn't come to the side of the Lord.

However, those who did probably came first out of loyalty to Moses, and thus the brotherhood of the tribe itself. This deep-seated loyalty can be traced all the way back to the account of Genesis 34 where Simeon and Levi both defended the honor of the family against the rape of their sister Dinah.

Moses, calling for the honor of the Lord, then stirred up that same loyalty in his brothers who quickly came to his side. Whether any or all of them had been a part of the feast is not the consideration here. What is being considered is their willingness to turn from the crowd and to the honor of the Lord. As one turned to Moses, another turned, and then another. Eventually, a great portion of Levi had come to his side.

27 And he said to them, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel:

Moses is speaking as the prophet of God. There is no indication in Scripture that the Lord told him to say this, with the exception of this verse itself. And yet, the silence concerning any condemnation of what follows, and even the approval of it, shows that Moses was speaking as the Lord's prophet. And therefore, what transpires is not to be considered inappropriate, rash, or unauthorized.

27 (con't) 'Let every man put his sword on his side,

The word translated here as "side" is *yarek*, and it properly means "thigh." The swords used would be thigh swords which were small and easily maneuvered in close-quarter fights.

27 (con't) and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp,

Here we see that the camp was set up with multiple entrances. For a tent type of city, it would have been a rather well defended encampment, and it would have had points where the people could quickly go in and out if enemies came to attack them. The verses here show discipline and contemplative arrangement by the leader, meaning Moses.

However, at this time, these gates would not be a place of safety and life for those inside, but rather they would become the place where death came upon them through full and unmerciful force.

²⁷ (con't) **and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.”**

The words here are given as an all-encompassing command. Regardless of how a person was known to one of the Levites, whether through blood relation, close friendship, or nearness as a neighbor, they were to kill and not hold back.

As they are told to go throughout the camp, the idea surely does not mean indiscriminate killing, but rather those who had not stopped their reveling at the return of Moses. Any continued offender would be subject to death. This is certain because out of a group of perhaps two million people, only a small fraction will actually die.

The obvious purpose of this command is to stay the wrath of the Lord against a greater destruction of life. This is seen at other times in the Bible. The zeal for the Lord, and the taking of action in regards to His wrath, is what saves the people from greater wrath. Each of these precepts is seen again in Numbers 25 –

“Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. ²They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. ³So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel.

⁴Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the Lord, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel.’

⁵So Moses said to the judges of Israel, ‘Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor.’

⁶And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who *were* weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. ⁷Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw *it*, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; ⁸and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel. ⁹And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand.” Numbers 25:1-9

²⁸ **So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses.**

Of this, Matthew Henry states –

“Those are marked for ruin who persist in sin: those who in the morning were shouting and dancing, before night were dying. Such sudden changes do the judgments of the Lord sometimes make with sinners that are secure and jovial in their sin.” Matthew Henry

What is important to understand here is that a type of amnesty was offered to all people with the words of verse 26. When Moses called out, “Whoever *is* on the Lord’s side—*come* to me!” it meant that those who came to him had been obedient, and for any who had not, their guilt remained. The only people who were actually not guilty were these faithful Levites. All others were rendered guilty by association, if nothing else.

²⁸ (con’t) **And about three thousand men of the people fell that day.**

The number to die in comparison to the number in the camp is exceedingly small. Though all bore the guilt implicitly, only 3000 died. However, it was a sufficient amount to demonstrate that the Levites had been faithful to the task to which they had been called.

For whatever reason, the Latin Vulgate of this verse reads 23,000 people were killed, that along with another Catholic version, the Douay-Rheims both state this without any textual support. They are in error and need a red letter correction penned in here.

²⁹ **Then Moses said, “Consecrate yourselves today to the Lord,**

The words here, *v’yomer moshe milu yedkem hayom l’Yehovah* literally say, “and said Moses fill your hands today to Yehovah.” The idea of filling the hand brings to mind that of consecration, just as when the priests would fill their hands with the ordination sacrifices, thus consecrating themselves to the Lord.

The deed of the Levites was considered as such a filling of the hand. They had filled their hand with the sword of the Lord, and they had then used that sword to avenge the honor of the Lord. Thus their actions were considered as acts of consecration. It is exactly what was seen in the passage from Numbers concerning Phineas. After his noble deed, this is recorded –

“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ¹¹ ‘Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. ¹² Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; ¹³ and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.’” Numbers 25:10-13

The destruction of the enemies of the Lord is called a sacrifice elsewhere in Scripture, thus, their deed is considered as if a sacrifice which fills the hand. In such a sacrifice, there is something which is then returned upon the person...

²⁹ (con’t) **that He may bestow on you a blessing this day,**

The opposite of a curse is a blessing. The blessing to be bestowed upon Levi for their zeal will be the distinction of a people who are set apart to serve the priests in Israel. What has occurred here is the reversal of a curse. As I said earlier, Simeon and Levi had defended the honor of the family when their sister Dinah had been raped. However, Jacob saw this as a reason to curse their zeal. On his deathbed, he pronounced these words over them –

“Simeon and Levi *are* brothers;
Instruments of cruelty *are in* their dwelling place.
⁶ Let not my soul enter their council;
Let not my honor be united to their assembly;
For in their anger they slew a man,
And in their self-will they hamstrung an ox.
⁷ Cursed *be* their anger, for *it is* fierce;
And their wrath, for it is cruel!
I will divide them in Jacob
And scatter them in Israel.” Genesis 49:5-7

In Levi’s zeal, he had violated the precepts of truth and justice in regards to a false connection to obtaining a blood relationship through the covenant of circumcision. Now the descendants of Levi had restored truth and justice, and had upheld the covenant at Sinai by avenging the Lord against their own blood relationships. Thus, their curse had been changed into a blessing.

Both Simeon and Levi would still be divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel, but for the Levites it would be in a positive sense. Whereas Simeon would scatter into obscurity in Judah, Levi would continue to be held in high honor in Israel. Even to this day, the name of Levi remains well-known. Nobody wears Simeon blue jeans, do they? But Levi's are the standard.

²⁹ (con't) **for every man has opposed his son and his brother."**

Of these words, the Geneva Bible says –

"In revenging God's glory we must have no partiality to person, but lay aside all carnal affection." Geneva

This tenet remains unchanged. To what point will you be willing to stand for the honor of the Lord? What will you do if your son or daughter tells you they are a homosexual? What will you do if your brother joins a cult? When will you say, "I'm going to ignore this part of the Bible because it conflicts with my interpersonal relations?" Be prepared now to stand and defend the honor of the Lord – at any and all costs.

How high will you hold up the honor of the Lord?

To what level will you go to defend it before another?

How precious to you is His sacred word?

Will you stand against your friend, or even against your brother?

How sacred is to you the faith that you profess

And how willing are you to stand upon every precept

What if your life is threatened? Will you still confess?

Or in your resolve will the Lord faltering detect?

Be steadfast in your proclamation

Be willing to stand for the Lord before any and all

Be one of the greats in your generation

When the times of testing come, be sure not to hesitate or stall

II. Accursed from Christ (verses 30-33)

³⁰ **Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin.**

After the slaying of the people by Levi, even on the next day, Moses spoke to the people concerning what had occurred. His words, “You have committed a great sin” follow on from what was said in Exodus 20, at the time of the giving of the law. At that time, there was the great display of thunderings, flashes, the blast of the trumpet, and smoke. The people then asked that the Lord would no longer speak to them lest they die. Moses’ response was –

“Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.” Exodus 20:20

They had forgotten this, and they had, in fact, committed a great sin, directly against the laws found in the Ten Commandments. The word “You” is emphatic. “**You** people have committed a great sin.” Because of this, Moses’ next words are given...

³⁰ (con’t) **So now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.”**

Of these words, several scholars state pretty much what Charles Ellicott says –

“When Moses had, on first hearing of God’s intention to destroy the people, interceded for them (Exodus 32:11-13), his prayers had received no direct answer—he had been left in doubt whether they were granted or no. Having now put an end to the offence, and to some extent punished it, he is bent on renewing his supplications, and obtaining a favourable reply.”

This is incorrect. Verse 14 shows that the Lord relented against destroying all of the people during his testing of Moses. Therefore, Moses’ ascent to the Lord now is not one of seeking His wrath to be stayed. It is a different level of restoration which he seeks.

The people have nullified the covenant through their deeds. They are, in essence, cut off from being the people of the Lord. This is what Moses is looking to restore. When Peter betrayed Christ, he received pardon for that betrayal in the death of Christ. However, he was not restored to his position as an apostle until later, on the shores of the sea of Galilee.

Israel has received general pardon from God for their idolatry; they will not be destroyed. However, their sin has separated them from their God as to being counted as the people of the Lord; His representative nation. This is the atonement which Moses will seek. He will now act as the mediatorial priest for Israel.

It is the greatest such act recorded of him. In the future, with the construction of the tabernacle and the service of the law, this duty will be conducted by Aaron and his descendants after him. That they have lost their status as the Lord's people is now seen in the words of the next verse...

³¹ Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold!"

After ascending the mountain once again to seek the Lord, Moses begins his petition with the word *an-na*. It is a contraction of two other words, *ahava*, meaning "love," and *na*, meaning "please." In essence, "I beg of you."

After this, he does not say, "Your people" as he did in verse 11. He says "these people." They have distanced themselves from the Lord by the worship of a false god which they called "the Lord." It has removed from them the position which they had been accepted to in the ratification of the covenant in Exodus 24.

As a further stress, Moses says that the people have made *elohe zahav*, "gods of gold." The plural is given for the singular to show the utterly contemptible nature of what had occurred. It is comparable to us saying, "He is engaged in sins of the flesh" when speaking of any illicit behavior a person may have been caught in. Moses has laid bare the *situation*, and now seeks for a sign of mercy and *restoration* concerning what has transpired...

³² Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—

This phrase is what is known as an aposiopesis. It is the sudden cutting off a speech to make a point. One must insert a thought, guessing what the rest of the phrase should be. Normally the continuation is obvious. In this case, it would be something like, "If you will forgive their sin, then great..." However, those words are left off in order to make the contrasting statement more poignant...

³² (con't) but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written."

The words here are often taken to unintended extremes, even to the point of saying that people can lose their salvation and that this is a proof of it. This is not what this is speaking of, and the context here has nothing to do with the context of salvation after the cross of Christ.

The “book which you have written” is the book of the living. The idea is similar to that of a registry of people in any city. There are those who are alive and who are thus accounted on those roles for all of the purposes of the living. These can include school, taxes, being drafted – whatever.

In the case of Israel, there was a book of the living for those who are a part of the covenant people. This was agreed to in Exodus 24. The people were inscribed in the book as subjects of the kingdom. It could even be that it was compiled during Moses’ 40 days on the mountain while receiving the details of the previous chapters.

To not have their sins forgiven means that they would be blotted out of that book. It would then mean that they would have no inheritance in the land of Canaan to which they were headed. This is what Moses has in view as he petitions the Lord.

Moses has tied himself to his people. They are either the people of the Lord, or he desires to be counted among them when they are no longer His people. He is expressing his highest desire that they remain the people of the Lord, despite having broken the covenant. John Lange details this –

“He would rather be blotted, with the people, out of the book of life, of theocratic citizenship, than without the people to stand in the book alone. As mediating priest he has come as far as to the thought of going to destruction *with* the people, but not *for* them.” John Lange

There are quite a few verses in Scripture which point to this idea of inclusion in the theocratic citizenship of the Lord. Two of them will help explain what is going on –

“Let them be blotted out of the book of the living,
And not be written with the righteous.” Psalm 69:28

“And it shall come to pass that *he who is* left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem.”

-Isaiah 4:3

This is an earthly kingdom leading to the Messiah. In Christ’s coming, the kingdom moves into a new phase where the Mediator will not be just willing to go to destruction *with* the people, but *for* them. In His act, the true book of life is seen and realized. When one puts their faith in Christ, receiving Him as Savior, they become a part of His eternal theocratic rule. Revelation says –

“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” Revelation 3:5

Paul shows us the state of those who have rejected this spiritual kingdom of Christ. It is a state of being accursed and cut off from God. In his love for his people, we find words reminiscent of those of Moses –

“I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, ² that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, ⁴ who are Israelites, to whom *pertain* the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service *of God*, and the promises; ⁵ of whom *are* the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ *came*, who is over all, *the* eternally blessed God. Amen.” Romans 9:1-5

In Moses, there is a petition for “grace or judgment.” In Christ, there is the realization of, “Through judgment the highest grace” (Lange). Paul could not seek the first for his people collectively, and so they are obligated to seek the latter individually.

*Gods of gold fashioned with our hands
We pray for them to save, but they do not hear
Gods of gold, it seems no one understands
Instead of life and peace, they bring only death and fear*

*Lord, forgive our hearts and turn us back to You
Give us wisdom to seek out that which is right
Help us to be ever faithful and true
And to pursue only Jesus with all of our might*

*Let our names be inscribed forever in Your book
Through Christ’s shed blood alone do we overcome
Towards heaven’s riches forever shall we look
To no more gods of gold will our hearts succumb*

III. Promises and Punishment (verses 33-35)

³³ And the Lord said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.

Cambridge states, “Jehovah replies that He will blot out of His book not the righteous, but those only who have sinned against Him.” However, there is the truth recorded later in Romans that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (3:23) Further, Romans says, “there is none righteous, no, not one” (3:10).

In Ezekiel 18, it twice says, “The soul who sins shall die.” It is certain that Moses sinned, and Moses died. Further, Moses could not die for the sins of others. The Bible makes it known that such a vicarious punishment is unacceptable.

And yet, we as Christians can rightly make the assumption that though Moses died, he is also considered a righteous saint, along with many others of the Old Testament. And so how can we reconcile these two contrasting thoughts – that of being blotted out if a soul has sinned against the Lord, and that of being considered righteous before the Lord?

The answer, as always, comes down to faith. Faith in God’s provision, which is Christ, is what brings a person to the Throne of God. This is why Hebrews 11 highlights the saints of old and proclaims that they were deemed acceptable to God. It was by faith in what lie ahead.

Only in Christ is there found One who never sinned. And yet He died. However, it was not for His sins, but for the sins of others. Only in Christ is a vicarious punishment deemed acceptable. The Bible shows us such marvelous truths!

In the immediate context though, Moses is being told that the one who has sinned against the Lord will be blotted out of the book. This is referring to the sin of the golden calf and the book of the theocratic rule which is to be realized in the land of Canaan.

Those who failed to live by faith, and instead trusted in the work of their hands, would not receive the promised inheritance. This is seen in the words of the next verse...

³⁴ Now therefore, go, lead the people to *the place* of which I have spoken to you.

It is the promised inheritance, the land of Canaan, which is being dealt with – life in Canaan under the theocratic rule of the Lord. Moses is instructed to lead the people there in fulfillment of the promise which was made.

³⁴ (con't) **Behold, My Angel shall go before you.**

There are two views on what these words mean. Is “the Angel” referred to here a created being, or is it referring to the Angel of the Lord who is Christ?

These words are very similar to Exodus 23:20 which was speaking of the Lord. However, based on the words of the next chapter, most scholars see this angel here is not the Lord, but a created angel. In the next chapter, it will say –

“Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you *are* a stiff-necked people.” Exodus 33:3

For this reason, it seems that this is not the Angel of the Lord, but a created angel. However, the words “in your midst” are the antithesis of the words of Exodus 33:7 –

“Moses took his tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of meeting. And it came to pass *that* everyone who sought the Lord went out to the tabernacle of meeting which *was* outside the camp.”

The Lord was no longer *in the midst* of the congregation, but a far way off. Thus, there is no reason to assume that this verse is not still the Angel of the Lord, meaning Christ. This is further supported by the term *malaki* or “My Angel,” rather than merely *malak*, or “an angel.” Only the “angel” of verse 33:2 is not speaking of the Angel of the Lord. This appears to be borne out in the chiasm which spans these chapters.

³⁴ (con't) **Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin.”**

The words here in Hebrew read, “when I visit, then I will visit on them their sin.” The word is *paqad*. It comes from a root which means to visit, either with friendly or hostile intent. In the case of this visitation, it will be with intent which is hostile. Those who sinned and were spared by the sword will still not find relief.

³⁵ **So the Lord plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made.**

The chapter ends with these sobering words. The Lord promised to visit the people with punishment and these words confirm that this took place. The word used here means to

strike. It can be in a plague or some other way. Nothing more is said about what occurred in their being stricken. Nor is there any note of those that repented and mourned over what they had done.

Instead, the verse is left up to the divine discretion of the Lord and to His righteous justice to decide what occurred with each person who sinned. The congregation was spared, but the soul that sinned was brought into judgment. What is to be considered of particular note is the contrast between this account today and that of what occurred in Acts 2.

At Sinai, which according to Galatians 4 symbolizes the temple in Jerusalem, the law was received and it was written on tablets of stone. Those tablets were given to Moses but were broken at the base of the mountain because of the people's turning from the Lord to a false God. After this, 3000 people *died* because of their sin. In Acts 2, we read this –

“And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation.’⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*.⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Acts 2:40-42

There at the temple in Jerusalem, the word of the Lord was again given, but this time it was written on the tablets of the hearts of the people, as Paul calls the work of the Spirit in 2 Corinthians 3:3. At that time, 3000 people were *saved* because of their faith in Christ.

The two accounts are given to show the superiority of the fulfilled law in Christ to the giving of the law by Moses. One was written on stone and it leads to death. The other is written on the heart and it leads to life.

It was a perverse generation who followed after the golden calf, having rejected the Lord on the mountain at Sinai, and it was a perverse generation who rejected Christ and sought to seek their own righteousness apart from Him. For those 3000 who died at Sinai, they died *in sin* because of their deeds. For the 3000 who received Jesus in Jerusalem, they died *to sin* because of His deeds.

For all the rest, in both places, and for all who have come since, the truth is that the soul who sins shall die. The question for each of us is, “When the Lord comes to visit us for

punishment, will it be punishment *in us* for the sins we have committed in this life, or will it have been *in Christ* for those same sins?" These are the only two options available to man.

If our sins have been judged in Christ, our names are written in the book of life and they shall never be blotted out; we have overcome. If our sins have not been dealt with through Him, then another fate awaits –

“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵ And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

-Revelation 20:11-15

Of this passage today, Matthew Henry says –

“But having that mind which was in Christ, he was willing to lay down his life in the most painful manner, if he might thereby preserve the people. Moses could not wholly turn away the wrath of God; which shows that the law of Moses was not able to reconcile men to God, and to perfect our peace with him. In Christ alone, God so pardons sin as to remember it no more.” Matthew Henry

Isn't that the most marvelous news. In Christ, God so pardons sin as to remember it no more! The world doesn't even want to hear about sin. But it is a reality which cannot be denied when considering the holiness of God.

Today many large churches are full of worshippers quite often because the church is geared towards the carnal man. There are promises of health, wealth, and prosperity, but there is no heart for the grace of God which frees us from sin. The sin is passed over, not dealt with.

It is the rare church which is both large and filled with worshippers who praise God not for what He can give us in this life, but what He has given us for eternal life. Sin is not a popular subject, but it is one of the defining subjects of Scripture. If God simply wanted

to plop down prosperity upon our heads, He would have skipped over the brutal death of Christ. But He didn't.

Today, if you are wanting a true and right relationship with Christ, come to the foot of the cross and call out your need for the Savior. After that all else will fall into its proper place. If you have never come to do this, please make today the day...

Closing Verse: *"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* Romans 5:6-8

Next Week: Exodus 33:1-11 *As you all listen, none of you should be bored* (Everyone Who Sought the Lord) (92nd Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Testing of the Sons of Levi

Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained
For Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies
Then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp
And said, "Whoever is on the Lord's side—come to me. Do, please

And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him
And he said to them

Thus says the Lord God of Israel:
"Let every man put his sword on his side
And go in and out from entrance to entrance, as well
Throughout the camp, let these words be applied

And let every man kill his brother
Every man his companion, and every man his neighbor

So the sons of Levi did according to as Moses did say
And about three thousand men of the people fell that day

Then Moses said, yes he did say
“Consecrate yourselves today to the Lord
That He may bestow on you a blessing this day
For every man has opposed his son and his brother according to His word

Now it came to pass on the next day
That Moses to the people said
“You have committed a great sin, in your wicked way
So now I will go up to the Lord instead

Perhaps I can make atonement for your sin
Otherwise you are surely done in

Then Moses returned to the Lord and said
“Oh, these people have committed a great sin
And have made for themselves a god of gold!
Surely your patience is wearing thin

Yet now, if You will forgive their sin – but if not, I pray
Blot me out of Your book which You have written, blot me out today

And the Lord said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against Me
I will blot him out of My book, this is how it shall be

Now therefore, go, lead the people to the place
Of which I have spoken to you
Behold, My Angel shall go before your face

Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for punishment
I will visit punishment upon them for their sin, the debt shall be paid
So the Lord plagued the people because of what they did
With the calf which Aaron made

Here we are Lord, really no different than Israel
We are unrestrained in in our lives each and every day
It is a sad, sad story to tell
But this is humanity’s normal, confused way

Help us to be bold, Lord, when facing sin
To stand against it and to be firm in defending Your glory

While the world continues to spiral its way in
Help us to proclaim to all the wondrous gospel story

For it alone has the power, the lost soul to save
For it alone tells of the precious life You gave

Thank You, O God, for this perfect gift which You have bestowed upon us
Thank You, O God, for our Savior, our Lord, our precious Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 33:1-11

(EVERYONE WHO SOUGHT THE LORD)

The chiasm which spans all of chapter 32 and through most of chapter 34 continues on in this passage. It is bringing us closer to the anchor verse which will come in just one more sermon. Until then, the structure of the chiasm appears to reveal to us the proper placement of the verses which we will look at today.

However, the verses today aren't just a set of verses that need to be properly aligned chronologically into the on-going narrative. They are also verses which show us a snapshot of Israel at several points throughout their history. The people disobey the Lord, the Lord distances Himself from them, but He also makes Himself available to them, at least individually, even if collectively they are out of His favor.

Today's verses show a separation between the Lord and Israel. Today's world shows the same. They are still under the promises of one covenant, while out of the favor of another one. As long as people can understand this, then it makes sense as to why they have remained a people despite their immense disobedience towards Him, and even their outright rejection of Him.

If He were to completely reject them, then His promises to their father's would be voided. This will never happen. An oath of God will never, never fail.

When we see Christians being killed around the world, and especially for those Christians who are facing such persecution, it might seem that God's promises have failed for us. That is, if we look at this world as our promised inheritance. Way too many Christians seem to look at it in that regard.

But there are no enduring promises that we won't face a lifetime full of trouble, pain, persecution, or misery. This is why the Bible notes we live by faith, not by sight. If this world were our true reward, then we might have reason to feel that way. But it is not.

We have a true inheritance that can never be taken away from us. God has spoken this, and it is true. When we get feeling like we may have been forgotten, all we really need to do is look at Israel. They have actively rejected the Lord, and yet He has remained faithful to them because of His former promises.

We have called on Christ, and His word says that because of that we have an eternal inheritance. Just as He has been faithful to unfaithful Israel, He will surely demonstrate the same faithfulness to us because of the sure promises found in Christ.

Text Verse: *In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.*

¹³ In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. Ephesians 1:11-14

These are the verses I send people to, time and again, when they are filled with bad doctrine concerning our inheritance. There is an entire camp of people out there who look at the salvation granted to us as a conditional thing; something we can lose.

However, if there is something that we can do (or not do) in order to lose our salvation, then it is not of grace at all – and it never was. Whether leading up to our salvation or following along after it, if there is something that is required by us, then it is not of grace, but of works.

Further, if we trusted in Christ, believed the word of truth which is the gospel of our salvation, and then were sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee, then what has happened must be eternal. If it was not, then that was 1) a rather crummy guarantee, and 2) God made a mistake.

Such things call into question the workings of God. Let us never presume to do that, even internally as we struggle and doubt our salvation. Today's passage continues to show us that the Lord was still there for Israel. He may have distanced Himself from them, but He has not left them, nor forsaken them. Neither will He do this to you. These are truths which are found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Stiff-necked People (verses 1-3)

¹Then the Lord said to Moses, "Depart *and* go up from here,

John Lange says, “This is one of the most mysterious chapters in all the three books of the covenant.” He is right. It is extremely hard to follow what is going on, and where the words belong in the narrative. However, it is not impossible to determine.

The words of chapter 33 and part of 34 are an expansion of what was said when Moses went back up the mountain after the narrative of the golden calf. This is similar, for example, to Genesis 2 being an insert into the sixth day record of Genesis 1. After the debacle of the golden calf, Moses ascended the mountain again where we read this –

Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses said to the people, “You have committed a great sin. So now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.”³¹ Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, “Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold!³² Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.”

³³ And the Lord said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.³⁴ Now therefore, go, lead the people to *the place* of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin.”

-Exodus 32:30-34

The details which we are seeing in Chapter 33, through verse 9 of chapter 34, chronologically belong between verses 33 and 34 of Chapter 32. The Lord said to Moses that He would blot out of His book the one who sinned against him. This account follows, and then the promise of the final verses of the chapter next are given. Confusing, yes. But it appears logical and orderly when laid out.

For now, Moses is told to “Depart and go up from here” with the abrupt words *lek aleh mizzeh*.

What appears to be the case is that everything promised to Moses on Mount Sinai which encompass all of the details of the construction of the tabernacle, and everything associated with it, was suspended. Moses was given all of those instructions with the anticipation that it would be built, and that the Lord would dwell in their midst as they traveled.

However, now they are being directed to simply go up from their place of encampment. This is based on a completely different covenant made at a completely different time,

meaning at the time of Abraham. As for the covenant which was just made since their arrival at Sinai, that was to be disregarded; it was voided by the golden calf.

^{1 (con't)} **you and the people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt,**

The words again reflect the sentiment that they are not the covenant people. The Lord says, as He did in verse 32:7, that they are the people Moses brought out of the land of Egypt. The Lord has distanced Himself from the people due to their disgraceful conduct.

^{1 (con't)} **to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your descendants I will give it.'**

Regardless of the status of the covenant between the Lord and the people, the issue of the inheritance of the land does not change. It was firmly resolved while Moses was on Mt. Sinai with the Lord the previous time. When the matter of the covenant violation arose, the following exchange came about between the two –

And the Lord said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and indeed it *is* a stiff-necked people! ¹⁰ Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation.” ¹¹ Then Moses pleaded with the Lord his God, and said: “Lord, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹² Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, ‘He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. ¹³ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit *it* forever.’” ¹⁴ So the Lord relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people. Exodus 32:9-14

The people, despite their rebellion would be the particular line of descendants who would receive the promises made to their fathers before them.

² **And I will send My Angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.**

This is the same general promise as in Exodus 23:23 which said –

“For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off.”

This same promise concerning these inhabitants will be repeated in Exodus 34:11. All three are under the same context. However, the order of the names varies in all three. The Canaanite group moves within each verse, but the other four – the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites stay in the same order. No idea why, just thought I would share that with you.

Amorites Hittites Perizzites Canaanites Hivites Jebusites.
Canaanite Amorite Hittite Perizzite Hivite Jebusite.
Amorite Canaanite Hittite Perizzite Hivite Jebusite.

Also, the Hebrew does not say “My Angel.” Instead it simply says “angel.” The word “my” is inserted by the translators. This then leaves in doubt who exactly is going to lead them.

³ Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey;

This is the fourth of 20 times that this expression will be used in the Bible. The last time will be in Ezekiel 20 where it is also called “the glory of all lands.” A land flowing with milk and honey implies richness and fertility.

Milk comes from cows and so it means there will be abundant pasture lands. Honey comes from bees which pollinate flowers and so it implies all sorts of fruit trees, herbs, and flowers.

Further the term “a land flowing with milk and honey” has a spiritual connotation. It isn’t just speaking of the physical abundance but also of spiritual abundance. It is the land of God’s word and the people through whom that word has come.

The word of God is said to be sweeter than honey. It is also equated with milk which nourishes. Thus, this is a reference to that as well. The land would literally flow with milk and honey for sustaining Israel’s physical lives. It would also flow with milk and honey for sustaining their spiritual lives.

At this time, they do not know this, and with the covenant broken, only the first can be assumed. Only in looking back after the fact can we see that both the physical and spiritual aspects of this verse have come about in Israel.

For now, the words are certainly given to shame the people for their ingratitude towards the already abundant provision of the Lord. He has given them Manna and water from the rock. He has given them meat. He has protected them and made a covenant with them.

Despite all of this, and so much more, they rejected Him. And yet he directs them to go up to the land, flowing with milk and honey, which was set apart for them.

³ (con't) **for I will not go up in your midst,**

This verse doesn't say that the Lord will not go up with them. It says the He will not go up *b'qirbekha*, or "in the middle of you." The word *qerev* gives the idea of the inward part. The fact that He just said, "I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite" shows that He intended to go ahead of them, just not among them. And there is a reason why He intends to not go in their midst...

³ (con't) **lest I consume you on the way,**

Elsewhere, the Lord is called a consuming fire. That which He does not purify with His presence is burnt up in it. The Lord says that He would not go up in their midst because if He did, it would be catastrophic for them. And the reason is expressly given...

³ (con't) **for you *are* a stiff-necked people."**

This is now the second time that this term, "stiff-necked" is used in the Bible. It is a metaphor which is normally explained as being obstinate, but it is more than that. It defines a perverse people who want to behave in a way which is both unacceptable and unreasonable, even in spite of the consequences they will face.

*You want a home, a place where you can stay
Go up there and make it ready on your own
I shall not be with you lest I consume you on the way
Don't weep to Me; nor to Me shall you moan*

*You have forgotten Me and so now I have let go of you
There will be a distance between the two of us
There is nothing more that You can do
Unless You call upon My Son; upon the Lord Jesus*

*You want a home, and it is waiting there for you
One that He alone has made and can endow
If You call on Him, He is faithful and He is true
You can come home through Him, this I do avow*

II. From Mount Horeb (verses 4-6)

⁴ And when the people heard this bad news, they mourned,

What is implied is that Moses went back down the mountain at this time. The events are still a part of the insert between verses 33 and 34 of the previous chapter, and they will continue to be so throughout chapter 33. Like I said, this is an insert chapter which fills in details which bring about a resulting action. It is the same as the details of Genesis 2 filling in what was missing in Genesis 1 and which led to a resulting action.

Having gone down to the people, he told them what the Lord had said. In His rejection of them because of the violation of the covenant, and His words that He would not go in their midst, it brought about a great sense of mourning. The word used is *abal*. It is only the second time that it has been used in the Bible.

To get the sense of their state, we can go to the first use of the word. It was in Genesis 37 when Jacob heard of the death of Joseph –

And he recognized it and said, “*It is my son’s tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces.*” ³⁴ Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and **mourned** for his son many days. Genesis 37:33-34

The grieving of Israel was profound over the bad news they had been given. It is a pattern which will be seen again in their history. Only when the knowledge of their sin is highlighted do they realize their horrible plight and mourn over their actions. An account, not too distant in their future will indicate the same type of mourning.

The people will refuse to enter Canaan when the twelve spies return with a bad report about the land. They will face the Lord’s sentence concerning their punishment and the same type of mourning will be mentioned.

⁴ (con’t) **and no one put on his ornaments.**

As a sign of their mourning, the people refrained from adorning themselves. The Hebrew reads “and no man put on his ornaments.” The masculine would include all people. The word for ornaments is introduced into the Bible here, *adi*. It is from the verb *adah* which means “to adorn.” The ornaments could indicate finery, an outfit, something worn on the head, etc.

Wearing ornaments today is no different than back then. They bring attention to oneself. They highlight and intensify the perception of a person. In not wearing ornaments then, it is a sign that a person wants no such attention and is thus in a state of grief. This is seen, for example, in the book of Jonah –

“So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. ⁶Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat in ashes.” Jonah 3:5, 6

⁵ For the Lord had said to Moses, “Say to the children of Israel, ‘You *are* a stiff-necked people.’

The tense of the words of this verse isn’t completely clear. Some scholars see this as a statement which followed, rather than preceded, the people’s repentance. The dolts at Cambridge find another answer by saying that –

“The people are here told to do what they have already done” which is “a clear proof that two narratives have been combined.”

In other words, they say that there are multiple authors who have been combined into one narrative. Were that so, they would have made a clearer, not a less clear transition.

It is probably correct that these words follow the people’s repentance. Because of this, the next clause is not a threat of destruction, but a repetition of what has already been said as an explanation as to why He would not be in the midst of them...

^{5 (con’t)} I could come up into your midst in one moment and consume you.

Were the Lord to come into their midst, even for a moment, He might be inclined to consume them. The word *rega*, or “moment” is introduced here. It is from the verb *raga* which gives the idea of suddenness. It thus indicates the wink of an eye or

something instantaneous. It is used twice in a affectionate passage from Isaiah when speaking of the Lord's tenderness towards Israel –

“For a mere **moment** I have forsaken you,
But with great mercies I will gather you.

⁸With a little wrath I hid My face **from you for a moment**;
But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you,”
Says the Lord, your Redeemer. Isaiah 54:7, 8

⁵ (con't) **Now therefore, take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do to you.”**

If the first clause came after the repentance of the people, then the words here would naturally follow in that same vein. And so instead of these words being a command to take off their ornaments, they are a command to lay them aside altogether.

The word is *yarad* and it means “down.” Therefore, it is an admonition to leave the ornaments off entirely. In obedience to this, and in that humbled state, the Lord would decide what He would do with the people. This is likely from the next verse...

⁶**So the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by Mount Horeb.**

The words here say that they stripped off their ornaments “*from* Mount Horeb.” John Lange says this means, “on account of.” But even more fully than that is that the people stripped off their ornaments *from that time on*. Because of what occurred, they left them off entirely and kept them off. They remained in a perpetual state of penitence. What is most interesting is that the term Horeb has not been used since Exodus 17:6. Since then, the term Sinai has been used eight times. Then, the term Horeb won't be used again until Deuteronomy 1:2, but the term Sinai will be used numerous times by then.

Although they are used almost synonymously, because Horeb and Sinai are used to indicate the same place, the words are selected to be used for different reasons when they are, in fact, used. Horeb means “Arid” or “Desert.” Sinai means “Bush of the Thorn.”

The different names are used to show different aspects of what is going on. When Sinai is used, it is normally referring to the on-going redemptive workings of God for His

people. When Horeb is used, it indicates the total dependence of the people on the provision of the Lord, or it indicates that which has been accomplished by Him already.

Here in the desert, the people need the Lord to sustain them. They have fallen out of favor with Him, and so Horeb is the right and proper term to use for their needy condition. From Horeb on, they have put away their ornaments in seeking the favor of the Lord.

*The Lord is righteous, and it is we who have strayed
He gave us laws with which to guide our ways
But we turned from them and our hearts were swayed
And now we live out saddened, miserable days*

*Return to us, O Lord, heal our erring ways
Grants us again Your presence in our midst
Where we can lavish upon You all of our praise
Let go of Your anger, and loosen your terrible fist*

*Lord God, to You our eyes are turned
And to You our hearts shall be directed always
For closeness with You our desire has burned
It shall never be quenched, even for eternal days*

III. The Tent of Meeting (verses 7-11)

⁷ Moses took his tent and pitched it outside the camp,

This verse now explains the separation of the Lord from the people. He would not dwell in their midst at this time, but rather a far distance from them in order to not consume them in His wrath. The Hebrew says *ha'ohel*, or “the tent.” The definite article is thus believed to indicate Moses’ personal tent. Moses’ tent was probably the finest in the camp and thus he moved it out from the camp in order to meet with the Lord.

^{7 (con't)} far from the camp,

The term “far from the camp” implies quite a distance. When the Ark went before the people as they crossed into the Land of Promise in Joshua 3, the distance between the

people and the ark was 2000 cubits, or 3000 feet. It is quite a distance, and is probably comparable to the distance Moses was from the camp itself.

⁷ (con't) **and called it the tabernacle of meeting.**

As has been typical with the KJV and the NKJV, they incorrectly call this “the tabernacle of meeting” instead of the “tent of meeting.” It is the same word as was just used at the beginning of the verse – *ohel*. It means “tent.” The word for “tabernacle” is *mishkan*. The KJV gets two demerits and the NKJV gets one.

⁷ (con't) **And it came to pass *that* everyone who sought the Lord went out to the tabernacle of meeting which *was* outside the camp.**

The Lord was not in their midst, but He was not altogether unavailable to the people. They could venture out of the camp to meet with Him if they chose to do so. This precept is similar to the words of Hebrews 13 concerning those who would come to Christ. If the people want to meet with the Lord, they must be willing to do it on His terms –

“Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. ¹³ Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.” Hebrews 13:12, 13

This separation was to be a reminder to them that they were not in favor with the Lord. In order to seek Him, they had to come to Him. The covenant was nullified through their actions and thus it was up to them to come humbly out of the camp, bearing the reproach of their actions in order to seek His face once again.

What is of note is that the words “everyone who sought the Lord” implies that not everyone sought the Lord. Some did and some did not. Those who did had to go to where the Lord would meet with Moses, or “He who draws out,” as his name means.

It is to be remembered that these verses are an insert into the ending of Chapter 32. Once the insert is finished, the narrative continued to the end of Chapter 32 with these words –

Now therefore, go, lead the people to *the place* of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for

punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin.”³⁵ So the Lord plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made.

-Exodus 32:34, 35

A time of punishment lies ahead. However, the Lord offers grace before that time comes. He has given grace by leaving their midst and not destroying them. He has given grace by allowing them to come out of the camp to Him. And He has given grace by allowing restoration for those who do seek Him. Thus we see the truth found in Romans 5 –

“Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.” Romans 5:20

And so in this narrative, we actually have a picture of Israel after their collective rejection of Jesus. They had forsaken the Lord and He no longer dwells in their midst. But He has still offered them individual grace before the time of punishment comes, meaning the tribulation period. Any who choose to do so can come outside the camp, bearing His reproach in order to be reconciled to Him.

⁸So it was, whenever Moses went out to the tabernacle, *that* all the people rose, and each man stood *at* his tent door and watched Moses until he had gone into the tabernacle.

This is an obvious sign of respect that is being portrayed here. The tent was not so far off that it could not be seen when Moses entered into it, but it was far off enough so that the people were reminded that the Lord was no longer in their midst.

As he passed through them, they would rise, and during the intervening time until his arrival, they would stand at the door of their tent watching the amazing scene of close and personal fellowship of which they were now denied.

The *pethakh*, or door, is that place which provides access. There seems to be a hint of symbolism here. As the people watched Moses walk towards the Tent of Meeting, they waited and watched at their own door. It was as if they were inviting the Lord to come to them if He so chose.

They were apart from Him and estranged from Him, but they still held out hope that He would make a change and come to them. Their ornaments were put aside and their hearts were being molded for a time of restoration.

And so they waited “until” Moses went into the tent. It was as if they had hoped that maybe he would turn around and rejoin them in the camp. If so, maybe the Lord would come into their midst instead of being separate from them.

Again, it is as if a picture of Israel after Christ’s first advent is being seen here. They rejected the Lord, went out after gods of gold, and found that they had lost His favor. Individually, they could come out to Him, but collectively, He is not there for them.

For the people at Sinai, it will not be until the sanctuary is built that the Lord will again reside in their midst. And it will not be until the time that Christ comes to His temple in Jerusalem that He will once again be in the midst of Israel. The words of Ecclesiastes shout out to us of the repetitive patterns of history –

That which has been *is* what will be,
That which *is* done is what will be done,
And *there is* nothing new under the sun. Ecclesiastes 1:9

Nothing is new. Each thing that comes about is already something that has occurred. God does this so that we can call the past to remembrance and be confident of what the proper course for our future should be.

⁹ And it came to pass, when Moses entered the tabernacle, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood *at* the door of the tabernacle,

Only when Moses was within the tent would the pillar descend and stand at the *pethakh*, or door. The place of access is where the meeting between the two would take place. The divine presence descending there for the people to see was an assertion of the authority of Moses.

Where they were set off from the Lord and considered unacceptable to fellowship with, Moses was given the Lord’s approval that his actions retained the Lord’s favor. By coming in this way, and after Moses was within the door of the tent, there could be no possibility of deception.

The cloud moved according to its own design and apart from any possibility of Moses’ having been behind its movement. Although unstated, it can be inferred that this was a regular occurrence.

Instead of the cloud coming and staying after Moses' first visit, it was what occurred each time Moses went to the tent. When the meeting was over, the cloud probably went back to the top of Sinai. Interestingly, the term "pillar," when speaking of this cloud, has not been seen since Exodus 14:24.

The cloud has been mentioned several times as having been atop the mountain, but the term pillar has not accompanied it since then. The *ammud*, or pillar, comes from the word *amad*, or stand. Thus, in this we get the idea that the standing cloud *stood* at the door of the tent.

⁹ (con't) **and the Lord talked with Moses.**

Once there, it says, "...and talked with Moses." The words "the Lord" are inserted by the translators. The standing cloud is the subject of the verb. It is directly equated with the presence of the Lord. It is how the Lord has manifested Himself to Moses and in the sight of the people.

A cloud is that which covers or conceals a thing. Throughout Scripture, the cloud is used to signify the coming and going of the presence of the Lord. It is this display which the Lord chose to come to Moses in the sight of the people, reminding them that just as He had delivered through the Red Sea and led them in the wilderness to Sinai, He was still there.

They had forgotten Him, even though His presence was in full sight atop Sinai, and now they had to see His presence from a distance as Moses talked and intimately fellowshiped with Him.

¹⁰ **All the people saw the pillar of cloud standing *at* the tabernacle door, and all the people rose and worshiped, each man *in* his tent door.**

This verse leads us to the notion that the cloud didn't just suddenly appear as soon as Moses went into the tent. Instead, the people stood all the time that Moses walked to the tent. Then the people would sit down and wait for the next great thing to occur, the appearing of the cloud.

Once the cloud appeared, the people would rise again and worship, as it says, "each man *in* his tent door." For the fourth time in just three verses, the *pethakh* or door is mentioned. It is as if a stress is being laid on the door of the people to show that they wished that the Lord would come into them.

They worshipped him not in groups, but individually. It was a sign that they would gladly welcome Him in and have Him fellowship with them as well. They had lost His favor and this was their way of begging for that favor to be restored to them once again. For them, that time was gone, but for Moses, it continued on uninterrupted...

¹¹ So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face,

These words are to be taken in the sense of familiarity as they will next be described. The Lord at this time came in the pillar, without discernable face or mouth. Rather, the term *panim el panim*, or “face to face,” means that they had open and free discussion without anything to hinder their words. In essence, the Lord has allowed Moses to speak to Him personally intimately, even...

^{11 (con’t)} as a man speaks to his friend.

When a man speaks to his friend, titles and formalities are set aside. Instead, there is a warmth and a closeness that permeates the conversation. It is the highest note of the character of Moses and the bond between him and his Lord. It is something that very few in the Old Testament ever attained the honor of knowing, even remotely, in comparison to Moses.

^{11 (fin)} And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.

When Moses’s time at the Tent of Meeting was done, he would make the trek back to the camp. This is expected as he would carry the messages of the Lord back, and he would also be needed in the camp for advice and direction over a host of matters. But once again, the enigmatic Joshua shows up out of the blue as he has already done a few times. He is identified in three ways.

- He is Moses’ servant.
- He is the son of Nun.
- He is a young man.

The word for servant means a to minister or serve. He is the one who tends to the needs of Moses as a general’s aide would tend to the needs of his superior. His father’s name, Nun, is introduced into the Bible here. The name comes from the verb *nun* which means

to propagate or increase. It is used only once in the Bible, in a messianic psalm when speaking of the reign of the King –

“His name shall endure forever;
His name **shall continue as** long as the sun.
And *men* shall be blessed in Him;
All nations shall call Him blessed.” Psalm 72:17

And he is lastly noted as a young man. This despite the fact that it says this in Joshua 14:10 –

“And now, behold, the Lord has kept me alive, as He said, these forty-five years, ever since the Lord spoke this word to Moses while Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, here I am this day, eighty-five years old.”

This means that Joshua is now about 38 or 39 years old. Therefore, the term *na'ar*, or young man, is probably being used either in relation to Moses who is over 80, or it is referring to his years of service to the Lord, he being a young man in his time of duties. The name Joshua, or Yehoshua, is a contraction of Yehovah and *yasha*. Thus his name means “Yehovah is salvation.” In this final verse of the day is a picture of the work of the Lord. Moses, or He who draws out” is the one who draws out from the Lord that which is for the people, and from the people that which is for the Lord.

Yehoshua, or the “Lord is Salvation,” remains outside the camp, there at the place where the Lord meets with either the people or the people’s mediator. Either way, the people must come to where he is at. Isaiah 59:1-3 tells the people that –

“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened,
That it cannot save;
Nor His ear heavy,
That it cannot hear.
² But your iniquities have separated you from your God;
And your sins have hidden *His* face from you,
So that He will not hear.
³ For your hands are defiled with blood,
And your fingers with iniquity;
Your lips have spoken lies,
Your tongue has muttered perversity.”

The sins of the people had, in fact, separated them from their God. He was there and willing to save, but the people had to come to Him to be restored to Him. This is the state of Israel today. Most still have not come outside the camp to Him, nor have they come through His Mediator to Him. Instead, they sit at their doors worshipping from afar and are not in His presence.

For the people at Sinai, their time of restoration lies ahead. And for Israel collectively, the same is true. The Lord's hand is not shortened, but the people's unwillingness to allow the outstretched hand to heal them remains an impassable obstacle to their restoration.

Today as we close, I would ask you to remember Israel in your prayers. They will be restored, but of them, who, how, and when is not known to us. Therefore, it is incumbent on us to pray for them, just as any lost souls. They need Jesus and they need to come outside their camp, to where He is, in order to find Him.

And the same may be true of you. Maybe you're listening today and have never raised yourself up and acknowledged Him in your life. If so, you are no closer to God than the worst heathen. But you can get that corrected by a simple acknowledgment of your state and His ability to fix it. Let me explain that to you...

Closing Verse: *"Jacob shall not now be ashamed,*

Nor shall his face now grow pale;

²³ *But when he sees his children,*

The work of My hands, in his midst,

They will hallow My name,

And hallow the Holy One of Jacob,

And fear the God of Israel.

²⁴ *These also who erred in spirit will come to understanding,*

And those who complained will learn doctrine." Isaiah 29:22-24

Next Week: Exodus 33:12-23 *The news is great, in fact for them it will be the best.. (My Presence Will Go With You, And I Will Give You Rest) (93rd Exodus Sermon)*

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Everyone Who Sought the Lord

Then the Lord said to Moses
Depart and go up from here, He did command
You and the people whom
You have brought out of Egypt the land

To the land of which I swore to Abraham
Isaac, and Jacob, saying
"To your descendants I will give it
So to you I am relaying

And I will send My Angel before you
And I will drive out the Canaanite, that's right
And the Amorite and the Hittite too
And the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite

Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey
For I will not in your midst go up with you
Lest I consume you on the way
For you are a stiff-necked people, it is true

And when the people heard this bad news, there at their tents
They mourned, and no one put on his ornaments

For the Lord had said to Moses
"Say to the children of Israel
'You are a stiff-necked people
And you know this very well

I could come up into your midst in one moment
And consume you, so could I do
Now therefore, take off your ornaments
That I may know what to do to you

So, stripped themselves did the children of Israel
Of their ornaments by Mount Horeb, as the record does tell

Moses took his tent and pitched it
Outside the camp, far from the camp he went

And called it the tabernacle of meeting
Yes, this is the name he called this tent

And it came to pass that everyone
Who sought the Lord, so we know
Went out to the tabernacle of meeting
Which was outside the camp, there they did go

So it was, whenever Moses went out
To the tabernacle, that all the people rose
And each man stood at his tent door and watched Moses
Until he had gone into the tabernacle, before they again did repose

And it came to pass, when Moses entered the tabernacle
That the pillar of cloud descended, him to meet
And stood at the door of the tabernacle
And the Lord talked with Moses, in fellowship sweet

All the people saw the pillar of cloud
Standing at the tabernacle door, as we know
And all the people rose and worshiped
Each man in his tent door, it is so

So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face
As a man speaks to his friend, there in that place

And he would return to the camp
But his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man as we know
Did not depart from the tabernacle
He stayed at the tent, even so

Lord God, You are there still
Waiting for Your people to come to You
For each and every one that will
You have promised them something new

No longer will we be estranged and living apart
No longer will we be far from Your place
Instead ahead will be a brand new start
When we come to fellowship with you face to face

Thank You, O God, for Jesus who makes all things new
Thank You for our Lord who is ever faithful and true

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 33:12-23

(MY PRESENCE WILL GO WITH YOU, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST)

Today we will come to the center verses of the lengthy chiasm which comprises this and the surrounding chapters. We'll also start heading back down the other side of it towards its completion. The verses which surround the center verse speak of God's grace.

Moses has been told that he has found grace in the eyes of the Lord, but he is unsure as to how far that actually extends. Does it include his beloved people Israel? He asks that it would, and he goes into great length to ensure that the message he is given is perfectly understood and without any ambiguity.

It is not that he doesn't *trust the Lord*, it is that he doesn't *trust the people*. They are prone to error and they are stiff-necked towards the Lord. And so he will methodically work to make sure that the grace he has been given will also be grace for them.

Text Verse: *Thus says the Lord:*

"The people who survived the sword

Found grace in the wilderness—

Israel, when I went to give him rest." Jeremiah 31:2

Israel has a long history of disobedience and falling away from the Lord, and yet if you talk to many Jews today, they are under the assumption that they are somehow deserving of God's favor. They have an attitude that because of who they are as a people, they are exempt from the very laws that established them as a people.

It's often hard to have a dialogue with a Jew about righteousness, because they feel they already inherently possess it. It is as if the grace that was bestowed on them was a once-for-all-time thing. It is as if to them God stamped them with a seal of approval, declared them righteous, and that is that.

As long as they have this impression, they have no need of Jesus. What good is imputed righteousness when you already have your own inherent righteousness? But one of the verses today is used by Paul to show us the folly of this type of thinking on their part.

And not to get too down on the Jews, there are oodles and buckets full of people who think they are inherently righteous before God on their own merits. There are others

who think they are righteous because of what they have done for their church, or even more – simply because of the church they attend.

But the lesson of the Bible is that all need grace. If one needs grace, it means that they have a lack which needs to be filled. One cannot merit grace. And so if that grace is lacking, then there is no other way to replace it.

On the other hand, there are those who know they have a problem and what they seek is mercy. However, one must know where God's mercy is derived from. How do you not get what you do deserve? That is the question and it leads right back to the grace. If the grace is lacking, the mercy cannot be provided because the mercy is the result of grace.

It's a horrible cycle for much of the world and it is something that all people need to ponder and to rectify. For corporate Israel, Moses secured the grace, but for individual Israelites, there is still a need for what God offers. Moses did His part, each Jew must do his part, and every one of us needs to do our part as well. Let us seek the Lord while He may be found.

He has offered us a Rock of refuge and a place of safety. The Bible tells us all the details if we will simply search them out. Yes, it's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Show Me Your Way (verses 12-14)

¹² Then Moses said to the Lord, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people.' But You have not let me know whom You will send with me.

In the last passage, the people had stripped off their ornamentation in a sign of remorse. They further had been shown that the Lord was no longer to dwell in their midst, but a far distance off from them. They had to go outside the camp to seek Him. Those in the camp simply worshiped from afar.

Their acts of self-humiliation now lead to Moses beginning a discourse, petitioning the Lord for His favor and to once again allow the honor of having His glory dwell in their midst. Without His divine Presence, there would be a notable fracture between Him and the people of Israel.

In verse 11 it said, "So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend." He is using this familiarity to draw out from the Lord His divine favor. He is

looking for clarification of what it means when He said that He would send “an angel” before them. What angel? He wants the same assurance which came back in Exodus 23 with the words “My Angel.”

In the previous passage, I noted the extremely complicated nature of the chronology of these verses. Scholars have struggled to determine when things were said and how they fit together. But we learned that the details which we are looking at in Chapter 33 and through until verse 9 of chapter 34, chronologically belong between verses 33 and 34 of Chapter 32.

In Exodus 23:30, the Angel of the Lord was promised to go up with them. In Exodus 33:7, which chronologically belongs between Exodus 32:33 and 32:34, “an angel” has been determined to go before them, but *who* it is isn’t known. Now Moses is questioning that. “Just who is it that will go before us?”

This is a clue that we are still in the middle of those verses now. Only when we come to verse 34:10 will we once again be moving forward from that point. I believe the reason for this is to show us the chiasm which spans these chapters. It is showing the logical nature of what is spoken for us to understand what is going on.

I know it is complicated, and it may seem to make little difference in the overall scheme of things, but this is a detailed and important part of the redemptive narrative. Will the Lord remain among His people or not? Moses is working to determine He that will be.

He has been told to bring the people up to Canaan, but unless it is the Lord who leads them, he thinks it is unwise to move an inch. What he is doing now is establishing to Israel that without the Lord in their midst, they have no security, no surety, and are just like all the other people of the earth.

¹² (con’t) **Yet You have said, ‘I know you by name,**

This has not been specifically recorded in the past. However, the Lord called to Moses by name from the burning bush. He has been called by name from the midst of the cloud as well. Such an act implies the greatest sense of divine favor.

Those whom He favors in an intimate way are said to be known by name. It is the same as a king in a kingdom. All are subjects, but those who are known by name are those who have special access to the king. To the Lord, the name signifies the being and thus

the special election to which one is called. This is seen elsewhere in Scripture, such as at the calling of Cyrus, the king of Persia –

“For Jacob My servant’s sake,
And Israel My elect,
I have even called you by your name;
I have named you, though you have not known Me.” Isaiah 45:4

It is also what Jesus did when Peter first encountered Him –

One of the two who heard John *speak*, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ). ⁴² And he brought him to Jesus.

Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (which is translated, A Stone). John 1:40-42

¹² (con’t) **and you have also found grace in My sight.’**

Again, this hasn’t been recorded in Scripture. However, it has been implied in several ways. In the last chapter, the Lord’s anger was evident when He said He would destroy Israel and make Moses’ name great instead. After Moses petitioned Him on Israel’s behalf, the Lord relented for his sake. In both instances, he found grace in the Lord’s sight. At the same time, Israel was granted mercy.

¹³ **Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way,**

This verse brings in the full picture of Moses acting as a mediator on behalf of Israel. He is thus a picture of Christ who ever lives to intercede for His people before the Father. Because of the grace which he has been given, he submits his request, but first by restating the fact that he has already been given grace – “...if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way.”

If, in fact, he has found grace in the sight of the Lord, then he would like to know what the plans of the Lord are for the conduct of the people. How will they be led? By whom will they be led? To Moses, proof of his having found grace is tied up in whether the Lord will be with His people or not.

¹³ (con’t) **that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight.**

This is similar to Jacob's wrestling with the Lord by the Jabbok River. He is struggling with the Lord and will not let Him go without first receiving a blessing. However, this blessing is not for himself, but for Israel. Just as the Lord blessed Israel by the River, Moses seeks a blessing for Israel while in the wilderness. To Moses, grace to him implies also grace towards the people. If they are given good and sure promises, then Moses will feel satisfied that he has, in fact, found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

13 (con't) And consider that this nation is Your people."

Moses here looks back to Exodus 32:7 where the Lord said, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted *themselves*." As he did then, he again reminds Him that they are **His** people and they bear **His** name. He had acknowledged this time and again before Pharaoh and the people of Egypt. "I have seen the affliction of My people." "Let My people go." And on and on, He had claimed them as His people. Moses asks Him to consider this yet again.

14 And He said, "My Presence will go *with you*, and I will give you rest."

panai yeleku va'hanikhoti lakh – "My face shall go, and I will give rest to you." The face of the Lord is the Lord. His face indicates His Presence. This is reflected in the words of Isaiah 63 –

"In all their affliction He was afflicted,
And the Angel of His Presence saved them;
In His love and in His pity He redeemed them;
And He bore them and carried them
All the days of old." Isaiah 63:9

This verse ends the upward climb of the chiasm which spans these many verses. The Lord has spoken; the wrestling match seems to have ended; Moses appears to have received his blessing. The Lord Himself will be present and it will be He who assures that rest is given, meaning the Land of Promise. However, Moses still senses a note of ambiguity.

The words, "with you" are inserted into this verse. The coming verses will show us that he is still concerned that this may only be a personal promise from the Lord to him. What he desires is that it will be a renewal of what was previously promised to the congregation as a whole.

*Show me Your way, O Lord, this I pray
Reveal to me that which I need to know
Show me what You have in store for me this day
And reveal to me the path on which I should go*

*Here in Your word I come to seek Your face
And here in Your word do I come each day
It guides me in life from place to place
Show me Your way, O Lord, this I pray*

*Open my eyes to the glory set before me
Show me Your way, O Lord, this I pray
Lead me to the still waters and to the glassy sea
Be with me as I open this word to read, each and every day*

II. Show Me Your Glory (verses 15-18)

¹⁵ Then he said to Him, “If Your Presence does not go *with us*, do not bring us up from here.

This verse here forms the center of the long and detailed chiasm. It is a verse which reflects Moses’ adamant desire that Israel as a people be considered sacred to the Lord. Moses again ties the people in with himself. The previous verse said that Moses would be given rest, but it doesn’t necessarily mean that the congregation would receive it with him. For this reason, he reiterates the request.

What would happen if the people rebelled again. What would the Lord do if they fell into national sin? Would the Lord again reject them? Moses is looking for the highest assurance that Israel will be led to its place of rest. No matter what they do, he is asking for the guarantee that as a people, they will continue to receive the grace of His presence. As John Lange comments concerning this verse –

“Better to die in the wilderness than to reach his goal without that guidance.”

¹⁶ For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us?

This is an obvious question. Grace is unmerited favor. How can one know that they have received unmerited favor unless they have a knowledge of that favor? If they made it to Canaan and completely subdued the land, would it have been the favor of the Lord, or would it maybe have been the lesser gods of time and chance? Isaiah later speaks of such things –

“But you *are* those who forsake the Lord,
Who forget My holy mountain,
Who prepare a table for Gad [fortune],
And who furnish a drink offering for Meni [destiny].” Isaiah 65:11

Or could it be the greatness of Israel as a people apart from the Lord? History has spoken of this belief time and again, as recorded in the Bible and in the history of the people throughout the ages –

And the Lord said to Gideon, “The people who *are* with you *are* too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’” Judges 7:2

Just as the Lord cherished His honor in both of those instances, Moses desires that the people receive the Lord’s grace now. His divine Presence among them is the guarantee of this grace that he seeks. Without it, there would be no indication that they were different from any of the other nations of the earth. In short, being the Lord’s people would mean nothing more than being the people of any pagan god.

^{16 (con’t)} **So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who *are* upon the face of the earth.”**

By the guarantee of the divine Presence among them, a distinction will be evident. The word translated here as “so we shall be separated” is *palah*. This is fourth of only seven times it will be seen in the Bible. It is found only in Exodus and the psalms. It comes from a primitive root meaning, “to distinguish.” In Psalm 139, it is used in its more precise sense –

I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and wonderfully* made;
Marvelous are Your works,
And *that* my soul knows very well. Psalm 139:14

The intent of Moses' words are that the presence of the Lord will indicate that they are "marvelously separated" from all of the people on the face of the earth. For the Christian, it would be the sealing of the Holy Spirit who "marvelously separates" us unto God from all other people.

¹⁷ So the Lord said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have spoken;

ha'davar hazzeh asher dibarta e-e-seh – "The word this that you have spoken, I will do." At last, the full and complete response which Moses sought has been realized. He has displayed amazing persistence towards the Lord, having taken full advantage of the face to face friendship previously mentioned.

In his diligence, he has now been rewarded. The words are in response to the petition of the previous verse, but they are also inclusive of the entire request presented by Moses, as is evidenced in the substance of the corresponding branches of the chiasm. Those words comprise verse 13 which said –

"Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation *is* Your people."

The Lord promised to not only make them His people, but that they would remain His people. They would not be cut off from this state even if they were to erringly fall away individually or nationally. Punishment would come, but He would – for once and forever – consider this nation His people.

In an astonishing understanding of this precept, Adam Clarke wrote the following concerning the promise of this verse. As I read what he says, remember that he lived from 1762 until 1832. Even at that point in time, he realized that God was still, even then, saving Israel for something marvelous in his future –

"...from the day in which he brought them out of Egypt to the present day, he has kept them a distinct, unmixed people! Who can account for this on any principle but that of a continual especial providence, and a constant Divine interference? The Jews have ever been a people fond of money; had they been mingled with the people of the earth among whom they have been scattered, their secular interests would have been greatly promoted by it; and they who have sacrificed every thing besides to their love of money, on this point have been incorruptible! They chose in every part of their dispersions rather to be a poor, despised, persecuted people, and continue separate from all the

people of the earth, than to enjoy ease and affluence by becoming mixed with the nations. For what great purposes must God be preserving this people! for it does not appear that any moral principle binds them together – they seem lost to this; and yet in opposition to their interests, for which in other respects they would sacrifice every thing, they are still kept distinct from all the people of the earth: for this an especial providence alone can account.”

Even at such an early date, long before any possible restoration of Israel to their land was conceived, Clarke looked at this promise of the Lord and knew it had future implications for them as a people.

The Lord has granted Moses’ request, to include everything since verse 12, but without having the chiastic structure highlighted, the verses seem difficult to grasp and to follow; but with it available, the entire passage comes into clear focus. The requests of Moses are granted. And so, it validates the truth of the next words...

17 (con’t) for you have found grace in My sight,

What was unspoken in the pages of the Bible thus far, but which is implied as having been said because of Moses’ words of verse 12, is now spoken in an outright manner. Because of Moses’ intercession on behalf of his people, the Lord explicitly states, “...you have found grace in My sight.”

Now stop and think on this from a New Covenant perspective. If Moses was given such great and enduring promises from the Lord at a time when all of Israel had failed, and considering Moses’ state as a mere human mediator, how much more assured should we be of the greater and more eternal promises of Christ who is our Mediator! He is the God/Man who is there before the throne of His Father, interceding for us moment by moment as we fail to live up to His absolute perfection. Paul may have been thinking of this passage when he wrote these words from Romans –

“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:37-39

17 (con’t) and I know you by name.”

The chiasm is quickly racing in the opposite direction now. These words correspond to verse 12 which started our verses today. Moses was favored by the Lord; known to Him by name. Because of this, he could mediate out such a weighty and marvelous promise from Him. How much more then can we anticipate from the mediation of Christ!

He, the Son of the Father, is known in the most intimate way of all and He speaks on our behalf, ever-petitioning for us. Because of Christ, we each are intimately known by name. There could be no greater assurance in all of heaven or earth of that which we possess because of Him.

Stepping back to Moses for a moment, what is ironic is that his petition for the Lord's Presence to be with the people until they received their rest will actually come back to bite him personally. He will die outside of the Land of Canaan for having not hallowed Him "in the midst of the children of Israel" (Deuteronomy 32:51).

Though judgment will come upon the offenders of the idolatry of the golden calf, and judgment will come upon many more – including Moses – before the wilderness wanderings are ended, the people as a whole would never have the divine Presence of God removed from them. Moses actually ended by taking the guilt of the people upon himself. Another marvelous picture of Christ in the countless thousands already seen.

The tabernacle will be built after all. The Presence will reside in their midst, and the people will be marvelously separated from the nations of the world. Like his forefather Jacob, Moses has struggled with God and men and he has prevailed. Because of this, he has a personal request of the Lord...

¹⁸ And he said, "Please, show me Your glory."

Moses could have requested this at any previous time, but he only does so *after* he has secured the restoration of His people. This is amazingly similar to Jesus' High Priestly prayer in John 17. Only after having completed the work on behalf of His people did Jesus ask to again share in the glory with His Father –

"I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. ⁵ And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." John 17:4, 5

Now that the destiny of Israel is secure, the desires of Moses need to be quenched. He had experienced fellowship with God beyond anything any man since Adam had

experienced, and yet everything he had seen to this point has only made him desirous of more. He wanted to fill himself up with the goodness of the Lord and so he asks *harení na eth kebodekha* – “Show me, I pray, Your glory.”

Exactly what he is requesting is debated, but if one assumes that Moses was already aware of the Genesis account, then he is asking to see what Adam saw. He is asking to see the visible representation of the Lord who walked in perfect fellowship and harmony with our first father.

Before sin clouded man’s mind, he walked in fellowship with His Creator, but when sin entered Adam, he hid from Him and stood in fear of Him. Moses is asking that this division be ended and that a more perfect fellowship – the glory of God – be revealed to him. He has seen numerous and marvelous manifestations of God, but they concealed more than they revealed. Moses desires that to end.

*Show me Your glory, O Lord, this I pray
Reveal to me that which I most desire to know
Let me see Your goodness set before me, here on this day
And reveal to me the path on which I should go*

*Here in Your word I come to seek Your face
And here in Your word do I come each day
It guides me in life from place to place
Show me Your glory, O Lord, this I pray*

*Open my eyes to the majesty set before me
Show me Your glory, O Lord, this I pray
And there I shall sing praises to You by the glassy sea
Until then I will seek You in Your word, day unto day*

III. Here is a Place by Me (verse 19-23)

¹⁹ Then He said, “I will make all My goodness pass before you,

This promise is fulfilled in the words of Chapter 34 verses 5-7. He promises a special revelation of Himself to Moses where He will reveal all of His goodness before him. The word for “goodness,” *tuv*, is one which indicates beauty, gladness, welfare, and the like.

This goodness is certainly not a physical brilliance so much as it is the ethical reality of who the Lord is, represented elsewhere by the physical brilliance. This is the infinite ethical purity of God which transcends anything a human could ever grasp.

Further, the attributes of God are many, and they are all good, but some of them carry a negative connotation – justice for example carries the connotation of judgment on sin. As Moses is a fallen man, he could not bear to see His infinite purity in this manner. What Moses will behold is the merciful, gracious, compassionate Creator in a manner that he could assimilate. And as He so passes by, the Lord says that He will do something extra...

19 (cont') and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you.

The noun here is used for the pronoun. This is something common in Scripture. To proclaim a name is to proclaim the essence of the being which the name represents. The name will be proclaimed, or “called out” as the word implies, for Moses’ sake. He will be neither surprised and thus terrified, nor will he blink and miss his chance at the unique revelation of the Lord.

Yehovah will proclaim His coming as an exceptional act of grace to his trusted servant. It is something unmerited, and yet it is something which defines who He is. He is the God of all grace...

19 (cont') I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

The Lord is notifying Moses that He will, in fact be gracious towards him, and thus towards the people on whose behalf he is petitioning, but He is not doing this to curry their favor. Rather, there are some who will be punished in light ways, and some who will be punished with a heavy hand.

Others will be pardoned and receive mercy. However, this doesn’t mean that they are better or more righteous than those who receive punishment, but because of His own sovereign will in His workings in redemptive history. His grace and compassion are neither arbitrary, nor are they to curry favor or to show vindictiveness.

Instead, He is sovereign. His judgments are righteous and His ways are perfect. What He does is a result of who He is and what He has determined. Paul uses this very verse in Romans 9 to upturn the self-righteous attitude of the Jews –

“What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.’ ¹⁶ So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.” Romans 9:14-16

The Lord was not obligated to forgive Israel, nor was He bound to show His goodness to Moses. He was gracious because Moses found grace in His eyes. Grace is getting what one doesn’t deserve, and mercy is not getting what one does deserve. The person who receives either can’t boast of what he has received, and the person who doesn’t receive cannot find fault in what he has not received.

²⁰ But He said, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.”

These words have to be taken in the greater context of the Bible. It is not an inability to see God, but it is an inability to see the particular sight to which He refers. God revealed Himself to Jacob as Genesis 32:30 points out.

“So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: ‘For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.’” Genesis 32:30

The name Peniel means “Face of God.” And so he saw that sight which God chose to reveal. However, he did not see the fullness of God, represented by His face. Even in our eternal state, we will not see the fullness of God, nor could we. God is infinite in His being. For us to see God in His face, or in His infinite nature would mean that we would need to be infinite as well; able to comprehend all of who He is. For us to do so would mean that we would be God. But there is one God and only one. In Revelation 22, it says this –

“And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. ⁴They shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads.” Revelation 22:3, 4

We will behold the Lamb. We shall see His face as He endlessly, ceaselessly reveals the infinite Father to us. There will never be a time when we will have seen all of God, even until the ages of ages. There will always be more to know. This is why Moses could not see the face of the Lord. He could not behold all that God is.

²¹ And the Lord said, “Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock.

Here we have a picture being developed for us. The Lord has a specific place in mind which is near to Him. He asks Moses to stand *al ha'tsur*, or "on the rock." There is a definite article in front of rock, it is not "a" rock, but "the rock." This is where Moses is to position himself. Matthew Henry rightly states –

"The rock in Horeb was typical of Christ the Rock; the Rock of refuge, salvation, and strength. Happy are they who stand upon this Rock."

When the glory of the Lord passes by, Moses will be at this place of refuge. He will see this marvelous vision, but he will be kept safe while there. The reason is explained in the next verse...

²² So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock,

The Lord says as His glory passes by, He will take Moses and place him in the cleft of the rock. The word is *neqarah* and is used only twice in the Bible, here and in Isaiah 2:21. It indicates that which is dug or gouged out, thus a cleft.

The question is, why didn't He just tell Moses to go hide in the cleft of the rock? Instead he says He will place him there. The answer is that it is God who places us in Christ. It is we who choose to stand upon the Rock, but only God places us into Christ. It is a picture of being saved from the complete destructive power of God in relation to sinful man.

One is either in Christ and secure from what must happen when man faces the infinitely holy God, or they are not in Christ and can only make a futile attempt to hide themselves. As I said, the word for "cleft," *neqarah*, is only used twice. The other time shows the futility of the man who attempts to hide from the Lord –

"In that day a man will cast away his idols of silver
And his idols of gold,
Which they made, *each* for himself to worship,
To the moles and bats,
²¹ To go into the **clefts** of the rocks,
And into the crags of the rugged rocks,
From the terror of the Lord
And the glory of His majesty,
When He arises to shake the earth mightily.

²² Sever yourselves from such a man,

Whose breath *is* in his nostrils;
For of what account is he?" Isaiah 2:20-22

²² (con't) **and will cover you with My hand while I pass by.**

Moses will not just be hidden in the Rock, but the Lord will also cover him from His splendor. Thus He will be both concealed and protected when the perfections of love, grace, mercy, justice, truth, righteousness, holiness, wisdom, and the like are revealed. Without such a covering, Moses would be destroyed. But hidden in the Rock, he will be spared from that fate. The words of this verse are reflective of the truth spoken by Paul in Colossians 3 –

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” Colossians 3:1-4

Our lives are hidden in Christ, the Rock. At the same time we are protected from the wrath of God. His perfections, which we fail to meet in our fallen selves, are kept from us by the covering of Christ, God’s right hand of power. However, the glory that was hidden from Moses will be revealed to us in the future. It will be an eternity of God revealing His goodness to us, moment by moment without ceasing, and without an instant of anything less than awed wonder.

²³ **Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back;**

The verses are filled with anthropomorphisms – hand, face, back are all human attributes which are being used for us to understand, in a limited way, what we are intended to know. And yet, at the same time, there is a hint of what God would do in the future through Christ.

The term for “back” is *akhorai* – My back. The word means more than just the back. It is used to indicate “west.” When looking towards the Lord in the tabernacle or temple, His face would be towards us, looking east. Thus His back would be west. It is the direction which we aspire to go towards – ever towards His face.

It is used to indicate the hereafter in Isaiah 41. In other words, things that are yet future. Thus, the Rock is Christ, our safe Refuge. The Hand is Christ, our Protector. The Face is Christ, the Revealer of God. And the Back is Christ, the One who is to come. What Moses saw was the glory of Christ as He would come afterwards in human flesh, revealing the Father to us. This is what John 1:14 is referring to –

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Moses saw the revelation of what God was doing in the stream of time in order to bring us back to Himself. This is why later, in the Song of Moses, he wrote these words –

“For I proclaim the name of the Lord:
Ascribe greatness to our God.
⁴ *He is* the Rock, His work *is* perfect;
For all His ways *are* justice,
A God of truth and without injustice;
Righteous and upright *is* He.” Deuteronomy 32:3, 4

He understood that Yehovah was the Rock. The symbolism was revealed to Him and thus God showed him His glory.

²³ (fin) **but My face shall not be seen.”**

To close out our verses, Moses was reminded that the face of God, was not to be seen. But as we already know, Jacob saw His face by the river Jabbok. Abraham saw His face as He traveled towards the destruction of Sodom. Joshua will see His face as He stands as the Commander of the Lord’s army.

Gideon, the parents of Samson, and others as well encountered the Man who moves through time because He is from outside of time. Each saw the Man while not seeing the full essence of the Lord. And we too shall see His face as the glory of God streams from Him for an infinite number of days.

We are hidden in Christ, and thus God will allow us to look west towards Him as He looks east towards us, forever revealing the goodness which Moses merely tasted for a moment in time. If you want a part of that marvelous goodness which God offers; if you seek Him but aren’t sure if you have sought Him in the right manner, today is the day of good news for you.

He has His hands out and is waiting for you to stand upon the Rock and to be protected by the covering of Christ, the power of God for all who believe. Let me take just another minute to tell you about Jesus and how you can be right with God through Him...

Closing Verse: *“The Lord your God in your midst,
The Mighty One, will save;
He will rejoice over you with gladness,
He will quiet you with His love,
He will rejoice over you with singing.” Zephaniah 3:17*

Next Week: Exodus 34:1-9 Moses asks, *“Set for us this precedence... (Take Us as Your Inheritance) (94th Exodus Sermon)*

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Safe in the Cleft of the Rock

Then Moses said to the Lord
“See, ‘Bring up this people.’ So You say to me
But You have not let me know
Whom You will send with me; who will it be?

Yet You have said, ‘I know you by name; which is right
And you have also found grace in My sight

Now therefore, I pray
If I have found grace in Your sight
Show me now Your way
That I may know You, alright?

And that I may in Your sight find grace
And consider that this nation is Your people; here in this place

And He said, “My Presence will go with you
And I will give you rest, what I have spoken is true

Then he said to Him
"If Your Presence with us does not go
Do not bring us up from here
It would be better that we stayed here, even so

For how then will it be known
That Your people and I have found grace in Your sight
Except You go with us
Surely then we would see that in us You delight

So we shall be separate, Your people and I, as if a new birth
From all the people who are upon the face of the earth

So the Lord said to Moses
"I will also do this thing that you have spoken
For you have found grace in My sight
And I know you by name, this word shall not be broken

And he said, "Please, show me Your glory"
Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you
And I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you
So this is the thing that I shall do

Gracious to whom I will be gracious will I be
And I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion
Thus it is, as you now see

But He said, "You cannot see My face, this word I give
For no man shall see Me, and live
And the Lord said, "Here is a place by Me
And you shall stand on the rock, and you shall see

So it shall be, while My glory passes by
That in the cleft of the rock I will put you
And will cover you with My hand
While I pass by; this I will do

Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back
But My face shall not be seen; this sight you shall lack

Heavenly Father, how good it is to know
That there is a place of safety both in and from Your majesty
Jesus does to us Your majesty show
And Jesus also reveals it slowly, for all eternity

And so we are not consumed by Your glory
Instead we can revel in it, seeking out Your face
This is the marvel of the Gospel story
This is why we come to gather in this place

Thank You, O God, that for the ages we will glory in You
Because of what Jesus Christ for us alone does do

And so in His name we give You all of our praise
And we shall do so for all the ages, even for eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 34:1-9

(TAKE US AS YOUR INHERITANCE)

There is a whole lot going on in today's nine verses. We're still in the chiasm which has spanned these past five sermons. We're also still in an insert passage which belongs between two verses of chapter 33. We are also in the middle of Moses' request for grace in the sight of the Lord. It is something that has already been promised, but Moses is still struggling with the issue.

None of this has been easy to grasp, and none of it has come without a lot of careful consideration. Each of you who are here, meaning a part of this sermon – whether here at the Superior Word or at some other time by video or simply reading the sermon notes – is to be commended for sticking this one out.

The chiasm itself is enough to tantalize, but being able to appreciate all of what is presented is like trying to assimilate the footnotes in a chemistry textbook. It is hard work and it can be... yes, tedious. But what results from the tedium is a fuller appreciation of the marvelous heart of God who has given us such depth.

The entire thought of today's verses can be summed up in one word – LOVE. The law was given and it was a law of justice and punishment. God has a set of laws, and they must be enforced based on His just, righteous, and holy character.

Israel violated the law and was set to receive His punishment. However, there was mediation and appeal on their behalf. Moses' words brought in a new aspect of the Lord's revelation of Himself. But before that is given, two new tablets are requested to be made.

With the tablets will come a repeat of their inscription upon stone. It appears that this repeat inscription would then mean justice and punishment was again to be the expectation, would it not? But before the inscription is made, and before the tablets are handed back, grace is received, mercy is granted, and the love of God is revealed. This love is then summed up in the final request of Moses that the sin of the people be pardoned and they be taken as His inheritance.

Text Verse: *"I will declare the decree:*

The Lord has said to Me,

'You are My Son,

Today I have begotten You.

⁸*Ask of Me, and I will give You
The nations for Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth for Your possession.” Psalm 2:7, 8*

Israel was to be the Lord’s inheritance based on the covenant at Sinai. In the 2nd Psalm, it says that the nations would be the inheritance of the Son of God. If the mediator of the first covenant was a mere man, and yet he obtained the grace and mercy of the Lord, how much more superlative is the expectation for the same from the Mediator of the New Covenant!

This is what is pictured in the second set of tablets which will be inscribed with the Ten Commandments. This is what we can put our trust and hope in – a greater hope than the law could ever provide. This is the wonder which is to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Tablets of Stone Like the First (verses 1-4)

¹And the Lord said to Moses, “Cut two tablets of stone like the first *ones*,

Of these words, Charles Ellicott states –

“Something is always lost by sin, even when it is forgiven. The first tables were ‘the work of God’ (Exodus 32:16). The second were hewn by the hand of Moses.”

He cites for this Exodus 32:16 –

“Now the tablets *were* the work of God, and the writing *was* the writing of God engraved on the tablets.”

Ellicott’s words are true in that the original tablets were formed by God and they were broken by Moses, but it was not the intent that the tablets alone were to be the focus of attention. Rather, there are all kinds of tablets in the world which look alike. For example, gravestones are pumped out one after another, each identical to the next. It is what is written on them that bears the difference and which causes them to be different.

If I walk through a cemetery and see two identical stones, but one says “Johnson” and the other says “Garrett,” I will naturally be more curious about the one which bears my name. If they both say “Garrett,” I will be equally interested in both.

These tablets which Moses is instructed to make will be “like the first ones,” and so they bear the same appearance. They will also be used for the same purpose as well. The fact that the Lord asks Moses to make the tablets, rather than being made by Him, shows that these are to be considered just as acceptable for the bearing of the law. Otherwise, He would have again made them Himself.

The word translated as “cut” here is *pasal*. It means to carve into shape, whether wood or stone. This is the first of just six times it will be seen. Four of those are referring to these tablets, and once it is referring to the cutting of the stones for the temple in Jerusalem. This was in accordance with the word of the Lord to build a temple, and the work was actually accomplished by Gentiles. This is seen in 1 Kings 5 –

“So Solomon’s builders, Hiram’s builders, and the Gebalites **quarried them**; and they prepared timber and stones to build the temple.” 1 Kings 5:18

Finally, it is used once concerning the carving of false images by the people of Israel in defiance of the word of God. That last one is found in Habakkuk 2 –

“What profit is the image, that its maker **should carve** it,
The molded image, a teacher of lies,
That the maker of its mold should trust in it,
To make mute idols?

¹⁹ Woe to him who says to wood, ‘Awake!’

To silent stone, ‘Arise! It shall teach!’

Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver,

Yet in it there is no breath at all.

²⁰ “But the Lord is in His holy temple.

Let all the earth keep silence before Him.” Habakkuk 2:18-20

And so we see a contrast in that the Gentiles were used to cut stone in a positive way for the building of the Lord’s temple where the Ark with its Ten Commandments would be kept, while the Jews carved out false images for themselves in defiance of the law written on those same Ten Commandments.

In fact, the passage in Habakkuk, which speaks of the apostasy of Israel, begins with these words concerning *lukhot*, or “tablets.” It is the same word used to describe these now made by Moses –

“Then the Lord answered me and said:
‘Write the vision
And make *it* plain on **tablets**,
That he may run who reads it.
³ For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time;
But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie.
Though it tarries, wait for it;
Because it will surely come,
It will not tarry.’” Habakkuk 2:2, 3

Immediately after this, the words of the Lord through Habakkuk, show us a marvelous truth concerning justification before the Lord –

“Behold the proud,
His soul is not upright in him;
But the just shall live by his faith.” Habakkuk 2:4

These passages are being tied together for a reason; one which is only realized in Christ Jesus. Further, the words for Moses are to cut two tablets of “stones.” The word is plural, not singular. They were hewn from two separate stones, not from one.

¹ (con’t) **and I will write on *these* tablets**

This verse may seem confusing when taken in connection with verse 27 of this chapter, which says –

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.” (vs. 27)

However, the words of verse 1 are speaking of the Ten Commandments on the tablets. The words of verse 27 are speaking of the laws spoken to Moses in verses 11-26, and certainly a copy of the Ten Commandments as well. This copy of the Ten Commandments, along with the other laws, would be for the people’s use.

But the Ten Commandments in stone were to be kept separate and enclosed within the Ark of the Covenant. This is certain because we are specifically told in Deuteronomy 10:1-4 that the Lord wrote the words of the Ten Commandments upon the tablets and then they were placed in the ark.

Despite the tablets coming from man, the stone was still made by God. The shaping of them simply came through man. However, the original design was made by God as well. Moses was told to “Cut two tablets of stone like the first.” Therefore, the pattern is already set by God. Further, the words to be written on them were to be solely the work of God...

¹ (con’t) **the words that were on the first tablets**

These would be the identical words of the first tablets. They are God’s eternal and irrevocable law. They are His standard which must be met in order to live in His presence. As it will say in Leviticus 18:5 –

“You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I *am* the Lord.” Leviticus 18:5

Paul cites this verse in Romans 10:5 and tells us that no person can meet the demands of the law. In fact, in James 2:10, we read –

“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all.” James 2:10

That is bad news for all of us. They are God’s standard, we cannot meet them, and they are written in stone. Is there no hope for us?

¹ (con’t) **which you broke.**

Of the breaking of the first tablets by Moses, Joseph Benson states –

“We may observe also, that although the first tables were broken, to show that there was no hope for mankind to be saved by their innocence, yet God would have the law to be in force still as a rule of obedience, and therefore, as soon as he was reconciled to them, ordered the tables to be renewed, and wrote his law on them. This plainly intimates, that even under the gospel (of which the intercession of Moses was typical) the moral law continues to oblige believers. For though Christ hath redeemed us from

the *curse of the law*, yet not from the *command* of it, but still we are *under the law to Christ.*” Joseph Benson

Although that sounds like a reasonable explanation, it is not. First, the Bible never makes a distinction between the civil laws and the moral laws which are found in the Old Testament. There is one law. The fact that the Lord renews the covenant and then speaks out, in verses 11-26 of this chapter, many commands not in the Ten Commandments, shows us that they are all binding and a part of the same covenant.

Secondly, if we were to suppose that there was a distinction between the moral and civil laws, then it would mean that the Sabbath is still a required day of observance, which it is clearly not. If it were, then every one of us would be in violation of the New Covenant which is in Christ’s blood; we are not. Paul and the book of Hebrews clearly and definitively shows this.

Therefore, if one of the supposed “moral laws,” meaning the Sabbath, is annulled in the coming of the New Covenant, then the entire law is so annulled. It cannot be a pick and choose thing when it comes to the annulling of the covenant. It is either annulled and set aside, or it is in full effect.

And so what we have here in these verses is a picture which has been developed by the Lord for us to see Christ. God made the first set of tablets. Upon them He wrote the Ten Commandments, the sum of His law for humanity, and upon which every other law finds its place.

These were given to Moses, but were destroyed by him when he saw the rebellion of the people. It is a picture of Adam who was created by the Lord. He was formed as a perfect man and was instilled with God’s perfect law. Though being in a state of innocence, he had the law of God given to Him, and yet he broke that same law. It doesn’t matter which law he broke either, he erred on one point, and the entire law was broken; shattered.

The second set of tablets was cut and formed by man, and yet the stones were originally made by God. These tablets picture Christ, who traces His humanity from the line of fallen man, but which was originally made by God – meaning Adam. Just as Moses was told to make the tablets like the first, Christ is a like-representation of Adam. This is seen revealed in Paul’s words of 1 Corinthians 15 –

“There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven.” 1 Corinthians 15:44-47

However, unlike Adam who broke the law, Christ fulfilled the law. The same perfect letters of the law were inscribed for both, but He never broke one of the commands of God. The law was secreted away in the Ark, which also pictures Christ. Thus Christ embodies that same law. It is fully contained in Him. This takes us back to the symbolism of the Mercy Seat.

In His perfect completion of the law, Christ died in fulfillment of it, and thus the law died with Him. The blood was shed, the law was fulfilled and annulled. This is what is being pictured in what is happening with the two sets of laws. It is showing the supremacy of the work of Christ in comparison to the failings of Adam. This is the meaning of Christ’s words of Matthew 5 –

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.” Matthew 5:17

Christ didn’t come to smash the law of the tablets as Adam did. Rather, He came to embody them. This is why the following words of Christ are so relevant to us –

“For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. ¹⁹ Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:18-20

Though often misused by people who claim that the law is still in effect, Jesus shows that the very opposite is true for those who have received Him. God’s law must be fulfilled, and fulfill it He did. The righteousness of the Pharisees is not only exceeded by the righteousness of Christ, it is infinitely exceeded. For those who are “in Christ,” we are counted as having fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law, and we are granted His righteousness.

I asked a few minutes ago if there is any hope for us. The answer is that in Christ, there is not only hope, there is surety. This is all being pictured in what is presented to us now in this ancient passage.

² So be ready in the morning,

There is an interval of one day allowed for the shaping of the tablets. In the morning, they were to be taken up the mountain. It is reflective of the one day in the creation of Adam. He didn't evolve into Adam. Rather, he was fashioned by God, and on the same day the breath of life was breathed into him.

The humanity of Christ, coming in the pattern of Adam, stems from that same act of creation. Every human since Adam was potentially in Adam the moment that he came to be. This includes Mary, the mother of the Lord, and thus it includes the Human nature of Christ. Thus, the Human nature of Christ is reflected in the tablets themselves.

^{2 (con't)} and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai,

The last time the mountain was mentioned by name was in the last chapter, verse 6. However, at that time it was called Horeb. Now, it is again called Sinai. When the name Sinai is used, it is normally referring to the on-going redemptive workings of God for His people.

When Horeb is used, it indicates the total dependence of the people on the provision of the Lord, or it indicates that which has been accomplished by Him already. In Chapter 33, the people needed the Lord to sustain them. They had fallen out of favor with Him, and so the term Horeb was used

Now, we are again seeing a picture of the redemptive workings of God in Christ, and so the term Sinai is used. What we tend to cursorily read and pass by without thought actually carries great significance to God. When understood, we find marvelous truths displayed in this precious word.

^{2 (con't)} and present yourself to Me there on the top of the mountain.

In the Bible, the top of the mountain is the place where much of the greatest business gets done. The law was received there; Jesus was transfigured there. It was from the top of a mountain that He ascended, and it will be to the top of the same mountain that He

will return. Israel will later be told that it is at the top of the high mountain that they should seek the Lord –

“O Zion,
You who bring good tidings,
Get up into the high mountain;
O Jerusalem,
You who bring good tidings,
Lift up your voice with strength,
Lift *it* up, be not afraid;
Say to the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God!’” Isaiah 40:9

It is to the top of Sinai where Moses is now, once again, expected to present himself to the Lord.

³ And no man shall come up with you,

Nothing is said of Joshua in this account as it was in the last. Moses was to ascend alone for this magnificent revelation and manifestation of the Lord; it was only for him. The reason for this is to again make another picture of Christ and His redemptive works. This will be seen in what happens to Moses after beholding the glory of the Lord.

^{3 (con't)} and let no man be seen throughout all the mountain;

After the enactment of the covenant, there was a covenant meal with the elders of Israel on Mount Sinai. That may have led the same people to assume that they could come up as far as that point on the mountain. However, this prohibition is made to expressly forbid any assuming of such a thing on their part.

The sin of the golden calf had alienated the people from the Lord and until the matter was resolved, no man was allowed to come to any part of the mountain for any reason.

^{3 (con't)} let neither flocks nor herds feed before that mountain.”

This prohibition was to ensure that nobody would even have their animals close enough to stray up a part of the mountain. If they did, they might be tempted to go and get them, thus incurring guilt. And so to preclude any chance of this at all, they were directed to not even allow the animals to feed before the mountain.

⁴ So he cut two tablets of stone like the first ones.

This is the second use of the word *pasal*, the first having been in verse 1. It was Moses who cut the tablets, or it was someone doing it at the direction of Moses, which is unstated. Either way, the picture of Christ is being formed by the cutting of stones like those cut by the Lord originally.

^{4 (con't)} Then Moses rose early in the morning and went up Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him;

Moses will be on the mountain for another period of forty days and forty nights. It is at this time that he would have directed the ark to be made. This is seen in Deuteronomy 10 –

“At that time the Lord said to me, ‘Hew for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to Me on the mountain and make yourself an ark of wood. ² And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke; and you shall put them in the ark.’

³ “So I made an ark of acacia wood, hewed two tablets of stone like the first, and went up the mountain, having the two tablets in my hand. ⁴ And He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing, the Ten Commandments, which the Lord had spoken to you in the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly; and the Lord gave them to me. ⁵ Then I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are, just as the Lord commanded me.” Deuteronomy 10:1-5

^{4 (con't)} and he took in his hand the two tablets of stone.

The tablets would be small enough to fit into the ark, and light enough for Moses to carry up the mountain by himself. Once again, the Hebrew says *lukhot abenim*, “tablets of stones.” The plural is used to signify that they were fashioned from separate stones. This is unlike the tablets of Exodus 31:18 which were called *lukhot eben*, or tablets of stone. There it is singular.

Again, a picture is being made for us to see. It is an indication of the many generations of humanity that led up to Christ, unlike Adam who was formed without any human

genealogy. The tablets of stone were broken in Adam; the tablets of stones remain unbroken in Christ.

Moses is going up the mountain to meet with God and to receive a marvelous revelation from Him. In Eden, it seemed that Satan had won. He had brought an end to the close and personal fellowship between God and man.

At Sinai, the same was true. The devil stepped in, entered the hearts of the people, and they formed a god of gold. It seemed that the purposes of God were once again thwarted, but where sin abounded, grace abounded much more. That will be seen in the continuation of our passage...

*Tablets of stone which bring words of condemnation
Words which prick my very soul
How can I live up to such a standard? I see only damnation
How can my name ever be written on heaven's scroll?*

*The words stand against me and show me my sin
They were meant to bring life, but only death do they bring
The man who lives by them, who is he? We are all done in!
From where can life come? Show me such a spring*

*Words of life! I now fully see
God Himself has condemned sin in the flesh, through Jesus
Marvelous words of life, to God be the glory!
Such a marvelous thing He has done for us!*

II. Yehovah El (verses 5-7)

⁵ Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there,

It is the cloud which would descend upon the tent of meeting when Moses was there that now descended and stood next to Moses. However, there is certainly more than what Moses observed in the tent. The effects of this meeting will be that which changes the countenance of Moses forever.

It will be the revealing of Christ to Moses in a way which would forever change the relationship of those who live by faith, and those who live by works. The cloud will, in

fact, reveal Christ to Moses, but it will conceal more than it reveals. We know this because of what Paul says about this encounter in 2 Corinthians 3.

⁵ (con't) **and proclaimed the name of the Lord.**

This is the fulfillment of the promise from the previous chapter. The Lord said that He would proclaim the name of Yehovah to Moses, and that has come about. The noun, "name," is used for the pronoun, "My."

For Him to proclaim His name is to proclaim the very essence of His being, which is what the name represents. Moses is now being prepared for the most magnificent display of splendor of his life. He is being alerted so that he will be neither surprised and thus terrified, nor will he blink and miss his chance at the awesome revelation of Yehovah.

⁶ **And the Lord passed before him**

It's a good time to stop and explain that what is translated in this passage as "the Lord" is literally the name of the Lord, Yehovah. Most translations do this, and they do it for a reason. It is to tie *the Lord*, Yehovah, of the Old Testament in with *the Lord*, Jesus, of the New. However, the name Yehovah has its own meaning. Thus it would probably be better for us to think of the name, rather than the title.

Yehovah, God's revelation of Himself, is passing before Moses. This is what He promised to do, and this is what He is now doing. In His passing, He again calls out a proclamation of Himself...

⁶ (con't) **and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God,**

v'yiqra Yehovah, Yehovah el – It is a double proclamation of His eternal being. He is the existent One, and He is the existent God. Further, the term *el*, or God, indicates power and might. Thus He is Yehovah the all-powerful. But what does that mean without a further explanation? How will He reveal Himself to Moses and thus to the people of Israel?

This is what will be learned, and it is in this coming revelation of Himself that will be explained all of His future dealings with Israel. Everything that He proclaims will be something that Israel can look to as a promise, and yet which will also serve as a warning.

⁶ (con't) **merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,**

The first of His attributes is translated as “merciful.” The word is *rakhum*. It is an adjective which will be used 13 times in the Old Testament. It is always used when speaking of the Lord. It is from the same root as *rekhem*, meaning “womb.” One can see how just as a mother cares for the child in her womb, so the Lord is compassionate. He is also gracious. The word is *khannun*. It is an adjective used for the second of 13 times. Again, it is always used when speaking of the Lord. When it is used, it gives the sense of hearing the cries of those who are vexed and cry out to Him. It is as if He is unable to hear such cries without responding to their need.

Next, He states He is *arek appayim*. It is translated by the NKJV as “longsuffering” which gives the sense of “slow to anger.” He is willing to put up with the grief His people give Him without immediately destroying them. This is the first use of the word *arek*, and it is almost always used of the Lord’s slowness at being aroused to anger.

The word *appayim* means “nostrils.” This gives a more vivid description for us to understand. He is slow to getting in an angry huff where the nostrils flare and snort. It is His nature to retain a calm composure even when anger is what should be anticipated. After this, He proclaims *v’rav khesed*, “and abounding in goodness.” The word *khesed* is deep and rich. It is a word often translated as “lovingkindness.” It indicates favor, merciful kindness, and even pity. The Lord proclaims that he doesn’t just possess this, but He possess it in abundance.

And along with that, He includes *emeth*, or truth. This is what indicates certainty, or that which establishes. There is no changing in Him, and there is no variance in Him. He is firm and fixed in His dealings.

⁷ **keeping mercy for thousands,**

notser khesed la’alaphim. This explains the *rav’khesed*, or “abounding in goodness.” Even though He has lovingkindness in abundance for some, He has enough for many. His lovingkindness is never fully exhausted. Further, this goes both laterally and horizontally. His mercy extends to the multitude at any given time, and at all times. His mercy endures forever.

⁷ (con't) **forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,**

notse avon va'phesha v'khataah – Man offends God in many ways. Each of these described here indicates an offense of some sort. *Avon*, or iniquity is immoral or grossly unfair behavior. *Pesha*, or transgression, is some breach of trust or rebellion. And *khataah*, is what we would simply call “sin.” It is missing the mark in doing right, and thus causing offense.

The Lord is willing to forgive these things, not because it is deserved, but because – as He has already said – He is compassionate. He is willing to not mete out the punishment which is rightly deserved.

7 (con't) by no means clearing *the guilty*,

v'naqqeh lo y'naqqeh – “and clearing, no will clear.” The word “guilty” is inserted, but it is correct. Though the Lord will forgive those who are contrite and humble, He will not allow the guilt of those who trample on the Lord’s goodness to be cleared. They will suffer the full measure of His justice. In other words, the Lord is implying His just and righteous character in His proclamation of Himself. He will not let this attribute of Himself be forgotten by His creatures. This thought is repeated many hundreds of years later by the prophet Nahum –

“The Lord *is* slow to anger and great in power,
And will not at all acquit *the wicked*.” Nahum 1:3

What we have so far in verse 7 is a theological truth. No one can make atonement for himself because he already bears his own sins, and thus Paul reveals to us what this means, “All have sinned and all fall short of the glory of God.”

7 (con't) visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation.”

These words cause consternation to many, but they bear a truth which cannot be escaped. When a father sins, the sin will often travel to the children, and to the next generation afterwards. A person who steals will most likely raise a thief.

A drunk will often raise children who are drunks. The visitation of iniquity is as much self-inflicted as it is imposed. As the Lord does not interfere with the transfer of this iniquity, He thus implicitly visits it upon the next generations.

However, Ezekiel 18 shows that when a son turns from the sins of the father, the Lord accepts him. And when a son turns from the righteousness of his father, the Lord judges him. These words show us a fairness in the Lord which allows man to make their own beds and lie in them, and even bring along their descendants if they so wish.

This has been seen in the exiled people of Israel for the past 2000 years. When one sins in his rejection of Christ, the children naturally follow in this, but for those who turn to Christ, they receive the benefits of the Lord's mercy and lovingkindness.

At the burning bush, on this same mountain some time earlier, the Lord revealed Himself to Moses as the great deliverer of His people. He is the self-existent God who determines all things according to His set purposes. Now, in this second revelation of Himself, He radiates out as the kind and loving Savior who is willing to forgive His people, thus taking their actions into account as He moves through His plan of the redemption of mankind.

*The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious
Longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth
Keeping mercy for thousands, mercy so spacious
His forgiveness to us is surely the proof*

*He forgives iniquity and transgression and sin
But the guilty He will not clear, they will see a bad end
He will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children
This is the warning which His word to us does send*

*But His word also shows us where His pardon to find
In the giving of Christ He has granted it to us
Be sober in thought and of a reasonable mind
Search out His goodness in the face of Jesus*

III. Take Us as Your Inheritance (verses 8 & 9)

⁸ So Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped.

In verse 18 of the last chapter, Moses said to the Lord, "Please, show me Your glory." Now that the glory of the Lord is passing by, he removes his eyes from seeing what he

most desired to see. Instead, he realized that it was not his right to see what his heart yearned for.

The Lord had told him that he would be hid in the cleft of the rock, and that He would cover him with his hand. It says nothing of that now. Rather, it simply says that Moses demonstrated humility and voluntarily looked away from the glory which was passing before him.

He realized that the proclamation itself was sufficient. The essence had been revealed in the cry of proclamation. How can we know that this is the correct interpretation? Because Paul explains it in the New Testament. We have to get ahead of ourselves, and thus repeat a portion of a sermon in the days ahead, but what happens to Moses becomes an object lesson to those who turn to Christ. In 2 Corinthians 3, he writes –

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 3:18

What is it that we see and behold as in a mirror? It is the glory of the Lord. And what is it that allows us this sight? It is the Lord’s proclamation of Himself in Scripture. In other words, the calling out of the Lord concerning Himself, is what causes the change in Moses.

It was not an external sight, but the understanding of the essence of who the Lord is. We have that same radiance **handed to us**, we carry it around with us and we open it to see its magnificence, or we close it up, put it on a shelf, and allow it to become dusty. At the same time, our souls darken, and the glory of the Lord fades from our minds. Moses never forgot the proclamation, and it radiated forth from him in a manner which is actually remarkable. How many of us are willing to radiate out the glory of the Lord as He has revealed it to us in His word? Thank God for those who attend the Superior Word! I thank God for you because of your desire for a pool of depth and lasting glory rather than a shallow puddle of temporary delight.

⁹ Then he said, “If now I have found grace in Your sight,

In chapter 33, it is twice said that the Lord had told Moses that he had found grace in His sight. And twice in between those verses, Moses questioned how he could know if he had found grace in the sight of the Lord. First in verse 13, he said –

“Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation *is* Your people.” Exodus 33:13

Therefore, this verse should be translated as “*Since* I have now found grace in Your sight.” The Lord has shown him His way. However, after his first appeal, and just a few verses later, he spoke his second petition to the Lord –

“If Your Presence does not go *with us*, do not bring us up from here. ¹⁶ For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who *are* upon the face of the earth.” Exodus 33:15, 16

Therefore, based on the first grace, he petitions for the second. It is that grace which he desperately longs for in the full acceptance of Israel as His people once again...

^{9 (con't)} **O Lord, let my Lord, I pray, go among us, even though we *are* a stiff-necked people;**

The word “among us” is *qerev*, meaning “in the midst of.” It is what the Lord decided He would deny Israel in verse 33:3 –

“*Go up* to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you *are* a stiff-necked people.” Exodus 33:3

Now, Moses acknowledges the truth of the statement once again, but he has heard the proclamation of the Lord. He has looked into the essence of his Creator as revealed to him in the divine proclamation, and he knows that the Lord is willing to forgive. Therefore, he anticipates the Lord’s forgiveness with our final words of the day...

^{9 (fin)} **and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your inheritance.”**

Moses asks for *salakh* or pardon. It is the first of 47 times that the term will be used, and it is *always* ascribed to the pardon of the Lord. Moses has seen the Lord’s compassion in His spoken word. As His word is the revelation of Himself, he knows that the Lord is by nature compassionate. And so, he asks for that which He knows the Lord possesses in unlimited abundance.

The verses are ended and we are seemingly left hanging as to whether the request will be granted or not. But have we forgotten our previous sermons so quickly? It is at this point in the narrative that the insert of the verses between Exodus 32:33 and 32:34 end. With the promise secured, we can take up the narrative with the words of Exodus 32:34–

“Now therefore, go, lead the people to *the place* of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin.”

Everything since Exodus 32:33 until now has been an insert account. The request of Moses is granted, in its fullness, by the words of Exodus 32:34. It is realized in the word *Malaki*, or “My Angel.” Rather than merely *malak* or any given “angel” the words confirm that the Divine Presence, the Angel of the Lord, will be the one who goes before Israel.

The tabernacle will be built, the Presence of the Lord will be in their midst, and Israel will have been shown to receive the grace which Moses so greatly desired for his people. This then brings us to my closing words of the day for you.

If the Lord was willing to grant to a fallible, human mediator His assurances of covenant blessings and grace, how much more willing do you suppose He is to grant the same to us because of the perfect, and unsullied petitions of Christ on our behalf?

We have trusted in Him, and He is there, even now petitioning His Father for us when we commit our own transgressions against Him. We set up idols and we bow down to them. We turn our stiff necks away from Him and exercise our own stubborn wills in doing what we wish rather than what He commands.

And yet, because of the Lamb who was slain, we have the perfect forgiveness of a far better covenant. We have the absolute and pure assurances of the word of God concerning the ministering of Christ Jesus on our behalf. Is the Lord in our midst? Youbetcha. He has sealed us with His Holy Spirit – our guarantee of redemption.

He has taken us as His inheritance. As this is so, let us not waiver in our confidence even when we waiver in our devotion. We are certain to fall, but He is more certain to forgive. It is a promise from the very foot of Calvary to all who believe. It is the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Closing Verse: *“Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, ¹⁸ the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of **His inheritance** in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰ which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.” Ephesians 1:15-21*

Next Week: Exodus 34:10-26 *The Lord has spoken and He will surely not relent...* (Behold, I am Making a Covenant) (95th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Lord's Inheritance

And the Lord said to Moses
Cut two tablets of stone like those at the first
And I will write on these tablets the words
That were on the first tablets which you broke in your outburst

So be ready in the morning
And come up in the morning to Mount Sinai
And present yourself to Me
There on the top of the mountain, by and by

And no man shall come up with you
And let no man throughout all the mountain be seen
Let neither flocks nor herds feed
Before that mountain where you and I will convene

So he cut two tablets of stone like the first ones
Then Moses rose early in the morning, at dawn of the day so new

And went up Mount Sinai
As the Lord had commanded him to do

And he took in his hand the two tablets of stone
And thus he ascended all alone

Now the Lord descended in the cloud
And stood with him there
And proclaimed the name of the Lord
A sight and sound both precious and rare

And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed
“The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious
Longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth
Keeping mercy for thousands, mercy so spacious

Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, it is so
By no means clearing the guilty, they will be done in
Visiting the iniquity of the fathers, even though
Upon the children and the children’s children

To the third and the fourth generation
A warning to Israel the nation

So Moses made haste
And bowed his head toward the earth
And worshiped
Yes, he worshiped the Lord of infinite worth

Then he said, “If now I have found grace in Your sight
O Lord, let my Lord, I pray, go among us; give us this chance
Even though we are a stiff-necked people
And pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your inheritance

O Lord God, how glorious You are; glorious in all ways
You are grandiose and holy, robed in majesty
And so we shall pursue you with all of our hearts, for all of our days
And praise You with all of our souls; yes Lord God Almighty

Thank You for how You have revealed Yourself to us
You proclaimed the name of the Lord, and came in the Person of Jesus
Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 34:10-26

(BEHOLD, I AM MAKING A COVENANT)

There is a lot going on in these verses today, and some of them seem entirely disconnected from the other verses, but that really is not the case. The Lord has shown grace to Israel rather than destroying them. Now, He is further refining many of the laws that He previously gave them. He is also repeating, in part or in whole, some of them as well.

At one point in the passage the people are forbidden from making a covenant with the people of the land, sacrificing to their gods, or intermingling with them through marriage. This is actually called harlotry. The reason for this is that in doing any of these things, their hearts will be torn away from worshipping the true God.

The rest of the Old Testament shows us continual violations of this, and the results were exactly as prophesied. We, as a species, have a perverse spot in our hearts where we want to flagrantly disobey God and turn from Him. Edgar Allan Poe would call it “The Imp of the Perverse.”

We are prone to doing something which is self-destructive simply because it takes hold of us and impels us to do it. Although his words are large, often difficult, and at times obsolete from our modern tongue, what he says well reflects the attitude we have. Listen to how he describes our often hell-bent nature –

“We stand upon the brink of a precipice. We peer into the abyss — we grow sick and dizzy. Our first impulse is to shrink from the danger. Unaccountably we remain. By slow degrees our sickness and dizziness and horror become merged in a cloud of unnamable feeling. By gradations, still more imperceptible, this cloud assumes shape, as did the vapor from the bottle out of which arose the genius in the Arabian Nights. But out of this our cloud upon the precipice’s edge, there grows into palpability, a shape, far more terrible than any genius or any demon of a tale, and yet it is but a thought, although a fearful one, and one which chills the very marrow of our bones with the fierceness of the delight of its horror. It is merely the idea of what would be our sensations during the sweeping precipitancy of a fall from such a height. And this fall — this rushing annihilation — for the very reason that it involves that one most ghastly and loathsome of all the most ghastly and loathsome images of death and suffering which have ever presented themselves to our imagination — for this very cause do we now the most vividly desire it. And because our reason violently deters us from the brink, therefore do

we the most impetuously approach it. There is no passion in nature so demoniacally impatient, as that of him who, shuddering upon the edge of a precipice, thus meditates a Plunge. To indulge, for a moment, in any attempt at thought, is to be inevitably lost; for reflection but urges us to forbear, and therefore it is, I say, that we cannot. If there be no friendly arm to check us, or if we fail in a sudden effort to prostrate ourselves backward from the abyss, we plunge, and are destroyed.”

Poe’s character was consumed with the Imp of the Perverse. A thought entered his mind which would surely condemn him if he spoke it, and yet, speak it he did. He tried walking quickly from it, then running, but it over took him. He could no more constrain himself than a balloon could keep from bursting when over-filled.

Poe understood human nature better than almost any. Outside of the Bible itself, I know of no source that peers so deeply into the human soul. We all carry with us the Imp and it will tear us away from what we should most cherish – Life.

But the Bible also gives us a cure from being consumed by the Imp. It is to hide God’s word in our heart and to hold fast to it, remembering it, and reciting it. It is the safety for our soul and the protection from the eternal curse...

Text Verse: *“Remember the Law of Moses, My servant,
Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel,
With the statutes and judgments.
⁵ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet
Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.
⁶ And he will turn
The hearts of the fathers to the children,
And the hearts of the children to their fathers,
Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.” Malachi 4:4-6*

Each word of today’s passage is connected because they are given as a safeguard from the onslaught of the Imp. The people are being reminded in law, and the law contains reminders in life. The rite of the firstborn, the calling to the feasts, even not boiling a young goat in its mother’s milk.

It is all given to ward off the Imp and to have the people fix their eyes on the Lord. This is what we are asked to do as well. To “fix our eyes on Jesus,” to “fix our thoughts on Jesus,” and to meditate on God’s laws day and night. These things have value because they will keep us from the Imp, and they will keep us from the Lake of Fire where the

Imp calls us from. Our lessons are all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Lord Whose Name is Jealous (verses 10-17)

¹⁰ And He said: "Behold, I make a covenant.

The last words of Moses in the previous verse said, "Lord, let my Lord, I pray, go among us, even though we *are* a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your inheritance." The words now coming will confirm that this request is granted. Israel will be made into the Lord's inheritance.

This is implied in the words, *Hinneh anoki koret berit* – "Behold, I am cutting a covenant." It confirms that the covenant will be worked out. Israel had broken it and it could have been annulled in its entirety. If so, they would have been susceptible to the entire weight of the penalty of death, pictured in the original shedding of the blood of the animals. But they had found grace.

Moses had interceded for the people, and the Lord had relented from fulfilling the terrifying terms of the covenant which they had violated. Now, it is God that makes, or "cuts," the covenant. It is one sided and therefore, "...if there be quarrels, we must bear all the blame; if there be peace, God must have all the glory" (Joseph Benson).

The action here doesn't mean that the original covenant is reinstated. Nor does it mean that there is a "new covenant." The grace of God in forgiving the transgressions of the people "describes rather His future rule as a constant, continuous establishment of a covenant" (Lange).

Therefore, the entire time of His dealing with Israel under this covenant is a transitional phase which will be in anticipation of a New Covenant. This is confirmed many hundreds of years later in the words of Jeremiah –

"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— ³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. ³³ But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds,

and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." Jeremiah 31:31-34

The word of the Lord through Jeremiah points back to the covenant which was broken by Israel after being brought out by the Lord. Thus, what is being renewed here is a transitional phase of God's redemptive workings, and it only anticipates a New Covenant at some point in the future.

¹⁰ (con't) **Before all your people I will do marvels**

The word "before" is *neged*. It gives the idea of right in front of, or in view of all. It is the same word used in the 23rd Psalm when speaking of the Lord's provision being provided right before the eyes of David's enemies with the words, "You prepare a table **before** me in the presence of my enemies" (v. 5)

This promise of marvels is said to be before "your people," meaning the people of Israel. They will personally behold what the Lord will do. In this, it will bring about a two-fold aspect for them to consider.

First, it will be that their faith in God should be strengthened as they see the marvels He does, but it will also actually bring about a more terrifying culpability when the people stray. Having personally seen the work of the Lord, they will thus be more accountable should they reject Him.

¹⁰ (con't) **such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation;**

The words "have been done" here are from a single verb, *bara*. When used in relation to God, it signifies His creative effort. It is the word which was used in Genesis 1:1 concerning the creation of the heavens and the earth. The next time it will be used in Scripture will be in Numbers 16, confirming the word of the Lord now spoken –

"By this you shall know that the Lord has sent me to do all these works, for *I have not done them* of my own will. ²⁹ If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, *then* the Lord has not sent me. ³⁰ But if the Lord **creates** a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and

swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the Lord.”

-Numbers 16:28-30

The Lord created a new thing in the destruction of those who rebelled against Him. This is the type of marvel that He would work in and among the people with whom this covenant was being made. Their eyes would behold marvels never before conceived of.

¹⁰ (con't) **and all the people among whom you *are* shall see the work of the Lord.**

In verse 9, Moses said to the Lord, “If now I have found grace in Your sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray, **go among us**, even though we *are* a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your inheritance.”

The Lord now uses the same term, among, but He contrasts the words “go among us” with “among whom you *are*.” What this means is that Moses is the one who interceded for the people. He is considered the administrator of the law. And so even after his death, it will be recognized that the great marvels of the Lord will be among the people of Moses.

Jesus confirms this thought with words from Matthew 23:2 which say, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat.” The law is called the “Law of Moses.” The authority of the law is called “Moses’s seat.” Thus the great deeds of the Lord will be before “all the people among whom you *are*,” meaning Moses.

Therefore, the “marvels” which are spoken of here are not just constrained to the lifetime of Moses, but they are all the marvels which will occur during the time of the law, culminating in the greatest works of all under the law, those of Christ – to include the fulfillment of the Law of Moses itself.

¹⁰ (con't) **For it *is* an awesome thing that I will do with you.**

The word translated here as “awesome” is *yare* – it is a noun which means “fright” or a “terrible act,” but it includes the thought of being placed in a state of fearful reverence. The work which will be accomplished by the Lord will be a terror. It will be a terror to the enemies of Israel, as they are destroyed for the sake of Israel, and it will be a terror

to the people of Israel as they are destroyed for violating the covenant which is set before them.

The world will behold the might, power, and majesty of the Lord in both contexts, a work which continues on to this day as He continues to bring the terror which was promised 3500 years ago.

And again, the Lord says that this will be a thing “that I will do with you.” He uses Moses as the cause of the terror which will proceed from the Lord. As I said, this continues on until this day. But how can that be if the Law of Moses is annulled in Christ? It is because Daniel 9:24-27 promises 7 more years to the people of Israel to come into the New Covenant through the work of Christ.

This is why, even to this day, the terror of the Lord as described in these verses applies to all who witness what He will do to and through Israel. When we think of the ultimate terror, that of the Tribulation Period, we can see the immensity of the words spoken at this time to Moses. He probably had no idea the scope of what he was being told. For Israel, the terror will be realized in its fullness by the words –

“Alas! For that day is great,
So that none is like it;
And it is the time of Jacob’s trouble,
But he shall be saved out of it.” Jeremiah 30:7

For the world at large, the terror will be realized in the words of Revelation –

“Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” Revelation 6:16, 17

¹¹ Observe what I command you this day.

This is spoken to Moses personally. He will be given a set of commands, most of which are positive in nature. The admonition here is to ensure that the people, typified by Moses, were to adhere to the commands. But the Lord doesn’t immediately give the commands. Before doing so, he makes a promise on which the commands are actually dependent...

11 (con't) Behold, I am driving out from before you the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.

These words both form one of the wonders the Lord promises He will do, and they form the basis on which the subsequent commands will be given. He promises that it will be by His power, not Israel's, that the nations would be driven out. That Israel was used in the process does not negate His having accomplished it. Rather, Israel was a part of His arsenal in making it come about. That this is one of the coming wonders He will perform is seen many years later in the words of David –

“And who *is* like Your people, like Israel, the one nation on the earth whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people, to make for Himself a name—and to do for Yourself great and awesome deeds for Your land—before Your people whom You redeemed for Yourself from Egypt, the nations, and their gods? ²⁴ For You have made Your people Israel Your very own people forever; and You, Lord, have become their God.” 2 Samuel 7:23, 24

David spoke both of the redemption of the people from Egypt, but also from the nations, meaning many of the nations mentioned here in this verse. The Lord promised He would do this, and He fulfilled His promise. But just as importantly as this, the driving out of these nations is necessary because it will provide Israel the basis for the laws which He will now pronounce...

12 Take heed to yourself,

These words are an imperative. The heart is prone to wander and the flesh is weak. Moses is being instructed now that a positive mindset and action is required in order to keep from failing. And lest we think we are exempted from this while living in the dispensation of grace, Paul warns us in the church otherwise –

“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.”

-1 Corinthians 10:12, 13

12 (con't) lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst.

The nations of the land were to be driven out for a specific set of reasons. First, they had become so perverse and ungodly that the judgment of God was due them. This is seen in Leviticus 18 –

“You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit *any* of these abominations, *either* any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you ²⁷ (for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who *were* before you, and thus the land is defiled).” Leviticus 18:26, 27

Secondly, it was promised to Abraham and his chosen descendants. Israel was that select line and the time of the fulfillment of that promise was rapidly approaching –

“Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.” Genesis 15:15, 16

And the third reason is that if they did stay, and Israel made a covenant with them, the Lord now says that such an action would become “a snare in your midst.” This is a close repeat of the words of Exodus 23. There it said –

“You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. ³³ They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me. For *if* you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.”

A covenant with the people would imply a covenant with their gods. Such an action would be sin against the Lord. Making alliances with those who worship other gods will inevitably result in a weakening of the true faith. It is as a snare by which one is caught. It is as if one is walking along, and without even seeing it lying there, they step in it and are set on a path to destruction.

This is the end for all who mingle the true faith with that which is false. Unfortunately, Israel failed to heed. Even today, 3500 years later, they continue to fail in this regard.

¹³ But you shall destroy their altars, break their *sacred* pillars, and cut down their wooden images

In Exodus 23, the people were told to break down the sacred pillars of the inhabitants. The Lord adds onto that here. First, they are to destroy their altars. The word *nathats*, or “destroy” is introduced here. It gives the idea of breaking down, and thus to destroy.

The Lord had mandated what type of altar was acceptable to use before Him. These were pagan altars which were to be utterly removed from the land.

Next, they were to “break down their *sacred* pillars.” The false gods were identified with the images which represented them. They were to be utterly broken down. They were to be crushed, burned, and left as nothing more than refuse.

It was the practice of conquering forces to take the idols of the vanquished nations and keep them as trophies of victory. However, this was not to be condoned in Israel. They were false, they couldn’t save their own people, and they could only entice Israel to eventually look to them for what they could never provide. The wicked king Amaziah actually did exactly this –

Now it was so, after Amaziah came from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the people of Seir, set them up *to be* his gods, and bowed down before them and burned incense to them. ¹⁵ Therefore the anger of the Lord was aroused against Amaziah, and He sent him a prophet who said to him, “Why have you sought the gods of the people, which could not rescue their own people from your hand?” 2 Chronicles 25:14, 15

Thirdly, they were to “cut down their wooden images.” These images, or *Asherah* are introduced into Scripture here. They were based on a goddess of the same name found in Phoenicia, Assyria, Canaan, and the like. They will be noted throughout the Old Testament as being worshipped by Israel. Exactly as the Lord warned, they became a snare to the people.

¹⁴ (for you shall worship no other god,

Each of these things that was instructed to be broken down was because it represented a false god. Hence the term *ki* or “for” is given. The plural “other gods” of the first commandment is made singular – “...you shall worship no other god.” The Lord is being explicit because the people had already done this on their own, fashioning a false god, erecting an altar to it, and sacrificing to it.

In His hot displeasure, He was prepared to destroy the people. Now, He is explicitly stating that as the people of the land were to be destroyed, so should their false religious implements be so destroyed. He has promised to take care of the inhabitants,

and He expects Israel to take care of what they leave behind. These things served no other purpose but that of false worship and idolatry.

¹⁴ (con't) **for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God),**

It is an unpopular set of words for many. People find the thought of jealousy being ascribed to God as something unworthy of His divine nature. But this is absurd for several reasons. First, He claims the title to Himself. Thus challenging the attribute is a challenge against Him.

Secondly, if God was not jealous of Himself and His own honor, it would mean that idolatry was unimportant to Him. If this were true, then it would mean He cared nothing for His creatures. Idolatry includes many moral negatives – adultery, self-flagellation, even human sacrifice.

Thus, it would be contrary to the nature of God for Him to *not* be jealous. Thus, the Lord's name and his character answer one to the other. The Lord's name is *Qanna*, and *el qanna hu* – "A jealous God is He."

Further, in Proverbs 6:34, jealousy is called a husband's fury. This is what is seen here. The covenant between the Lord and the people of Israel was a type of marriage contract. In the worship of other gods, the fury of their Husband, His righteous displeasure, would be brought out of Him.

Finally, this type of jealousy doesn't indicate jealousy of success in another. It speaks of a defense of His honor and glory. When one bows to another god, the Lord isn't jealous of that false god receiving worship. His jealousy is having been deprived of what He is justly due. His words in Isaiah show the thought well –

"I *am* the Lord, that *is* My name;
And My glory I will not give to another,
Nor My praise to carved images." Isaiah 42:8

As Matthew Henry states about this verse, "Those cannot worship God aright, who do not worship him only."

¹⁵ **lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they play the harlot with their gods and make sacrifice to their gods, and *one of them* invites you and you eat of his sacrifice,**

The idea of verses 15 & 16 is, “One thing leads to another.” If the people were to make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, they would then be joined in a familiar way with them. But the Lord has promised to drive them out of the land. A covenant would imply that they receive safe harbor within the land.

This would be contrary to the work of the Lord in expelling them. Now, with their safe harbor, they would continue to “play the harlot” with their gods. This is the first time this word, *zanah*, or harlot, is used in a spiritual sense in the Bible, and it is used of Gentile people in relation to their gods.

The Lord is their Creator too, and yet they sacrifice to that which is not God. In these words, His jealousy is as evident as in that which He proclaims towards Israel. But they are not His redeemed people and so they are to be destroyed. But, with safe harbor, they instead sacrifice to their own gods and they will even invite Israel to join them. The covenant brothers will now be brothers in worship also.

¹⁶ and you take of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot with their gods and make your sons play the harlot with their gods.

Brothers in worship will inevitably become brothers by blood. The relations will become deeply rooted in family. In joining in marriage, there will be a joining in false worship, and the sons and daughters of Israel would soon “play the harlot” with false gods.

Here the thought of the marriage tie between the Lord and Israel is seen in its full sense. A covenant was made with the Lord, resembling the rite of marriage. Just as when a woman who goes out from her husband to another man is considered adultery (well, it used to be), so is the worship of other gods by the people of the Lord. This is the idea which is conveyed here concerning sacrificing to, and worshipping of, other gods.

It is a lesson Israel failed to heed, and they were swept up in idolatry, from the least even to the greatest. Kings as great as Solomon intermarried, and they left the Lord in order to worship the gods of their wives.

¹⁷ “You shall make no molded gods for yourselves.

This verse ends the long chiasm which started all the way back at verse 32:1. The chiasm opened with an example of idolatry in the making of the golden calf; we have now been given warnings against idolatry in these commands of the re-worked and continually reworking covenant of the Lord. Here as a final warning, He commands explicitly against

what they had done by using the words *elohe masekah*, or “molded gods.” The word “molded” was first used when speaking of the molten calf which Aaron made, now it is warned against explicitly in any type, shape, or form. No molded gods!

*I am a God of grace, longsuffering and kind
I am a God of mercy, forgiving transgression and sin
But I am a jealous God; to harlotry I am not blind
And in your harlotry, you will find yourself done in*

*If you go a-whoring after other gods, away from Me
Your heart will be led completely astray
My fury will rise against you, most assuredly
And I will destroy you and your wicked way*

*Cling to Me! Let Me be your only God
Follow Me and I will give you life and love
Pursue Me always in this life you trod
And I will shower you with blessings, yes blessings from above*

II. Close Fellowship With the Lord (verses 18-26)

¹⁸ “The Feast of Unleavened Bread you shall keep. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, in the appointed time of the month of Abib; for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt.

In what seems an abrupt change in commands, a feast of the Lord is suddenly introduced. It will be followed up with the other two pilgrim feasts. There is actually nothing abrupt about this. Rather, it is a logical progression of thought. The people are warned against idolatry, and then they are admonished to keep the precepts which acknowledged them as the people of the Lord.

As the Lord’s people, they would fellowship with Him intimately through these feasts. Instead of sacrificing to other gods, they would be sacrificing to Him. One must ask why, though, the double feast of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread is simply called the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The reason is that they had been redeemed. The Passover, though observed annually, was commemorative in nature. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was instructive in

nature. It signified being separated from the heathen world. They were to commemorate this annually to show their set-apart status. Every year at *ha'aviv*, or the time of fresh young ears of grain, they were to observe the feast.

¹⁹ “All that open the womb are Mine, and every male firstborn among your livestock, whether ox or sheep.

The term *peter* or “open” was introduced into the Bible in Exodus 13. It was used 5 times where the “Law of the Firstborn” was given in great detail. Now it is mentioned again, three times in verses 19 & 20. As this mandate was given before the giving of the law, it is now brought into the law itself. It is not an option, but rather a command which must be adhered to.

This claim on the firstborn is an assertion by the Lord that all born to Israel – man or beast – were His, but the firstborn was taken as representative of that fact. The people were set apart to Him and the clean animals were His.

²⁰ But the firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb. And if you will not redeem him, then you shall break his neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem.

The donkey is representative of all unclean animals. They were not to be offered to the Lord, and so they had to either be redeemed by a clean animal, or they were to be killed. A picture is made here. The donkey, symbolic of unclean Gentiles, was to be redeemed with a lamb or have its neck broken. In picture, the Gentile had never been redeemed by Christ. Instead, his neck remained turned in defiance to Him. This is why the breaking of the neck is chosen.

Human sacrifice was unacceptable, and so all human sons of Israel were required to be redeemed.

²⁰ (con't) “And none shall appear before Me empty-handed.

The word “empty-handed” is *reqam*. It gives the sense of something being vain. The word was used in Exodus 3:21 when the Lord promised that Israel would not come out of Egypt empty-handed –

“So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go. ²¹ And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be, when you go, that you shall not go **empty-handed.**” Exodus 3:20, 21

The intent here is that, “Just as I brought you out of Egypt with hands that were not empty, so you shall come before Me with hands that are not empty. To do so would be a vain thing.” The Lord provided for Israel; Israel was to acknowledge that.

²¹ **“Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest;**

The mandate of the Sabbath rest has already been seen at the time of the giving of Manna in Exodus 16. It was brought in as the fourth of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. It was reiterated in the Book of the Covenant in Exodus 23. And it was again given as an appendix in the directions for the construction of the Sanctuary in Exodus 31. It is given again now for the following reason which is tied into the annual harvest feasts...

²¹ (con’t) **in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest.**

The word *kharish*, or “plowing” is rather rare, being used only three times in the Bible. Normally the Bible speaks of seedtime and harvest, but here it speaks of plowing. This is set in contrast to reaping then. The times where hard physical work was required, it was still to be stopped on each Sabbath day.

This is especially so because if the weather was bad all week, these tasks may have been urgently needed. However, the Lord may provide a marvelously beautiful day on the Sabbath. The obvious thought might be, “The Lord has given us this beautiful day to plow so that we will be fruitful.” But rather, they are being told now that this was not the case. The Sabbath was not to be violated.

²² **“And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest,**

Khag Shavuot, or the “Feast of Weeks,” gets its name from a seven-week period which started at the bringing of the Firstfruits to the Lord. This is detailed in Leviticus 23:10, 11. In Exodus 23, this same feast was call *ha’qatsiyar*, or “the harvest.” The feast in Greek and in the New Testament is called “Pentecost” meaning “fiftieth.”

This grain harvest, which began fifty days earlier, was now considered finished. As the feast of harvest, it was a celebration of the blessing of labor in the field.

²² (con't) **and the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end.**

Khag ha'asiph, or Feast [of] the Ingathering is the final of the three mandatory pilgrim feasts. It is only called by this name here and Exodus 23:16. When the feast is mentioned elsewhere, it is called Sukkoth, or Tabernacles. It is referring to the ending of the harvest season when the labors of the people are gathered in from the field.

The dating for this feast will later be fixed as the 15th day of the seventh month and it will last for seven days. This corresponds to around October on our calendar. There are various crops that grow in Israel throughout the summer months and by this time, they are almost all harvested.

Generally, the last crops to be gathered in are the grapes, figs, pomegranates, almonds, and olives. At the time when these harvests were accomplished, the people were to celebrate this feast of their labors, as it says "at the year's end."

The Hebrew term for "end" here is *tequphah*. It is a noun used for the first of just four times. It means a coming round or circuit, and it comes from the verb *naqaph* – to circle or go around. At this point of turning, the cycle of the agricultural life they lived would be ready to start once again.

²³ **"Three times in the year all your men shall appear before the Lord, the Lord God of Israel.**

This verse is almost a repeat of Exodus 23:17. The only difference is that it includes the words *elohe yisrael* or "the God of Israel" at the end of it. The Lord Yehovah is specifically said to be "the Lord Yehovah, the God of Israel."

²⁴ **For I will cast out the nations before you**

The Lord has promised to do this, though the people did not fully obey the Lord concerning making covenants with the inhabitants, nor did they fully obey in driving out all of the people, the nations were essentially driven out from the land. Israel ruled the land of Canaan as was originally promised to Abraham in Genesis 12.

²⁴ (con't) **and enlarge your borders;**

Later in Genesis 15, the Lord promised Abraham an enlargement of the borders originally promised. That is repeated now, and it was fulfilled at the time of David and leading into the rule of Solomon. Though they only possessed this larger expanse of land for a short time, the promise was fulfilled.

²⁴ (con't) **neither will any man covet your land when you go up to appear before the Lord your God three times in the year**

These words are found nowhere else in Scripture, but they are so memorable that no other recording of them is needed. Even though every male of Israel was to present himself before the Lord, leaving every city and town with only women and children, the Lord made a promise that they would never need to fear during these feasts, even with no protection at all in a country larger than the state of New Jersey. With its increased borders at the time of Solomon, it was far, far larger than that. It is an amazing promise, but it was a promise based on the obedience of the people.

²⁵ **“You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leaven, nor shall the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover be left until morning.**

With but a few differences, this verse is almost the same as Exodus 23:18. In both verses, the blood is the object of what is offered instead of the sacrifice – “You shall not offer the blood.” As the Bible says that the life is in the blood, and because grain offerings were considered separate offerings than sacrifices, it is referring only to the Passover, which is a type of Christ’s cross. Thus it is called, “My sacrifice.”

Leaven was to be completely purged from the home prior to the slaughtering of the Passover. Thus it is a picture of the sinless Christ who shed His blood for us. There was no sin to be found in Him, just as there was no leaven to be found in the homes of those who partook of the Passover. There was to be nothing left of the lamb by morning time. This was explained in Exodus 12 –

“You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire.” Exodus 12:10

²⁶ **“The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring to the house of the Lord your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.”**

Verse 26 is identical to Exodus 23:19, word for word. For that reason, I’ll send you there either via my written sermon, or YouTube for you to get all of the exciting details.

Suffice it to say that every word of this verse points to the work of Christ. His resurrection, and all the way through to the end times.

In fact, each of the precepts that we have looked at today picture Christ intimately. If you missed those previous sermons, go back and watch them to get a full appreciation for all that is entailed in them. There is truly marvel to be seen in how Christ is so beautifully revealed. Today, I simply took the time to highlight the changes from previous passages, and to explain any additions. But be sure that it is all about Christ.

The Old Testament was given to show us what lay ahead in Him. Without Him, we are all lost. We follow the Imp of the Perverse and we turn our hearts away from God, but with Christ, we are given the ability to focus our thoughts anew and to redirect our hearts and our lives to a state which God finds good and pleasing.

And it is all based on our faith and His grace. If you have never received the good news of Jesus Christ, please do it today. He died so that we can live. Through the blood of His cross, we are reconciled to God and brought near to Him once again.

Closing Verse: *“Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the Lord your God has forbidden you. ²⁴ For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.” Deuteronomy 4:23, 24*

Next Week: Exodus 34:27-35 *Don't think this title at all odd...* (The Refulgency of God) (96th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Covenant Continues

And He said: “Behold, I make a covenant
Before all your people, of every station
I will do marvels such as have not been done
In all the earth, nor in any nation

And all the people among whom you are
Shall see the work of the Lord
For it is an awesome thing that I will do with you
The guarantee is my word

Observe what I command you this day
Behold, I am driving out from before you, as I determine is right
The Amorite and the Canaanite and the Hittite
And the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite

Take heed to yourself
Lest a covenant with the inhabitants you make
Of the land where you are going
Lest it be a snare in your midst, this warning do take

But you shall destroy their altars
Break their sacred pillars too
And cut down their wooden images
For no other god shall be worshipped by you

For the Lord, whose name is Jealous
Is a jealous God, and for His name He is zealous

Lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land
And they play the harlot with their gods, a terrible vice
And make sacrifice to their gods
And one of them invites you, and you eat of his sacrifice

And you take of his daughters for your sons
And his daughters the harlot with their gods play
And make your sons play the harlot with their gods
You shall make no molded gods for yourselves; this you shall obey

The Feast of Unleavened Bread you shall keep
Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread
As I commanded you
In the appointed time of the month of Abib; just as I have said

For in the month of Abib out from Egypt you came
And so the nations heard of my great name

All that open the womb are Mine
And every male firstborn among your livestock
Whether ox or sheep
Animals of the herd or of the flock

But the firstborn of a donkey
You shall redeem with a lamb for My name's sake
And if you will not redeem him
Then his neck you shall break

All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem, I have commanded
And none shall appear before Me empty-handed

Six days you shall work
But on the seventh day you shall rest
In plowing time and in harvest you shall rest
Do not disobey and thus put me to the test

And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks
Of the firstfruits of the harvest of wheat
And the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end
When the harvest cycle is complete

Three times in the year all your men
Shall appear before the Lord
The Lord God of Israel
This according to my word

For I will cast out the nations before you, so understand
And enlarge your borders, so will it be – have no fear
Neither will any man covet your land
When you go up to appear before the Lord your God three times in the year

You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leaven
This I state to you as a warning
Nor shall the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover
Be left until morning

The first of the firstfruits of your land
You shall bring to the house of the Lord your God

You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk
You shall not so defile the land upon which you tread

Lord God, You gave good laws to Israel
But as a people, they failed You time after time
They turned their necks to you, and raised their fists as well
But through it all, You have claimed, "This people is Mine"

And the people of Your church have likewise turned away
We have shunned Your grace and gone after works of our own
But still You hold out nailed-scarred hands, even to this day
Great mercies to Your wayward people you have shown

Help us Lord to turn our hearts to You
Help us to be like Christ, ever faithful and true

And as we walk upon this world, let us ever give You praise
Yes, for the duration of our lives, whatever number be our days

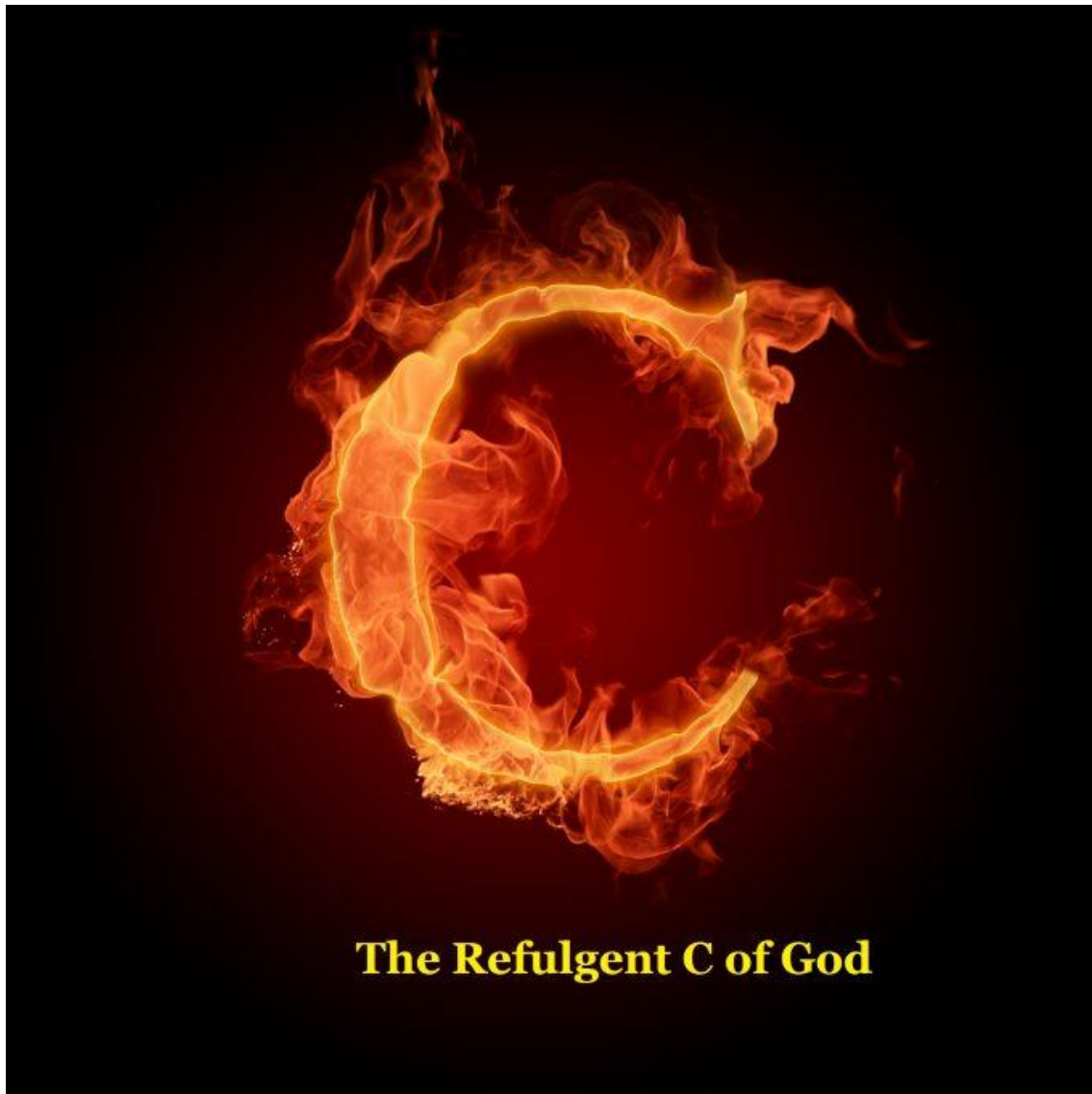
For You are worthy, O God – Yes, faithful and true
And so we shall in heaven's majestic home, ever be praising You

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 34:27-35
(THE REFULGENCY OF THE LORD)

Some years ago, I was reading this passage and it made me think of the words, “the refulgency of God.” The word “refulgent” isn’t very common. It simply means “shining radiantly” or “resplendent.” Thus, the “refulgency of God” would be the shining radiance or resplendent glory of God.

Being the odd soul that I am, I decided that instead of “refulgency,” I would modify the word to “Refulgent C.” From there, I made a meme with a marvelous, burning C on it, and put on it the title, “The Refulgent C of God.” Do you know that not one person on Facebook got my pun? I was crushed. That was the end of my meme making days...



In today's account, and taken together with the rest of Scripture, we will logically see hints of the Trinity. We will also see the temporary nature of the Old Covenant, and how that Old Covenant is actually a hindrance to a right standing with God.

This is one of those passages that seems almost obscure and even quaint when quickly passed over, but what it reveals to us is as important to New Testament theology as almost any other passage we will come across.

Text Verse: *“So she took off her widow’s garments, covered herself with a veil and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place which was on the way to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given to him as a wife.” Genesis 38:14*

Judah's daughter-in-law covered herself in a veil in order to hide who she was from him. Moses covered his face in a veil as well. What are we being told in these passages? Well, if you listened to and remember the account from Genesis 38, you may already be partially aware of what today's passage is showing us.

If not, sit tight, pay attention, enjoy what God has set before you, and know that He is unveiling His truth to those who are willing to accept what He has done through the Person and work of Jesus Christ. One theme which resounds, time and again, in the pages of the Bible is “DOCTRINE MATTERS!”

How much does it matter to you? To some, clinging to the Law of Moses is where their hope lies. For those, today's passage should be a wake-up call. It is time to put behind us works of the law. It is time to come to Christ. For those who have trusted in the finished work of Christ, today's passage is a reaffirmation that you are on the right road, the advantageous avenue, the perfect parkway, and the street of salvation.

Be pleased to know that God has accepted you because you have received Jesus. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. He was there with the Lord (verses 27 & 28)

²⁷ Then the Lord said to Moses,

These words are a continuation of what began in verse 1. The entire chapter is interconnected and is revealing the concept of the on-going nature of the covenant

which is made between the Lord and Israel. This on-going nature of the account is evidenced in the next words...

27 (con't) **“Write these words,**

The command to write is not based on what follows, but what he has just said in verses 10-26. As was noted last week, the Lord isn't reinstating the original covenant. Nor is a “new covenant” being made. Rather, this is a constant and continuous establishment of a covenant to the people.

Because of this, the entire time of His dealing with Israel is a transitional phase which will be in anticipation of a New Covenant. It is for this reason that the words of the prophets are considered as a part of the covenant. When the Lord spoke through Isaiah, for example, it was to be considered a part of the covenant.

He would deal with Israel in a unique way which was in anticipation of a coming New Covenant. This was shown to be true last week when citing the words of Jeremiah 31 where a New Covenant was promised. As Jeremiah was speaking under the Old, it means that the entire working of the Lord with Israel was a part of a much greater plan which was to come.

The word of the Lord through Jeremiah pointed back to the covenant which was broken by Israel after being brought out of Egypt by the Lord, and yet it anticipated a New Covenant at some future point. And nothing shows us this more clearly than the words of Deuteronomy 18:15-18 –

“The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, ¹⁶ according to all you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.’

¹⁷ “And the Lord said to me: ‘What they have spoken is good. ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.’”

This “Prophet” mentioned by Moses is none other than the anticipated Messiah. In John 1:21, the people wondered if John the Baptist was this coming Prophet. He told them he was not. As this Prophet, meaning Christ Jesus, was to have the words of the Lord in His mouth, then it shows that His words were to be a part of this on-going covenant. As He declared that the covenant was fulfilled in Him, and simultaneously He declared the

initiation of a New Covenant, we see that the entire Old Covenant was both on-going and yet limited in its duration. It ended with Christ's shed blood.

27 (con't) **for according to the tenor of these words**

ki pi ha'devarim ha'elleh – “for as to the mouth the words these.” In other words, as the words were spoken to Moses, so He was to write. This shows us that the Lord is the ultimate Author of Scripture. When the Holy Spirit moved upon the prophets, it was according to the word, or mouth, of the Lord.

This is seen countless times in the Bible. A prophet would say, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel...” or some other similar statement. At times, it was the Lord who spoke directly to the prophet, at other times, the prophet spoke under inspiration of the Spirit. But at all times, it is the word of the Lord which defines Scripture. For this reason we can rightly say that Jesus is both the Author and the Subject of all inspired Scripture. He even hinted at this in the giving of the New Testament –

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you.” John 16:13-15

And yet, Jesus claimed that the words He spoke were not under His own authority, but those of the Father who dwells in Him –

“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. ¹¹ Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.” John 14:10, 11

Thus, we come to understand more fully His words to the disciples, “I and My Father are one.” The work of the Trinity is fully revealed in the giving of the word of God, the Holy Bible, to us. It is this same Lord who thus says now to Moses...

27 (con't) **I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.”**

As the Lord made the covenant, and as He fulfilled the covenant in Himself, and as He initiated the New Covenant in His blood, then we can see the on-going nature of this Old Covenant until the time of its ending. It is all about Christ. It is all about what He determines for those He elects. As this point in history, the covenant is with Moses and Israel.

²⁸ So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights;

The interval of time is repeated from Moses' previous ascent up the mountain. It seems as if a period of forty days and forty nights is excessive for what little information we have been given here, but Deuteronomy 9:18-20 explains the state of things. Moses spent much of this time interceding for the people who had sinned –

“And I fell down before the Lord, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger. ¹⁹ For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the Lord was angry with you, to destroy you. But the Lord listened to me at that time also. ²⁰ And the Lord was very angry with Aaron *and* would have destroyed him; so I prayed for Aaron also at the same time.”

It would be good at this time to reiterate the meaning of the number forty as defined by Bullinger. He says it is associated...

“...with a period of *probation, trial, and chastisement*—(not *judgment*, like the number 9, which stands in connection with the punishment of enemies, but the chastisement of sons, and of a covenant people). It is the product of 5 and 8, and points to the action of *grace* (5), leading to and ending in *revival and renewal* (8). This is certainly the case where *forty* relates to a period of evident *probation*. But where it relates to *enlarged dominion*, or to *renewed or extended rule*, then it does so in virtue of its factors 4 and 10, and in harmony with their signification.”

In fact, both of Bullinger's significations of the number forty apply here. Moses' time on the mountain is both a time of evident probation, and it is also a time of renewed and extended rule. The time period was certainly repeated as a test of the people below.

They had failed the first time during his absence; now they were being tested and refined through his second absence. But further, it is a time of renewing and extending

the original covenant. It is really an astonishing thing how the numbers of Scripture so perfectly and continually match what is occurring in each account.

²⁸ (con't) **he neither ate bread nor drank water.**

There are three people who are mentioned as having fasted for this time period in Scripture. The first is Moses who did it twice. In 1 Kings 19:8, Elijah is said to have fasted forty days and forty nights as he traveled to this very same mountain. And finally, Jesus is said to have fasted this same time period in Matthew 4:2. It seems improbable that someone could survive this amount of time without bread and water, but the reason for it is given explicitly in Matthew 4:4 during Jesus' trial –

“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” Matthew 4:4

There Jesus cites the words of Deuteronomy 8 which speak of the Manna which was given to the people –

“And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you *and* test you, to know what *was* in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. ³ So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every *word* that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.”

-Deuteronomy 8:2, 3

But Moses had no Manna, and so how can the two be reconciled? The answer is found in John 6 –

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰ This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” John 6:48-51

The Manna only pointed to Christ. Thus it is not at all improbable that these men were able to endure forty days and forty nights without food or drink. Christ is the true

Manna and He was able to sustain Moses and Elijah, just as He was able to sustain Himself – relying solely on the providence of God for nourishment.

²⁸ (con't) **And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.**

Although this appears to be speaking of Moses because he has been mentioned several times in repetition, the NKJV rightly translates this verse with a capital H on “He.” This clause is speaking not of Moses, but of the Lord. This is confirmed in the words of Deuteronomy 10:3-5 –

“So I made an ark of acacia wood, hewed two tablets of stone like the first, and went up the mountain, having the two tablets in my hand. ⁴ And He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing, the Ten Commandments, which the Lord had spoken to you in the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly; and the Lord gave them to me. ⁵ Then I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are, just as the Lord commanded me.”

Though the second set of tablets was made by Moses, the writing on them was still the work of the Lord. The purity of the word of God is evidenced in these marvelous verses in a most wonderful way. God has allowed us to transmit and carry His word, but it is still the word of the Lord.

There are notable contrasts between this forty day period, and that of Matthew 4. Here, Moses receives the word from the Lord on the high mountain. In Matthew, there is the same Lord protecting and defending this same word in the wilderness. In this, fallen Moses had asked for a divine revelation of the Lord. In Matthew 4, the Lord was tempted by the one who caused man to fall, Satan. In this, the Law is spoken in anticipation of it being adhered to. In Matthew, the Law is adhered to in anticipation of it being fulfilled. In this, the tablets foreshadow Christ, coming from Man, but embodying the law given by the Lord. In Christ is the Man who is the Lord and who embodies this same law.

There is more than just a quaint account of Moses and the Lord here. In this, there is the Lord giving us one picture after another of what He intended to do, which led to what He did, and which continues to be reflected in what He does for each person who comes to Him by faith.

*The word of God, glorious and pure
Has been given to us; a perfect gift
Its contents are truthful, steady and sure
There to provide our souls with a lift*

*When we are low, in a time of great need
We can go to this marvelous, perfect gift
And before we know it, even with great speed
Our souls have been given a blessed lift*

*Let us hold fast to this word which has been given to us
Let us never take for granted this marvelous gift
It is what refreshes our lives as it tells us of Jesus
And so it is exactly what we need to give our souls a lift*

II. That Which is Glorious (verses 29-35)

²⁹ Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain),

This is similar to Exodus 32:15. Both times, it is careful to note that the tablets were in the hand of Moses. The same is true in verse 4 when he ascended the mountain. The tablets were carefully noted as being in his hands there as well.

As the tablets are the means by which God's word is put on display, it begs an obvious question of us. Do we have the same care for God's word as He does? Each reference to the word of God in the word of God is noted as something which we are to be aware of, to tend to, to safeguard, and to hold in the highest of esteem.

Is this how we treat this same word which we have now been entrusted with? In the Bible, the term "in hand" has a similar meaning as in English. It refers to having possession of something and to have charge over its care. Is this attitude which we display towards this treasure of infinite value?

^{29 (con't)} that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him.

The translation here says, “the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him.” This is not the sense of what is written. Rather, it says, “the skin of his face shone *through* his talking with Him.” It was in the conversation with the Lord that his face was made to shine, and it continued to shine even afterwards.

A new word is introduced into the Bible here, *qaran*. It is a verb translated as “shone.” It is used just four times in the Bible, three times in this chapter when speaking of the shining face of Moses, and once in the 69th Psalm, where it is translated as “horns” –

“*This* also shall please the Lord better than an ox *or* bull,
Which has **horns** and hooves.” Psalm 69:31

Qaran comes from the noun *qeren* which means “horns.” Therefore, some translations say that Moses had horns –

“And when Moses came down from the mount Sinai, he held the two tables of the testimony, and he knew not that his face was horned from the conversation of the Lord.” Douay-Rheims

From these older translations, such as the Latin Vulgate and others, depictions have been made of him having actual horns, like those of a ram, but this is not the intent of the verse. Rather, the light which shone off of him was so brilliant that it emitted out rays of light just like the horns of an animal emit out of its head.

If we compare this descent down the mountain with the previous one, there are some important contrasts to note. In the first, he was filled with righteous anger for the Lord; now he is filled with the glory of the Lord. Then he came to a people swimming in idolatry, unafraid of the Lord; here he returns to people who are literally afraid of the glory of the Lord. In the first, Moses destroyed the tablets of the Testimony; here he will have them carefully deposited in the Ark of the Covenant.

The two accounts contrast, and yet they confirm the work of Christ which is pictured in the second descent, over the failings of Adam which is pictured in the first descent. In Adam, there is enmity with God, a violation of His law, and no fear of who He is. From that came resulting death. In Christ, there is fellowship with God, faithful satisfaction of His law, and a reverent fear of who He is. And from that comes life. None of this is by random chance.

Again, each detail is given as a set of instructions concerning man, the Lord, the law, and grace. Everything is tied together to show us the superiority of the work of the Lord for us over the failings of Adam, of which we are included.

³⁰ So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.

This is rather similar to that of the moments after the fall of man –

“And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

⁹ Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where *are* you?’

¹⁰ So he said, ‘I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.’” Genesis 3:8-10

Adam had been confronted with the knowledge of his sin and he feared the presence of the Lord. Now the people of Israel are being confronted again with the law of the Lord on the tablets, and the glory of the Lord reflected in Moses’ face.

Here, we are told that they saw Moses. There is nothing to suggest that they thought it was anyone but Moses. However, there was a change in him which they did not understand. The light shining off of him meant something, but they couldn’t discern whether it meant good or evil towards them.

The glory of the Lord, even in a secondary manner such as this, combined with the second set of tablet’s bearing God’s law, seems to have uncovered their sinful state and exposed it to their hearts. No wonder the Lord said in the last chapter that “...no man shall see Me, and live.” The very thought of sin-filled man standing in the presence of pure holiness and beholding it with uncovered eyes would mean utter destruction. From Aaron down, there was fear because of the revealed glory of the Lord.

³¹ Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him; and Moses talked with them.

Like Adam who had hid himself from the Lord, those who saw Moses hid themselves from the glory of the Lord which had rested upon Moses. And like Adam who came forth to speak to the Lord and admit his nakedness, Aaron and the rulers came forward despite their nakedness.

This same type of spiritual encounter will occur again in the future. Christ will come back in His full splendor, and all of the rulers of Israel will fear, but when He calls to them, they will return to Him. When they do, He will speak to them as well. Their nakedness will be covered in His righteousness and the law will be secreted away, once and for all in the true Ark, Christ the Lord. The patterns repeat so that we can see the Lord's hand in each step of the process. As it says in Ecclesiastes 3:15 –

“Whatever exists now has already been, and whatever will be has already been; for God will seek to do again what has occurred in the past.” (NET)

³² Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them as commandments all that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai.

What this appears to be is a congregational gathering of the people where Moses stood and spoke aloud to all who could hear. Everything that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai, he repeated as commandments for the people. In their own hearing, he spoke to them, exactly as they had requested after the giving of the Ten Commandments –

“You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.”
-Exodus 20:19

Again, like earlier in this chapter, the mount is called Sinai rather than Horeb. When the name Sinai is used, it normally refers to the on-going redemptive workings of God for His people. Such is the case here. The commandments of the Lord were spoken, and now they are being transmitted to the people of God.

Sinai is used once again to bring us the idea of the work of Christ. Sinai means, “Bush of the Thorn.” It is a picture of the work of Christ culminating in the cross of Christ. The law is given and it is a ministry of death, not of life. This is seen in the next words...

³³ And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.

The KJV gives the exact opposite rendering of the Hebrew. It states that the veil was on Moses' face when he spoke to the people, not after. This is incorrect. The NKJV corrected this error.

The people of Israel were given a chance to see the reflected glory of the Lord personally. When Moses spoke to the leaders, and then when he spoke to the people, he did it with an unveiled face. He expounded the law to them and they listened.

However, when he finished speaking with them, he *then* put a veil over his face. The word “veil” is *masveh*. It is introduced into the Bible here, it will be used once in this and each of the next two verses, and it will not be seen again. It comes from an unused root meaning “to cover.”

The glory of the Lord would be covered over and thus it would be concealed from their eyes. They would have the law, but it was a law which veiled the Lord to them. It could not save anyone, and this was never its purpose. Instead, it is a law which has an end. It is this passing away of the law, superseded by the glory of the Lord, which was veiled to Israel.

³⁴ But whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he would take the veil off until he came out;

There is rich symbolism here. What is in the spot where Moses would go to speak with the Lord? The ark which contained the tablets. This hasn't actually been recorded yet, but it says as much in Deuteronomy 10:5.

This ark, as we have seen, pictures Christ who embodies the law. Within Him is the fulfillment of the law. In this, the veil is removed, but for those who do not know Christ, a covering stands between them and the Lord which obscures who He is and the glory He reveals.

When Moses was in the presence of the Lord, the veil was removed, and it would stay off until he once again came out. During that time, he would receive the law of the Lord which he would then relay to the people as we read next...

³⁴ (con't) and he would come out and speak to the children of Israel whatever he had been commanded.

The law of the Lord was communicated to the people by Moses who alone reflected the glory of the Lord. They would hear the words and they would have a validation that the words were from the Lord by the rays of light shining from Moses' face. After they had received this proof, he would then cover himself, as is seen in our final verse of the day...

³⁵ And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him.

They would see the glory of the Lord radiating off Moses' face. Thus the authentication of the words of the law would be made. After this, he would then cover his face until he again went in before the Lord. The fact that the law was something temporary and destined to end was veiled from the people.

They took the law as a perpetual covenant, and they still take it this way today. Even some Judaizing sects of Christianity still look at the law in this manner. And thus a veil rests over their eyes. This is explained, in detail, by Paul in 2 Corinthians 3.

*How I love your law, O Lord, it is my meditation day and night
And upon Your law I contemplate with all my mind
But in Your law I find myself in a challenging plight
I find myself in a spot difficult and unkind*

*I see Your law is perfect, but I am prone to sin
I find a war within myself which rages against my will
What will free me from this body of death? Am I done in?
How can I these evil desires crush? I am fighting with them still*

*Thanks be to God! I can prevail through the Lord Jesus!
In His cross, I am set free and I am granted new life
What a marvelous God who has done these things for us!
In Jesus I find release from the once raging strife*

III. From Glory to Glory (2 Corinthians 3)

We have to ask ourselves each time we come to a passage like this, "What is the Lord trying to tell us?" Why did He include this remarkable, but otherwise obscure passage concerning the radiant face of Moses? The answer is that He is showing us Christ.

And the best part about it is that we don't even need to struggle with it to find the answer. Instead of searching mind and searching the word for secret clues, the Lord has revealed the meaning to us. Paul clearly and precisely explains it in 2 Corinthians 3.

In the previous chapter, Paul spoke of victory in Christ. He then said that the message of the apostles carried "the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing." Expanding on that, he gave a contrast as to how this fragrance is received. He says that, "To the one *we are* the aroma of death *leading* to death." In Greek, it reads *ek thanatou eis thanaton* – "from death to death."

The state of the unregenerate is already death. This is because “the wages of sin is death” and “all have sinned.” Those who reject the gospel message do so from death to death. There can be no life for someone who is already dead and who has chosen the path of death by rejecting Christ.

For the one who reaches out and receives the fragrant aroma of the gospel message, it is *ek zoes eis zoen* – “from life to life.” The Source of life is found in the gospel message which centers on Jesus Christ.

In chapter 3, he told his audience that they were in themselves an epistle of Christ which was “written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is*, of the heart.” Here he contrasts the superiority of the gospel of Christ over the Law of Moses. One was written on stone, the other on the heart.

He then went on to say, very exactly, that “the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” As I said earlier, the law could save no one, nor was this its intent. Rather, the letter, meaning the law, kills. Only the Spirit can give life. Remember that Paul was a Pharisee. He was trained like few other people in all of Israel. And yet, he came to understand that the law was opposed to salvation.

Despite this, he tells about the magnificence of the law. He said, “But if the ministry of death, (meaning the law) written *and* engraved on stones, (meaning the Ten Commandments which was the basis of the law) was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which *glory* was passing away,⁸ how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?”

Here we see the truth that it was the law itself which brought the radiant shine to Moses’ face. The pure law of God, given directly by God to Moses, was so splendid that it caused his face to shine, as if he had horns protruding from his face.

The radiation of the glory of God emanated from Moses after he beheld the Divine glory. This was a part of his ministry as the lawgiver to the people. It showed the splendor of what God was doing in the giving, and tending to, of the law through Moses. And yet, Paul’s words show that this amazing glory which caused this supernatural emanation of light from the face of Moses “was passing away.”

In other words, the law which was given through Moses is being equated with the passing away of the glory of the light emanating from Moses. There would be a time when the law would fade into history, being replaced with something even more glorious.

The law was never intended to be a means to an end. It was a part of the dispensational model of God's interactions with mankind, leading us another step towards the coming of Christ. The reason why, is because the law is reflective of the perfection of Christ. In Christ, the law is fulfilled and thus the Spirit is available to any who come to Him through faith in what He has done.

And so, if the law brought death to man, and yet it radiated with glory, Paul asks, "...how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?"

It is a wonderful, even amazing sentiment! Paul has spoken of the glory of the "ministry of death" (meaning the Law of Moses) which is fading away. In an argument from the lesser to the greater he now basically asks, "If that was so glorious, then how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?"

But Paul doesn't call it the "ministry of life" as if in contrast to the "ministry of death." Instead he calls it the "ministry of the Spirit." This Spirit, meaning the Holy Spirit, is life. And so the contrast is made instead to the physical, tangible stone with carved letters.

Because of the use of "the Spirit" in place of the law, it is speaking of the entire process of the transmission of the gospel – the work at Pentecost, His influence on the apostles to include their work and their writings which are now the New Testament, and then the continued preaching and evaluation of that word. This, and so much more, is the "ministry of the Spirit."

It is this which is more glorious, and it is this which will reveal glories ahead. This is seen in his use of the Greek preposition *en* which denotes the permanent nature of the glory, and then the verb translated as "will be," which is in the future tense. It shows that what is yet to be revealed contains surpassing glory. Everything about the new surpasses the old, both in the present and in what is yet to be revealed.

In verse 9, Paul then changes the terms. He goes from "the ministry of death" to "the ministry of condemnation," and from "the ministry of the Spirit" to "the ministry of righteousness." In other words, the law brought death, and associated with that death is condemnation; it is ineffectual to save anyone.

However, the Spirit brings life, and with that comes righteousness; it is not only sufficient to quicken the spirit to live, but to also grant Christ's righteousness to the one who is so quickened. The glory of this ministry of righteousness far exceeds the glory of the law. The law faded away, but the work of Christ will endure for all eternity. The glory of Christ will shine upon His redeemed throughout the ages of ages.

In verse 10, Paul compares the two dispensations. The giving of the law at Sinai was glorious. It was glorious in the contents of the law which it revealed. It was glorious in how that law was ministered throughout the time of Israel's life under it as well. And yet, it was a ministry of death. It showed that man cannot fulfill its requirements. Instead, it only brought condemnation. The only thing that spared men from this was a grant of mercy based on the Day of Atonement rituals.

However, the covenant which came through the work of Jesus is a ministry of life. It excels in that where the law brought death, it brings life. Where the law brought condemnation, it brings salvation. Where the law was written on stone, it is written on the hearts.

In Jesus, there is full pardon of sin. In Jesus, there is the sure hope of restoration with God. In Jesus, there is the prospect of eternal life. In all ways, the glory of the law is shown to have only fading glory compared to the work of Jesus on our behalf. Jesus is our Day of Atonement. A one-time and for-all-time glory.

In verse 11, Paul again shows the superlative nature of the grace of God in Christ over the giving of the law. In verse 12, he says that because of the hope of this grace, there is a boldness which was lacking in the law. This is detailed in verse 13 and it explains the obscurity of our passage in Exodus 34 today.

Paul uses the account of the Israelites before Moses as an allegory of the time in which we live. The law is ended in Christ, but the Israelites could not see the end of it. They looked at the law as permanent and as a means to an end. But the law was intended to lead us to Christ. Because they missed this, they "could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away." And this is exactly what has happened in the dispensational model of history.

But the scholar Hermann Olshausen asks, "How could St Paul say that Moses covered his countenance in order that the Israelites should not behold Christ?" His question seems to imply that it would be wrong for Israel, who was looking for their Messiah, to be denied seeing Christ.

But this question is faulty. They were not denied this actively. Instead, they chose to deny Him. They were offered Christ in Acts 2. From there, and throughout Acts, it shows the truth that Jesus was rejected by them. Paul explains this in Romans 11:25 –

“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”

God knew in advance that Israel would reject their Messiah, but it served a greater purpose in that the nations received Him and became the called-out Gentile church. Israel was set-aside during this dispensation “until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”

There is a time coming when the Gentiles will have reached their fullness and they will be raptured home to be with the Lord. At that time, the focus will be on the nation of Israel once again. On that day, the veil will be taken away and they will see that Christ is, in fact, the end of the law for all who believe.

Paul explains this in verse 14. He notes that the Jews, and indeed anyone who would follow in the misguided notion about the purpose and continuance of the Old Testament, is blinded. This blinding of one’s eyes indicates a spiritual blindness.

This veil which remains in place is “unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament.” Anytime the law is read to a person who is trying to be justified by the law, the veil remains. They have missed Christ and are attempting to seek a right-standing before God based on personal merit. It is a self-condemning act.

Finally in verse 14, the NKJV ends this verse with, “because the *veil* is taken away in Christ.” This is not the intent of Paul’s words. The word “veil” is inserted; it is not in the Greek. They have incorrectly assumed that it is the veil which is taken away in Christ. But this is properly explained in verse 16. Rather, it speaking of the law itself. In Christ, the law is taken away. Only when one realizes this is the veil then removed. John Darby rightly translates the verse –

“But their thoughts have been darkened, for unto this day the same veil remains in reading the old covenant, unremoved, which in Christ is annulled.” Darby

In verse 15, Paul explicitly tells us that when the law of Moses is read by any who are trying to be justified by the law, a veil lies over their heart, just as the veil was placed over Moses’ face. And then in verse 16 he shows us something wonderful.

Different translators look at what this verse is saying in different ways. In the NKJV, it says “when one turns to the Lord.” It implies that each time a Jew turns to Jesus, the veil is taken away. However, other translations say, “...when it shall turn to the Lord.”

This then would be speaking of the heart of Israel collectively. The Weymouth version says this more specifically with the words, “But whenever the heart of the nation shall have returned to the Lord, the veil will be withdrawn.”

It is true that individually, as Jews come to the Lord, the veil is taken away. However, the context of the passage is implying the nation as a whole. This is what is pictured in Exodus 34. In verse 31 it said, “Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him; and Moses talked with them.”

The prophetic picture of that passage is that the rulers (who represent the nation) “returned” to Moses. The word drives the analogy which Paul clearly saw and is using for us to see. In verse 17, Paul says, “Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty.”

The Lord is the Spirit of biblical interpretation. This is not speaking then of the Holy Spirit but the knowledgeable relationship between what is written in the law and what it is pointing out, which is Christ Jesus.

Finally, Paul closes out with the marvelous words, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

At this time, we are “beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord.” This happens each time we contemplate the gospel, or now because it is written, search out the New Testament Scriptures. And, in the searching out of Christ in this way, Paul says that we “are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory.”

Just as Moses’ face reflected the glory of the Lord when he came before the Israelites, so we are being transformed. It is not a physical transformation, but a spiritual one. As we conform to the prescriptions of the New Testament, and as we follow as disciples of Christ, we are being spiritually transformed into that same image; the image of Christ – thus, “from glory to glory.” We behold the glory and it transforms us to that glory.

Paul finishes his thought and the chapter with the words, “just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” It is the Spirit who calls, it is the Spirit who seals, and it is the Spirit who sanctifies.

As we pursue Christ from glory to glory, the Spirit is accomplishing His role in the process to conform us to the image of God in Christ.

From what is obscure and hidden, to that which is revealed and open, the Bible speaks of Christ. Because of this, I would hope that each one of you would search Him out, read His word, and fellowship intimately with Him and with those He has called – your brothers and sisters in the Lord.

And if by chance you have never taken the blessed opportunity of calling on Christ and being saved from your just due as the object of God’s wrath, please let me tell you what will bring you to become an object of His affection and a recipient of His marvelous grace...

Closing Verse: *For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:*

*“The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;
²⁷ For this is My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins.” Romans 11:25-27*

Next Week: Exodus 35:1-19 *When you get your call, don’t be nervous...* (A Call to Service) (97th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

From Glory to Glory

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write these words
For according to the tenor of these words that I say
I have made a covenant with you and with Israel
And these words will direct you in the way

So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights
He neither ate bread nor drank water as well

And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant
The Ten Commandments; God's great law for Israel

Now it was so, when Moses
Came down from Mount Sinai
And the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand
When he came down from the mountain, by and by

That Moses did not know
That the skin of his face shone
While he talked with Him
To him this condition was unknown

So when Aaron and all the children
Of Israel saw Moses, they were filled with fear
Behold, the skin of his face shone
And they were afraid for him to come near

Then Moses called to them
And Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation
Returned to him; and Moses talked with them
Yes, he talked to the rulers of the nation

Afterward all the children of Israel
Came near, and as commandments them he gave
All that the LORD had spoken with him
On Mount Sinai, directions for how they were to behave

And when Moses had finished speaking with them in that place
It was then that he put a veil on his face

But whenever Moses went in before the LORD
To speak with Him, he would take the veil off –
...as the situation demanded
Until he came out; and he would come out and speak
To the children of Israel whatever he had been commanded

And whenever the children of Israel
Saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone

Then Moses would put the veil on his face again
Until he went in to speak with Him; in the tent with Him alone

Lord, you have explained to us in Your word
That it is Jesus who shines forth Your radiant glory
And so we hail Him as our exalted Lord
And we hold fast to this marvelous gospel story

Praises, yes praises to You O Lord our God
Forever we shall praise You as in Your presence we trod

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 35:1-19

(A CALL TO SERVICE)

In today's passage, as with next week's as well, we will have a significant amount of repetition. However, it is repetition which stems from passages going all the way back through all of the instructions for the construction of the sanctuary.

If you remember more than 1% of what we talked about in those sermons, you have an excuse to nap while we review. However, I'm going to hand out a proficiency test to make sure you qualify before your nap is approved.

In all honesty, as I was reviewing these verses and getting things prepared, I was astonished at how much I didn't retain. Going back over those 22 sermons, I couldn't believe the amount of detail we covered. The symbolism of Christ in each of the things described to Moses is overwhelming.

If you missed those sermons, you missed a great deal and I would encourage you to take the time and listen to them. For now, what was presented to Moses will be restated to the people, calling them to holiness in life and holiness in conduct.

The call to holiness in life will be by a short explanation of the Law of the Sabbath. The calling to holiness in conduct will come by a request for offerings of material and service from the people. Now think about that from our perspective today. Is it any different?

We have been called to holiness by resting in Christ – what He has accomplished. That is our first obligation. After that, we have been called to holiness by giving of our possessions in the service of Christ, and then of the giving of ourselves in a more complete service to Christ.

I am going to repeat this thought in just a few minutes during the sermon in hopes that it will sink in through the repetition. What Israel did is the same thing that we are asked to do.

Text Verse: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Romans 12:1, 2*

The only difference between Israel and us is that they worked and then rested. We rest and then we work. They gave of their goods, they gave of their lives, and then they rested in anticipation of the Messiah's promised rest which was yet ahead.

We rest in that which they looked forward to. In this completion of His work, we then are given the chance to give of our goods and then of our lives. Please though, do not think of this as a call for you to give to the Superior Word. That has never been something we have done, nor will it ever be. And yet the Lord has always provided.

It is up to you where you give your tangible gifts and your gifts of service, but you are to give. You can't be a living sacrifice if you aren't sacrificing. The animal on the altar which was presented by the people to God died there by the altar.

We on the other hand died on the altar with Christ, and now we are to live for Christ as that gift being offered to God. In whatever way you determine, and as the Lord prospers you, so you should return yourself to the Lord.

The call is made today by Moses. It is a call which contrasts a shameful act of giving not long passed. After the call is made, work on the Lord's dwelling place can begin. And you, the call was made and you responded. Now, you should be actively working on being a more perfect part of that more perfect temple which the Lord is building.

Types and shadows of the reality we now live in Christ are seen in today's passage. So let's get into it. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Law of the Sabbath (verses 1-3)

¹Then Moses gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel together,

The word "gathered" here comes from the verb *qahal*, which means "to gather as an assembly." It comes from the more common noun *qahal*, which is the assembly itself. It was first used in this verb form in Exodus 32:1 when the people "gathered together to Aaron" in order to demand the making of a golden calf.

Now it is used for the second time in complete contrast to that. Instead of gathering together for disobedience to the Lord and His commands, they are being called together for honoring Him. He has spared them despite their rebellion, and because of His mercy, Moses is calling them together as a people to come and learn the way of holiness.

In today's verses, we will see three separate sections by which they will learn this way. Each step is carefully positioned and methodically presented in order for the people to understand this way of holiness.

He will begin with the external display of how they are expected to live in this manner by repeating the Sabbath requirement to them once again. He will then continue with this in asking them for donations of articles in order to build the sanctuary which will stand in their midst, and from which, their means of interacting with Him in holiness will come about.

After this, he will then ask for those who have the abilities to make the things mandated out of those same offerings. In this, they will learn of the sanctification of the people by the Lord for sacred purposes.

Each step in its own order is a reflection of the process of sanctification of the people. They must first be given the law which reflects their sign as a people. This is done in the repetition of the Sabbath law. The next is a giving of what one possessed in honor of the Lord. And the third is the giving of oneself in the service of the Lord.

In the church, there are those who are saved and who are given the sign of that salvation, baptism. This reflects the baptism of the Holy Spirit which was received upon belief in Christ. There are next those who are obedient in the giving of their possessions to build and sustain the ministry of the Lord. And then there are those who are set apart to minister to the Lord with their lives, and according to their abilities. This is what we are seeing reflected in these verses today.

^{1 (con't)} **and said to them, "These *are* the words which the Lord has commanded *you* to do:**

These words should rightfully have been placed after Exodus 31:18, a full eight sermons ago. This was when the Lord handed the first two tablets of stone to Moses. He should have simply received them, turned down the mountain, and found the people respectfully and obediently awaiting his return with the word of the Lord for the future conduct of their lives.

Instead, chapter 32 introduced the sin of the golden calf and all that occurred after that. Instead of a joyous regathering of Moses to the people, there was wrath, indignation, and death associated with his return. Because of that incident, a new direction in the law came about as well.

We have to keep reminding ourselves that none of those things were unknown to God, and they were ultimately a part of His unfolding plan. However, it doesn't change the nature of the catastrophe which came upon the people. Nor does it change the many variations in direction which resulted in the occurrences of those intervening chapters.

Moses' shining face was given as a permanent reminder to the people of this. And when I say permanent, it is a reminder which continues to this day. Only in Christ is the veil taken away and the glory of God revealed in a new and marvelous way. As you can see, everything occurred as it should.

The intervening eight chapters have formed an integral part of the unfolding plan of the ages. Understanding that, we now return to where the account left off. The last thing before the giving of the original tablets of the commandments to Moses was that of the Law of the Sabbath.

As I said, the giving of the Sabbath law to the people in connection with the building of the tabernacle was for the purpose of tying it into the sanctuary. The sanctuary is where the Lord is to reside. It signifies that He is dwelling among the people.

Once again, the reason for the Sabbath's inclusion here is because it, like every other detail which has been given concerning the tabernacle ultimately points to Christ – His Person and His work, for us. That physical manifestation of the tabernacle being among the people is now realized in the giving of the Spirit to the believer in His finished work.

This is why the Sabbath is no longer required. The rest which was anticipated for God's people is realized in His completion of the work of the law. And this is why Hebrews 4:3 now says that we who have believed, do enter that rest.

In the Old Covenant, man worked and then rested. In the New Covenant, man rests and then works. A picture is made of the process of salvation in the two dispensations. Israel worked six days and then rested on the Sabbath. It was an anticipation of the time of rest which lay ahead when all things would be restored.

We rest in Christ and then do works for Christ, not for salvation, but for our walk in Christ and in anticipation of our heavenly rewards. This is all reflected first in the law of the Sabbath, and then in the fulfillment of it in Christ. Now, that law is briefly summarized for the people to hear...

²Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh day shall be a holy day for you, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord.

The Law of the Sabbath was given in Exodus 31:12-17. However, this first spoken mandate by Moses to the people actually parallels only verse 15. Although not a direct quote, it carries all of the substance of that verse. Also, he has abbreviated the substance of the words that were given to him, but the main point of the instruction is carefully repeated here to the people.

They are to work six days and then have a *shabbath shabbaton*, or a Sabbath of rest to the Lord as a holy day. The instructions for the building of the tabernacle lie just ahead. Its construction though was not to take precedence over the Sabbath. Rather, they were to rest each week from their work. Of the words of this verse, Joseph Benson says – “Work for the tabernacle, but on the seventh day they must not strike a stroke, no, not at the tabernacle work; the honour of the sabbath was above that of the sanctuary.”
Joseph Benson

This is not correct. The Sabbath has no more honor than the sanctuary. As we have seen and will see again, every detail of the sanctuary points to Christ. The Sabbath rest also points to Christ. It simply would make no sense to work for Christ on a day which points to Christ. In fact, in Leviticus 26:2, the Sabbath and reverence for the sanctuary are tied together in one thought –

“You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary:
I *am* the Lord.” Leviticus 26:2

Though the Israelites didn’t realize these things, we now do. What was given in type and shadow is realized in the marvelous Lord who fulfilled those same types and shadows. The Sabbath was to be a day the people heeded according to the word of the Lord. If they didn’t heed, the penalty is now repeated from chapter 31 –

² (con’t) **Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death.**

These words here also reflect the substance of Exodus 31:15. The Sabbath looked forward to the coming “rest of God” which was lost when man was cast out of Eden. When Adam disobeyed the word of the Lord, his punishment was –

“Cursed *is* the ground for your sake;
In toil you shall eat *of* it
All the days of your life.
¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,
And you shall eat the herb of the field.

¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread
Till you return to the ground,
For out of it you were taken;
For dust you *are*,
And to dust you shall return.” Genesis 3:17-19

Man was destined to work in order to survive, implying that this was not previously the case. During my sermon on the Law of the Sabbath, one person – obviously caught up in the legalism of either the 7th Day Adventists, or some Hebrew Roots movement, argued that the Sabbath was God’s standard for man all along; it was an eternal edict.

Not only can that not be inferred in Scripture at all, it is completely false. I directed him back to the original giving of the Sabbath in Exodus 16 where it was first presented to man. One has to remember that Genesis 2 was not recorded until the time of Moses. Here is what Genesis 2:1-3 says –

“Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. ² And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”

After that, nothing is mentioned of the seventh day for rest until Exodus 16. And the words that were used in that sermon were very specific, showing that it was now a new aspect of God’s dealings with man. Further, it was a new aspect which dealt solely with the people of Israel.

The heresy of Sabbath observance as a necessary requirement in today’s church is truly sad. All the information we need for salvation is found in Paul’s epistles. He, as the apostle to the Gentiles, defines clearly and precisely what we need to do to be saved; what we need to do in order to be pleasing to God; and how to also instruct others in meeting those same goals.

Nowhere in his writings does he ever indicate anything concerning the Sabbath, except to argue against it as an observance. This is especially so in Romans 14:5 and Colossians 2:16, 17, but it is implicitly true in everything he writes.

What part of the concept of “grace” these heretics don’t understand is hard to grasp. It is a simple word with a simple meaning, as is the concept of a gift. One does not work in

order to receive a gift. And though the Sabbath is a day of not actively working, it is a day of spiritual work in order to not physically work. That is realized in the next verse...

³You shall kindle no fire throughout your dwellings on the Sabbath day.”

One must do something in order to not actively do something. Along with all the other things that the people have already been instructed to not do on the Sabbath day, a new requirement is now added in. No fire is to be kindled in any dwelling on the Sabbath. This thought can be taken as an addendum to what was stated in Exodus 16–

Then he said to them, “*This is what* the Lord has said: ‘Tomorrow *is* a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. Bake what you will bake *today*, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.’”

-Exodus 16:23

No manna was provided on the Sabbath and so they were to prepare their food a day in advance of the Sabbath. As a further restraint, they were told to not even kindle a fire. To kindle a fire was a laborious process of work. As food wasn’t cooked, they were not to consider making a fire for any other reason as well. As John Lange says about this –

“The addition, prohibiting the kindling of fire, indicates that the law of the Sabbath is made more rigorous in the matter of abstinence.” John Lange

The Israelites were to actively abstain from work in every possible way. Now in Christ, we are given a different aspect of the same precept. We are not told to actively abstain from every work in order to attempt to merit God’s favor. Instead, we are to rest in the finished work of Christ. In the end, whether before the cross or after, it is all done in relation to Christ.

Another great scholar of times past, Matthew Henry, does a terrible job of his analysis of these two Sabbath verses. He says –

“The mild and easy yoke of Christ has made our sabbath duties more delightful, and our sabbath restraints less irksome, than those of the Jews; but we are the more guilty by neglecting them. Surely God’s wisdom in giving us the sabbath, with all the mercy of its purposes, are sinfully disregarded. Is it nothing to pour contempt upon the blessed day, which a bounteous God has given to us for our growth in grace with the church below, and to prepare us for happiness with the church above?” Henry

Matthew Henry errs in his analysis like many others in moving the Saturday Sabbath to a Sunday Sabbath. There is no such thing as a Sunday Sabbath. The Sabbath is Saturday, the seventh day of the week. In its fulfillment, it ended.

Again, if one departs from Paul's doctrine for the church age, there is no doctrine for the church age. All theology thus becomes a pick and choose path to God. As we close out this section, let us remember a few key points. The Sabbath is a part of the law; the law is fulfilled in Christ and annulled. Salvation is a gift which comes by grace. A gift cannot be earned; grace is unmerited favor.

Attempting to be justified before God through works sets aside both the notion of receiving a gift as well as the granting of grace. Rest in Christ, trust in Christ, and be pleased to be reconciled to God solely by the work of Christ. Thank God for Jesus Christ.

*I am the Lord who sanctifies you
In Me you shall find your rest
What I look for is faith that is true
And in this, I shall put you to the test*

*I am the Lord, pay heed unto Me
For I will give you a Day of rest
If you will simply trust, you will see
That in My presence you will be eternally blessed*

*Come unto Me, you who are weary
And in My presence there will be peaceful rest
Come unto Me, leave your life so dreary
If the land of Paradise-restored is your hope-filled quest*

II. An Offering to the Lord (verses 4-9)

⁴And Moses spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, "This is the thing which the Lord commanded, saying:

These words begin the second and final major section of the chapter which will be divided into four smaller sections. Moses will first recount the substance of Exodus 25:2-7 which concerns the offering of the people for the construction of the sanctuary.

The Hebrew reads *zeh haddavar asher tsivah Yehovah*. “This the word that commanded, Yehovah.” It is to be remembered that it was not long before that the incident with the golden calf had occurred. At that time, the people has said this to Aaron –

“Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.”
-Exodus 32:1

In response to that, it says –

“And Aaron said to them, ‘Break off the golden earrings which *are* in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring *them* to me.’” Exodus 32:2

Once the calf was fashioned, Aaron indicated it was a representation of Yehovah. The people had willingly given their treasure for a false god. Now, Moses would ask something of them as directed by the true God...

⁵‘Take from among you an offering to the Lord.

This is to be an offering “to Yehovah.” It is thus infinitely more worthy than for the false idol to which they willingly broke off their earrings. Everything that is needed can be expected to be obtained from this offering.

It would make no sense for the Lord to plan on the construction of it without knowing in advance that each and every thing that was necessary for its completion would be available. Understanding this, it will still require the stirring of the hearts of the people to give what they possess. However, there would be no “breaking off” or “tearing away” their prized possessions like Aaron asked of them. Instead, they were asked to let their hearts guide them...

^{5 (con’t)} Whoever *is* of a willing heart,

A new word is introduced here, *nadiv*. It is an adjective which comes from the verb *nadav* which means willing. *Nadiv* means “free” or “liberal” or even a noble or a prince. The idea is that a noble person would be a charitable giver. This is what the Lord is asking for concerning the materials for the sanctuary; giving with a charitable heart.

^{5 (con’t)} let him bring it as an offering to the Lord:

The offering, or *terumah*, is something which is “lifted up” to the Lord. It is an acknowledgment of His exalted status, and thus the offering is to be lifted up as an oblation to Him. This is set in complete contrast to that which was given for the making of the golden calf. The difference could not be any more distinct.

The requesting of these materials, and the direction for the construction of the sanctuary, is an understood proclamation that the covenant relationship has been restored, and that the Lord has agreed to be Israel’s God and to dwell among them in that capacity. And so the materials are now named. Each was described in minute detail in the past as to their symbolism in Christ. Here we will just briefly look at each...

⁵ (con’t) **gold, silver, and bronze;**

zahav, or gold, is the finest of the biblical metals. It symbolizes purity and holiness, royalty, and divinity. *keseeph*, or silver is another precious metal which is associated with redemption. *nekhosheth*, or bronze, mainly symbolizes judgment, but also endurance. The judgment can be negative, such as in punishment, or it can be of judgment in purification and justification.

⁶ **blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine linen, and goats’ hair;**

tekeleth, or blue, is associated with the law, especially the keeping of the law. *argaman*, or purple is a purple or blue/red. It speaks of royalty or that which pertains to or belongs to a king. It is a mixture of blue and red, and so it is a combination of what those two colors mean – the law for blue; and war, blood, and/or judgment for red.

towlaat shani, or literally, red worms. Together, the words are translated as “scarlet,” but implying the scarlet which comes from the *towla* or crimson-grub worm. This scarlet, or red, pictures war, blood, and/or judgment. *shesh*, or fine linen symbolizes righteousness. *izzim*, or goat hair symbolizes awareness of sin and that it will be punished.

⁷ **ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood;**

orot elim me’addamim, or skins of rams dyed red, symbolize power and protection in the skins, and of atonement for sin in the dyed red color. *orot tekhashim*, does not indicate badger skins. Rather, it indicates skins of porpoise or a sea cow. The sea is

representative of the world of chaos, confusion and rebellion. Thus these skins symbolize protection from that. Within, there is order, harmony, and peace. *atse shittim*, or wood acacias, symbolize humanity, but more, humanity which is incorruptible. Therefore, it symbolizes Christ's humanity.

⁸ oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense;

shemen la'maor, or oil for lighting, symbolizes the presence of the Spirit, which is for spiritual understanding; specifically that which provides illumination. *besamim l'shemen ha'miskhah*, or spice for anointing oil, symbolizes the anointing of the Holy Spirit first for Christ's work, and then that which is given to us through Christ's work.

liqtoreth ha'sammim, or incense fragrant, symbolizes prayer to God, but specifically acceptable prayers to God.

⁹ onyx stones,

avne shoham, or stones onyx, are mentioned in addition to those to be used in the shoulder piece of the ephod on the high priest. Because of this, they are probably specifically to be for the Urim and Thummim. If this is so, and it is likely, then they signify intercession on behalf of the people.

^{9 (con't)} and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate.

avne milluim la'ephod v'lakhoshen, or "stones to be set for the ephod and for the breastplate." Exodus 28:9 tells us that the stones for the shoulder piece of the ephod are to be onyx stones. Thus they symbolize the bearing of the burden of the people in a mediatorial role.

The other stones which are to be used in the breastplate of judgment are specifically named in Exodus 28:17-20. The exact identity of many of these stones is unknown, but because they are in the breastplate of judgment, they symbolize the judgment rendered for God's people through the work of Christ.

*Hints of Christ in every detail of the book
Waiting for us to study and show ourselves approved*

*What a marvel when we open it up and look
How our souls are stirred! How our hearts are moved*

*Christ is there, it all speaks of Him and His work
What He has done for us was all told in advance
Let us not fail to look for Him, let us not this obligation shirk
Each discovery is like joining in a heavenly dance*

*Thank You for this marvel, Your precious superior word
It is filled with wonder! It is beautiful and marvelous
Christ is there in every detail; it's all about our Lord
Yes, every single verse tells us of our Lord Jesus*

III. The Lord's To-Do List (verse 10-19)

¹⁰ 'All *who are* gifted artisans among you shall come and make all that the Lord has commanded:

The call is now made from the general of the previous section – meaning all who had a willing heart, to the specific of this section – meaning all who are gifted artisans. Those specifically for the work of this section who were mentioned before were Bezalel and Aholiab in Exodus 31:2-10, and the others in Exodus 28:3 for making of garments.

Those whom the Lord already knew are now being called for the service of making this marvelous dwelling place for the Lord God. In it, there is a logical order to what we will see next. First, the tabernacle is mentioned. This is followed up immediately with those things by which it will be constructed.

After this, will come the contents of the tabernacle. First for the Most Holy Place, then the Holy Place, and then the furniture which is outside of the tabernacle in the courtyard. After that, those things which comprise the courtyard itself. Then the pegs are mentioned, first for the tabernacle and then for the court – with their cords. Finally the garments for each aspect of the ministry are given.

We will go over them without any detail because all of the details have already been given in the past.

¹¹ the tabernacle, its tent, its covering, its clasps, its boards, its bars, its pillars, and its sockets;

In this verse, two separate words are used – *ha'mishkan*, or “the tabernacle,” and “*aholow*” or “its tent.” The two are distinct things and are not to be confused. Each of the items mentioned in this verse perfectly and beautifully prefigure Christ.

¹² the ark and its poles, *with* the mercy seat, and the veil of the covering;

The ark and its mercy seat is mentioned in Exodus 25:10-22. The veil is detailed in Exodus 26:31-33. In this verse, the term *paroketh ha'masak*, or “veil of the covering” is now used instead of simply the *paroketh*, or veil. It is still speaking specifically of the veil which divides the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place, but a fuller name is given here. The ark symbolizes Christ, the embodiment of, and thus the fulfillment of, the law. The mercy seat is Christ our satisfaction of the law through His shed blood. The veil represents Christ’s body through which we have restored access to God.

¹³ the table and its poles, all its utensils, and the showbread;

This is speaking of the table of showbread which was mentioned in Exodus 25:23-30. It, in short, details Christ our Bread, and thus our source and sustenance of life.

¹⁴ also the lampstand for the light, its utensils, its lamps, and the oil for the light;

The menorah and its associated articles are mentioned in Exodus 25:31-40. It was an amazing study, every detail of which pointed to Christ – the Servant, our Messiah, our Light, our Wise Counselor, our Word of God, our Giver of the dispensations of time, and so much more. The symbolism of the menorah is so exceptional that we will never fully realize everything it portrays.

¹⁵ the incense altar, its poles, the anointing oil, the sweet incense,

The incense altar was detailed much later in the instructions provided to Moses. It wasn’t until Exodus 30:1-10 that it was named. The anointing oil and the sweet incense came later in that same chapter. They were detailed in order from verse 22-38.

The incense altar pointed to Christ’s intercessory work for us. The anointing oil minutely detailed Christ’s work which was accomplished for us, and the sweet incense symbolizes His ongoing work for us as our Mediator and Intercessor.

^{15 (con’t)} and the screen for the door at the entrance of the tabernacle;

This screen door was the covering entranceway into the tabernacle itself. It is described in Exodus 26:26, 27. It symbolized the work of Christ for us which allows us access once again into the heavenly realms. In short, it pictures Christ, our Door to salvation.

¹⁶ the altar of burnt offering with its bronze grating, its poles, all its utensils,

This altar is detailed in Exodus 27:1-8. In short, it symbolizes Christ, our judgment on sin and thus our Justifier.

¹⁶ (con't) and the laver and its base;

This item was mentioned seemingly out of place as a few others were, in Exodus 30:17-21. However, as we saw, it was actually perfectly placed. In short, it signifies among other things Christ, our Sanctifier and Purifier.

¹⁷ the hangings of the court, its pillars, their sockets, and the screen for the gate of the court;

These things were detailed in order in Exodus 27:9-19. They symbolize those things which Christ accomplished in His ministry and which are open and visible to all who are willing to simply look. They portray the evident Christ who is on display to the world, but who is also limited in effect to only those who enter through Him, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, which is seen in the gate for the court. He is the expectant Christ, open and available to all who will simply come.

¹⁸ the pegs of the tabernacle, the pegs of the court, and their cords;

The pegs were all to be made of bronze. They speak of judgment rendered. As they are what hold the tabernacle and the court hangings up by being firmly planted in the ground, they speak of permanency. The cords are the tie between the two.

Surprisingly, the *methar*, or cords have never been mentioned until now. The word comes from the verb *yathar*, meaning left over, or abundant, or to preserve. They then signify the ability of Christ's judgment to preserve us and tie us to all of the other aspects of His work, binding us to what He has done and abundantly keeping us for the great day of salvation which lies ahead.

¹⁹ the garments of ministry, for ministering in the holy place—

These *bigde ha'serad*, or “cloths of service,” are lumped in here by the NKJV with the garments of Aaron and his sons. However, they were described in Exodus 31:10 where they were noted, most probably, as the cloths which cover the sacred articles of the sanctuary as they were transported from place to place.

They thus reflect Christ concealed. His actual Person and work are covered and not viewable to the people of the world. We are to trust in the work of Christ, and thus they symbolize our faith in His work, which is – other than as recorded in Scripture – completely unseen to us.

^{19 (fin)} the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, to minister as priests.”

The garments for the priesthood, along with the things the high priest wore on his garments, comprise all of chapter 28. The garments in particular point to the ministry of Christ – His nature, His attributes, and His work. The garments for Aaron’s sons pictured Christ’s work on our behalf, covering us in His righteousness.

As I said at the beginning of our passage today, there was a lot of repetition from 22 previous sermons. But I bet quite a bit of what we looked at brought back some great reminders of the magnificent pictures of what those sermons detailed.

And as we have highlighted the giving of the people in their goods and in their service, I would like to mention one way of giving which you may not have thought of. If you have just popped into this sermon and haven’t seen what all of those chapters on the anticipated construction of the sanctuary and all of its implements actually detail, you could give the Lord of your time and go back and watch them.

If you’re really brave, you could go back and start watching from Genesis 1:1 as several people have done, and offer your time to the Lord in learning His word. Time is the fire in which we burn, and it is a candle which is quickly being consumed. But time is also the school in which we learn. Therefore, a wise use of your time is one of the greatest things you could offer to the Lord.

I would put learning His word right up at the top of what you can offer to Him. But no matter what you choose to do, what you choose to give, or what services you decide to offer – do it all for the glory of God which is found in Christ Jesus the Lord. And under the odd possibility that you are here not knowing Christ the Lord, well... you’d better get that squared away right now.

Closing Verse: *“So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.” 2 Corinthians 9:7, 8*

Next Week: Exodus 35:20-35 *Fifteen verses it spans...* (Offerings and Artisans)
(98th Exodus sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

A Call to Service

Then Moses gathered all the congregation
Of the children of Israel
Together, and said to them, to the whole nation
These are the words he did tell

These are the words which the Lord
Has commanded you to do; according to His word

Work shall be done for six days
But the seventh day shall be a holy day for you
A Sabbath of rest to the Lord
Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death, so shall you do

You shall kindle no fire, as I now say
Throughout your dwellings on the Sabbath day

And Moses spoke to all the congregation
Of the children of Israel, saying
This is the thing which the Lord commanded
This is the saying; these the words he was relaying

Take from among you an offering to the Lord
Whoever is of a willing heart

Let him bring it as an offering to the Lord:
Gold, silver, and bronze, but this is just the start

Blue, purple, and scarlet thread
Fine linen, and goats' hair as well
Ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood
Such are needed as to you I now tell

Oil for the light
And spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense too
Onyx stones, and stones to be set just right
In the ephod and in the breastplate are needed from you

All who are gifted artisans among you
Shall come and as the Lord has commanded shall make all
The tabernacle, its tent, its covering, its clasps
Its boards, its bars, its pillars, and its sockets, according to His call

The ark and its poles, with the mercy seat
And the veil of the covering; as He did relay
The table and its poles
All its utensils, and the showbread, as the word does say

Also the lampstand for the light
Its utensils, its lamps, and the oil for the light as well
The incense altar, its poles
The anointing oil, the sweet incense; so I now tell

And the screen for the door
At the entrance of the tabernacle, in that place
The altar of burnt offering with its bronze grating
Its poles, all its utensils, and the laver and its base

The hangings of the court
Its pillars, their sockets, according to these words
And the screen for the gate of the court
The pegs of the tabernacle, the pegs of the court, and their cords

The garments of ministry
For ministering in the holy place

The holy garments for Aaron the priest
And the garments of his sons, to minister as priests before My face

We have been called to follow a process in the Lord
First to rest in Him and what He has done for us
We come to do this through hearing His word
And then showing faith in the Lord Jesus

After that, we are asked for what we have to give
The things which we possess as our offering to God
With a willing heart in this life that we live
And without compulsion in this walk that we trod

And then if we have been given even more
If we possess a special ability or a skill
We should use that for the Lord, yes let us open that door
And use it for His glory with all of our will

In this, the Lord is surely pleased, we know
And so let us not hold back from Him these things
Serve the Lord with all your heart as you grow
As faithful Christians, in all that title brings

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 35:20-35 (OFFERINGS AND ARTISANS)

If you travel around America, especially in the older sections where people moved to and settled, there is one thing you will find of particular note. Normally, right in the center of the original town that was settled, there is a church building. It is where everything else radiates out from.

Further, this is usually the oldest building in the town, or it was built right at the same time as the other oldest buildings. In other words, the people came together to form a community, and while they were either building their own houses, or while they were still living in wagons or tents, they set about to build the house of God where they could meet, worship, marry, bury their dead, and be instructed by the man designated or elected by them to lead them in the pursuit of God.

In ancient Israel, Moses was that man. The people have come out of Egypt and are on their way to the Land of Promise. However, before they arrive there, they are already set to build the place where the Lord will reside. It will be the spot where they come for meeting with Him. It will be right in their midst, and everything else will radiate out from that spot.

When the people finally get to the land of promise, the tabernacle will be set up and it will be the focal point of the land for many years, even until the time of David. He will begin to prepare for the building of a temple, and his son Solomon will be the one to build it. But until then, this tabernacle will be the continuous reminder of the Presence of the Lord living among them.

It's a sad thought that we no longer set out to establish new communities with a central focus on the Lord. We might build a new town around a Walmart or a factory, but the churches are spread out, away from the town's center. Quite often, they are missing altogether.

Text Verse: *"Thus says the Lord:
'I will return to Zion,
And dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.
Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth,
The Mountain of the Lord of hosts,
The Holy Mountain.'* Zechariah 8:3

In the Gentile world, people are still coming to Christ in great numbers. New groups are hearing of the Lord and are building a place where they can go and worship Him. This is so even in the remotest parts of the earth. But for the most part, the more populous places of the earth are moving in the opposite direction.

Their worship is directed to false gods, or to no God at all. While this is occurring, Israel is being prepared for the building of their third temple. It will be where they go to honor the Lord of their past, but not yet in the way that He has determined acceptable. They will go through the tribulation period and at the end of it, He will return to them and dwell in their midst.

He must long for this day, as we all should. The dwelling of the Lord among His chosen people Israel is not something to be taken lightly. It is a sign that He is the covenant keeping Lord who will never fail to keep His promises to them, despite their failures in His presence. The true beginning of the dwelling of the Lord among His people is pictured in His dwelling among Israel in the tabernacle.

The actual beginning of the process of constructing this wonderful edifice is detailed in today's verses. What a marvelous thing it must have been for these people to anticipate, especially after what they had done with the golden calf. Peace was restored, and the Lord would dwell among them after all.

And so it will be once again after the tribulation period. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Willing Offering to the Lord (verses 20-29)

²⁰ And all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses.

In the first half of this chapter, three specific divisions were made by the mouth of Moses as directed by the Lord. The first was applicable to all people and came in the form of a command. This was in verses 1-3, and which comprised the law of the Sabbath as pertained to the congregation.

The second was a request from all of the congregation concerning the offering to the Lord. However, it was qualified with the words, "Whoever is of a willing heart." Within this, there would be divisions as well. Those with a willing heart, do not necessarily

mean they have something needed that they could give. Those who had something to give, may not have had a willing heart to give it. And then there are those that both had needed items, and they also had the heart to give.

And finally, the last division spoke to the “gifted artisans” among the people. Those who had an ability for the making of the sacred things were petitioned to come and assist in the work. With these commands, petitions, and instructions now imparted to the people, they are said to have “departed from the presence of Moses.”

They will have to consider the command of the Sabbath, search their goods and their hearts for offerings, and determine if their skills are acceptable for assisting in the making of the things required by the Lord. As they are in the wilderness, time is not a consideration. Rather, there is simply a need for willingness to step forward and demonstrate obedience in the three areas specified.

²¹ Then everyone came whose heart was stirred,

In Exodus 25:2, when the original call for materials was made to Moses while with the Lord on Sinai, it said, *kal ish asher yidevenu libbow*, literally “...of every man whose heart impels him.” Now a completely different word is used. It says, *kal ish asher nesaow libbow*, or basically, “everyone whose heart was lifted up.” Instead of the word *nadav*, or “impel,” it says *nasa* or “lift.”

There is then the sense of the removal of a weight which had burdened them. As a congregation, they had departed from the Lord and fashioned a golden calf. The covenant was annulled in Moses’ breaking of the original tablets, and there was the removal of the Lord from the midst of the people.

Instead, He had met with Moses a far distance from the camp. There was no surety as to what their fate would be as Moses once again ascended the mountain and stayed for a second forty-day period petitioning the Lord and being instructed concerning the people. They didn’t even know if He would go with them or not.

Now Moses has returned and given them the news. A tabernacle *will be* built, and He *will be* in their midst. He will dwell among His people Israel. The hearts are lifted now in gratitude to that fact.

²¹ (con’t) and everyone whose spirit was willing,

Only now is the term *nadav* used. It says, *v'kol asher nadevah ruakhow otow* – “and everyone whose spirit in him was impelled.” This is the second of eighteen times it will be seen. It means to incite or to impel. It is the kind of willingness that would impel a person to volunteer as a soldier after their country was attacked.

It would also be the type of offering someone would make when a great need arose in a community or a church. They would see the need and their heart would *impel* them forward to meet the need. This is exactly what the Lord is looking for. With their hearts lifted because of the grace and mercy of the Lord, their spirits are now impelled forward in an act of giving.

It is the same sentiment that Paul uses in the New Testament concerning one's giving in church for any reason. In his second letter to the Corinthians, he gives one of only two specific verses concerning giving in our dispensation of grace. There he wrote –

“So let each one *give* as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:7

There was to be nothing forced upon the people for this most sacred of habitations. Rather, the bestowal of the offerings was solely up to how their heart urged them on.

^{21 (con't)} **and they brought the Lord's offering for the work of the tabernacle of meeting, for all its service, and for the holy garments.**

Note for your Bible, it says here *ohel moed*, or “tent of meeting.” The translation should say “tent,” not “tabernacle.” Despite this, the people whose hearts were lifted and whose spirits impelled them are now said to come forward with their offerings.

The word used for offering is *terumah*. It indicates an offering for sacred use which is lifted up as if exalted. The people probably came, lifted the gift above their heads as a note of devotion to the Lord, and then bowed to place it among the piles of things which were being offered.

One can see in this the contrast between the offering now made to the Lord and that which was made for the golden calf. At that time, Aaron told the people to break off their earrings using a word which implied near violence. Now they humbly bring a *terumah* which is accompanied by a lifted heart and a willing soul.

²² They came, both men and women, as many as had a willing heart,

Now in this verse, the heart is described as *nadav* or “impelled to give.” They first needed to have their hearts lifted. When the heart was lifted, the soul was willing, and now from that the heart is made willing as well. The words show us the process of what is going on. And it is the same as what occurs in us today. When we are dispirited, giving isn’t the first thing on our mind, but when our hearts are lifted up, then our souls will be willing to give, and from that springs forth a willing heart.

The wording of this verse is debated. It says, *v’yabou ha’anashim al hannashim* – “and they came the men over and above the women.” What it appears to be saying is that the women were the first and prominent givers in the process, and only then the men came forward and gave of their things. If so, it would follow the normal pattern of the ladies being more disposed to such things than men, but their example prompts the men on to giving as well.

²² (con’t) and brought earrings and nose rings, rings and necklaces, all jewelry of gold, that is, every man who made an offering of gold to the Lord.

There are five things which are mentioned here. The first is *khakh*. It is the first of 7 times it will be seen. The word comes from *khoakh* which indicates a thorn. That is derived from a root meaning to pierce, as a thorn would pierce. Thus, this is some type of thing which pierces, such as an earring, a nose ring, a hook, or the like. It is used in Ezekiel 38 in this way –

“I will turn you around, put **hooks** into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company *with* bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords.” Ezekiel 38:4

The next is *nezem*. These are the same as the earrings mentioned in Exodus 32 when Aaron asked the people to break off their earrings and give them to him for the golden calf.

Next are *tabbaath* or “rings.” This comes from another word, *taba*, which means “to sink.” This then gives the idea of a signet which is sunk into clay or wax in order to make a seal. From this comes the idea of any ring. It is the same word used to describe the rings on the Ark, Table of Showbread, and the other things to be made.

Next is mentioned *kumaz*. This is the first of two times it will be seen. It isn't sure what it means, but maybe a golden ornament, or perhaps a bracelet. It comes from an unused root meaning "to store away," and so it is probably some type of jewelry or item that is kept stored away, or that is used to store something away.

And finally is mentioned *keli*. It is a general word that is widely translated as utensil, implement, article, vessel, and the like. All of these precious gold items were brought forward and waved as a wave offering by the people; an offering of gold to Yehovah. The gold of these items will be used to signify the deity of Christ as well as His kingly authority.

²³ And every man, with whom was found blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, fine linen, and goats' *hair*, red skins of rams, and badger skins, brought *them*.

The one major note of disagreement with this verse as far as translation is the word *tehashim*, which is translated here as "badger skins." This is not likely. Rather it is the skins of a sea animal like a seal, porpoise, or a manatee. Older versions made a guess as to what *tehashim* meant, and it was not a good guess.

Each of these was previously mentioned and each detail of them was precisely seen to picture the Person and work of Christ. The blue signifies the law; the purple royalty, scarlet pictures war, blood, and/or judgment; fine linen symbolizes righteousness, goats hair signifies an awareness of sin and that it will be punished; the ram skins died red reveal Christ's atoning blood covering our sin; and the skin of the marine animal pictures Christ's order and harmony covering us from chaos and confusion

²⁴ Everyone who offered an offering of silver or bronze brought the Lord's offering.

Again, the call was made for these articles, and the people are found to be obedient in bringing them as well. The silver symbolizes redemption and the bronze judgment. These were brought as an offering lifted up before the Lord.

The silver which is specifically to be used in the tabernacle itself will actually come from a mandatory redemption tax, but this silver may have been used for some unnamed articles for the service of the Lord.

^{24 (con't)} And everyone with whom was found acacia wood for any work of the service, brought *it*.

The acacia wood represents the incorruptible nature of Christ's humanity. This was brought forward for the *meleket abodah*, or work of labor. It is a fitting choice of words considering what it symbolizes – the work of labor of those items which picture the humanity of the Lord by which He accomplished His earthly work.

²⁵ All the women *who were* gifted artisans spun yarn with their hands,

v'kal ishah khakmat lev b'yadeha tavu – “And all the women who were wise of heart with their hands spun.” Their skill is said to be a skill which is reflected in a wise heart. The word for “spun” is *tavah*. It will only be used here and in the next verse in the entire Bible. It comes from a root which means “to spin” and thus it simply means, “spun.” The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 is said to do this type of labor. There it says –

“She stretches out her hands to the distaff,
And her hand holds the spindle.” Proverbs 31:19

²⁵ (con't) and brought what they had spun, of blue, purple, *and* scarlet, and fine linen.

The process of making yarn would be very simple, just as described in the Proverbs. It was probably done by the use of a wheel and a spindle and either with or without a distaff. Once the yarn was spun of the various dyes, or simply made into white fine linen, then it was brought forward as their offering.

²⁶ And all the women whose hearts stirred with wisdom spun yarn of goats' hair.

This verse is translated one of two ways. Either it is “the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom, spun goats hair,” or it is “the women whose heart stirred them up, in wisdom, spun goats hair.” The word for “stirred” is the same as that which was used in verse 21, *nasa*, or “lifted,” rather than *nadav*, or impelled.”

Either way, what appears to be the case is that the goats hair took a special skill, or more laborious effort than that which went beyond the normal spinning of the other mentioned items. Thus, the different word for the prompting of the heart is used.

And more, as goat's hair pictures an awareness of sin, the Bible is highlighting this specifically. It shows that these women's hearts were impelled forward concerning the sin-debt in their lives.

27 The rulers brought onyx stones, and the stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate,

Now are mentioned the *nasiim* or “rulers.” They are the ones to bring the special stones which would be used on Aaron’s shoulder pieces and on the breastplate of judgment. What we have here has been an order of offerings. The first were ornaments worn on the body, then after that were the special treasures or the possessions of the people, the offering of the labors of the females, and finally the offerings of the rulers which consist of the princely jewels.

28 and spices and oil for the light, for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense.

The rulers also brought the spices and the oil for the light, and those for the special anointing oil and incense as well. It would be expected that the rulers would have such items on hand, whereas the common people would be less likely to have them in their possession. It is no different today where some have Rolex watches and diamond earrings, but the common people have tee shirts and blue jeans. However, in the end, every need that was named is filled by the various people.

29 The children of Israel brought a freewill offering to the Lord, all the men and women whose hearts were willing to bring *material* for all kinds of work which the Lord, by the hand of Moses, had commanded to be done.

This verse is translated in a surprising number of ways, and yet most of them get the general sense of what is being said. The people, both men and women, whose hearts had been willing, are the ones who brought, for every kind of work, the things that Yehovah commanded to be done, by the hand of Moses, which were to be brought by the children of Israel as a willing offering to Yehovah. Concerning all of the previous details since verse 21, Matthew Henry states –

“Without a willing mind, costly offerings would be abhorred; with it, the smallest will be accepted. Our hearts are willing, when we cheerfully assist in promoting the cause of God. Those who are diligent and contented in employments considered mean, are as much accepted of God as those engaged in splendid services. The women who spun the goats’ hair were wise-hearted, because they did it heartily to the Lord. Thus the labourer, mechanic, or servant who attends to his work in the faith and fear of God, may be as wise, for his place, as the most useful minister, and he equally accepted of the

Lord. Our wisdom and duty consist in giving God the glory and use of our talents, be they many or few.” Matthew Henry

He is correct in this, and what is implied in both verse 22 and in this verse, is that there were some whose hearts weren’t stirred up. They were neither lifted up, nor were they impelled, to give of their goods in the service of the Lord. They are the same people today who will gladly sit on the sidelines and let nothing change their demeanor, even when something is hoped for or needed.

And of course, there were certainly some who came forward hoping everyone would see that they were giving, even though their hearts didn’t give a hoot about the cause. Jesus addressed those types in Matthew 6.

In the end, the Lord is looking on the heart, and He is looking for those who have their hearts lifted up towards Him, and who are willing to give without expecting anything in return. For Israel, they would be given the honor of having Him dwell in their presence in a magnificent edifice. What more reward could they ask for?

*How much can I give Lord; from You I have received so much
I know that what I give is never enough
I have been blessed with Your salvation, grace, mercy, and such
My life is abundantly blessed when it once was so rough*

*Now, even the worst of times is filled with joy
I have a hope which transcends the troubles of this world
How much can I give Lord, for others to employ
Let my heart be appreciative of the wonders You have unfurled*

*Help me to never be tight-fisted or to turn away from a need
Grant me the heart to respond in turn as You have blessed me
When I see a lack that needs filling, may I fill it with speed
May my heart be willing to share, and to do so joyfully*

II. Bezalel and Aholiab (verses 30-35)

³⁰ And Moses said to the children of Israel, “See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah;

Bezalel was specifically named by the Lord in Exodus 31. These verses now are exceedingly similar to those of Exodus 31:1-6. Moses simply repeats the words of Yehovah to the people, and the only substantial differences in them are to be found in the additional words of verses 34 and 35.

The name Betsalel is formed of three parts. The *el* at the end means "God." The "b" at the beginning signifies "in." and the middle part comes from the noun *tse/*, meaning shadow. Thus his name means "In the Shadow of God." As shade is considered a protection, like the tabernacle, his name is a metaphor for "In the Protection of God." He is the son of Uri, which means something like either "My Light" or "Light of Yehovah." The name of Uri's father is Hur which means "White." And Judah means Praise. It is Bezalel who will be the chief artificer for the construction of the tabernacle and everything associated with it. This is because of the next words...

³¹ **and He has filled him with the Spirit of God,**

The term *male* or "fill" gives the idea of being set apart or consecrated for a specific task. In this case, he is said to be *filled* with the *ruakh elohim* or "Spirit of God." This means that his work will be acceptable concerning the things which are required for him to accomplish. In this case, he is said to be specifically filled in four particular ways...

³¹ (con't) **in wisdom**

The word is *khokmah*. It signifies wisdom in a good sense. It is a common word, but it is used a great deal the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. It refers to understanding which is rightly applied in a wise, prudent, or beneficial way.

³¹ (con't) **and understanding,**

The word is *tebunah*. It indicates discretion, reason, skillfulness, understanding, and wisdom. Again, it is mostly used in Proverbs and it indicates an ability to comprehend. A man may see a storm coming and say, "Gee, it's going to rain," but he may not understand that the lightening in the storm can reach out beyond the storm itself and kill him before the storm even arrives. Having a knowledge of something does not mean that there is an understanding of the thing.

³¹ (con't) **in knowledge**

The word is *daath*. It was first seen in Genesis 2:9 when speaking of the tree of the **knowledge** of good and evil. It indicates knowledge in the general sense. One is either aware of something or they are not. If they are, then they can use that for understanding or even in wisdom. In this we can think of empirical, experimental, or experiential knowledge.

Therefore, we can rightly assume that Bezalel was probably already able to accomplish the things necessary for the work to be done. He had empirical knowledge, experimental knowledge, and experiential knowledge, all of which comprised who he was based on what he had already learned.

³¹ (con't) **and all manner of workmanship,**

The word is *melakah*. It is the same as the word *malak*, or angel, and so it signifies employment in a task or job, but never in a servile way. Rather it would be in an industry or occupation. Just as an angel or a messenger has his duty to carry out, this indicates the ability to accomplish the task at hand by employing the knowledge, understanding, and wisdom one possesses.

In every aspect – in his name, in the name of his father and grandfather, in the tribe he descends from, and in his skills and abilities – in each of these he makes a marvelous picture of Christ. If you missed the sermon where he was introduced, it would be worth the time to go back and see how intricately each of these aspects of him points to the coming Christ.

In just his aspects of workmanship, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, he is seen as a marvelous type of Christ who possesses the Holy Spirit without measure, and “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3).

³² **to design artistic works, to work in gold and silver and bronze,**

All of the tasks and designs for the sanctuary had been laid out in minute detail by the Lord to Moses. It would be Bezalel who would be in charge of carrying out the work. The designs which needed to be made, the gold that needed to be shaped, the silver which needed to be refined and poured into molds or beaten into implements, and the bronze which needed to be formed as necessary – all of it required the work of a master craftsman.

Bezalel was selected for the task, and he was capable of seeing it to its completion. The Lord knew him and his capabilities, and he was selected as the perfect artificer for the job, and the perfect picture of Christ to come. But the tasks thus far mentioned are not the total of his abilities. He could do even more...

³³ in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of artistic workmanship.

The word for both cutting and carving is the same. In other words, the stones to be cut and the wood to be carved uses this same rare word, *kharosheth*. In this noun form, it is found only here and in Exodus 31:5 when Bezalel was first introduced. It indicates mechanical work such as carved or cut, and it is actually a noun, but it is almost exclusively translated as a verb.

³⁴ “And He has put in his heart the ability to teach,

These words are not a part of what was recorded in Exodus 31. Not only would Bezalel have the abilities to form everything necessary to build the edifice and implements, but he would also have the ability to teach. What he could do was not to be limited to him, but he would be an instructor of others who would participate in the process until completion. And this is true with another person...

³⁴ (con’t) *in* him and Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan.

Another person who would have the gift of teaching would be Aholiab. The name Aholiab comes from *av*, which means “father,” and *ohel*, which means “tent.” Therefore, the name means “Father’s Tent,” just as the tabernacle pictures the Father’s Tent. He is the son of Ahisamach which means “My Brother has Supported.” And finally, he is from the tribe of Dan which means “Judge.” Again, like Bezalel, everything about him points to Christ.

³⁵ He has filled them with skill to do all manner of work of the engraver and the designer and the tapestry maker, in blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and fine linen, and of the weaver—those who do every work and those who design artistic works.

The passage and the chapter end today with these words. Several categories of workmen are specified – the *kharash*, or the engraver, would more aptly be called an

artificer. He would be skilled in cutting stone as well as engraving it. The word also means a person who might be a skilled cutter of wood, or an iron worker, etc.

The next is the “designer.” The verb used to describe him indicates “to consider,” and so he who would “count and calculate the threads in weaving figures after the manner of tapestry or carpet. His work was chiefly used in the curtains and veil of the tabernacle, in the ephod and the breastplate” (Albert Barnes).

The next is the “tapestry maker” who works in blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and in fine linen. The verb describes a weaver, and so he would work with a needle, weaving and embroidering the materials for the entrance curtains of the tent and of the court. He was also the one who fashioned the sash of the high priest.

And then the weaver is mentioned with the qualifying words “who do every work and those who design artistic works.” This would probably be the person who worked on the loom. The things he made would have been then used for the robe of the ephod, along with its binding, and also for the garments of the priests.

What is seemingly certain to me is that these people were folks already capable and able to accomplish these tasks. If further instruction was necessary, they had the direction of Bezalel and Aholiab to guide them.

And the same is true with us. We already have abilities when we come to Christ. What we need to do is to direct them towards our new calling in Him. We certainly don’t need to look for an external zapping of the Spirit to make us qualified to do the Lord’s work. What we need to do is to take what we have and apply it in a wise and considered way.

Another thing that we can see in the gathering together and formation of this tabernacle by the work of the people is that it leads us to a marvelous picture of Christ. God created the heavens and the earth. He has directed the course of nations and by His hand each thing happens so that redemptive history continues on as it should.

Each earthquake, or each war is used in His plan. Each person who is born or dies is known to Him. Some are raised by Him to be kings, while others die in obscurity. He is sovereign over all that happens. With this understanding, we come to the obvious thought that He could have simply *caused* the tabernacle to come into being and then moved in.

But instead, He went to the people to receive the materials from them. He then had them take those materials and fashion them according to the plan that He had laid down. The people who did the work were already known to Him and were used by Him to bring the thing into existence in the form that He determined.

And this is exactly how Christ came about as well, at least His humanity. God chose the selected form, and directed the materials that would form the Man. There was Adam, and there was Methuselah. Along came Abraham and Sarah as well as Lot and both of His daughters. Israel and Judah and Tamar were all brought forward.

Ruth, David, and Solomon were directed into this genealogy along with countless others, some named, but many completely unknown to us. Each life was a part of the weaving together of the fabric of the Man who would come.

Just as the Tabernacle was used of materials from God's creation, but which passed through humanity in order to be returned to Him to build this sanctuary, each and every detail of which points to Christ, so the materials of which these people were comprised passed through humanity in order to be returned to Him to form the human aspect of Christ.

And as the *ruakh elohim*, or "Spirit of God" endowed these men with the ability to form that which came into their hands, the Spirit of God also formed in Christ to erect the more perfect edifice which is the humanity of our Lord; an edifice where the Spirit of God is found without measure.

But on top of this, these men were also given the ability to teach. And this is one of the great titles of the Lord Jesus, Teacher. Time and again, the title is used of Him in the gospels. From there, we deduce that if there is a Teacher, then He must have students who would carry out the work with and for Him.

That is where disciples and apostles came in. They were taught by the Lord how to form the various parts of the great edifice which God is building, of which we are a part. This is seen in the writings of the New Testament. As Peter and Paul and the others are not with us now, then we must have something from them that tells us how we are to be shaped so that we too will properly fit into this marvelous building... and we do.

It is the Holy Bible. Christ is, in fact, the great Artificer. And He is also the great Teacher. He then instructed others who have written down what He expects of us, the materials

of this house of God which are continuing to be brought forth for His workmanship even today.

It should not be enough to say, "I am a living stone which will be placed in God's temple." Rather, it should be our goal to be the most perfect living stone possible. We have all of the instructions necessary to be just that if we will only avail ourselves of them.

Today and every day, I would hope that you would continue to perfect yourself though first an understanding of God's word, and then secondly to a right application of it. If you do these things, then you will be a prominent part of the magnificent thing which God is erecting as His eternal dwelling.

Please don't waste the few moments you have here on earth in chasing after the wind. Look unto Christ, pursue Christ, and endeavor to be more Christ-like in all ways and at all times. Before you know it, the life you are living will be over and your eternity will begin. It is an eternity which will be based on a very, very short span of time. Use it well.

And if you have never taken the time to first call out to Christ to begin this process, today is the day. You cannot be a part of God's building if you are not the redeemed of the Lord. His cross is what makes that possible and it is what You need for it to come about...

Closing Verse: *"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."* Ephesians 2:19-22

Next Week: Exodus 36:1-38 *Every need will be met in this proffering...* (The People's Offering) (99th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Offerings and Artisans

And all the congregation of the children of Israel
Departed from the presence of Moses, after the things he did tell

Then everyone came whose heart was stirred
And everyone whose spirit was willing, not as if competing
And they brought the LORD's offering
For the work of the tabernacle of meeting

For all its service, and for the holy garments too
Fulfilling each need as requested to do

They came, both men and women
As many as had a willing heart
And brought earrings and nose rings
Rings and necklaces, this was a great start

All jewelry of gold, that is, according to this word
Every man who made an offering of gold to the LORD

And every man, with whom was found
Blue, purple, and scarlet thread
Fine linen, and goats' hair, which did abound
Red skins of rams, and badger skins, brought them as is said

Everyone who offered an offering
Of silver or bronze brought the LORD's offering
And everyone with whom was found acacia wood
For any work of the service, brought it as their proferring

All the women who were gifted artisans
Spun yarn with their hands

And brought what they had spun
Of blue, purple, and scarlet, and fine linen
They brought the work that they had done

And all the women whose hearts stirred
With wisdom spun yarn of goats' hair, according to the word

The rulers brought onyx stones, as was right
And the stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate
And spices and oil for the light
For the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense
The offering was great

The children of Israel brought
A freewill offering to the LORD
All the men and women whose hearts were willing
To bring material for all kinds of work, according to the word

Which the LORD, by Moses' hand
Was to be done at His command

And Moses said to the children of Israel
"See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel

The son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah
And He has filled him with the Spirit of God
In wisdom and understanding
In knowledge and all manner of workmanship, ability so broad

To design artistic works, as was understood
To work in gold and silver and bronze too
In cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood
And to work in all manner of artistic workmanship they were to do

And He has put in his heart the ability to teach each man
In him and Aholiab the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan

He has filled them to do all manner with skill
Of work of the engraver and the designer
And the tapestry maker, according to His will

In blue, purple, and scarlet thread
And fine linen, and of the weaver as well
Those who do every work
And those who design artistic works, as the account does tell

Lord God, help us to learn from Your word
May we give willingly of ourselves and of what we possess
Let us be thankful and thus glorify our Lord
Who has beautifully fashioned what was once such a mess

May the lives that we lead be comparable to what He has done
May we live for Him following in the life He lived for us
His perfect life was lived and through it victory was won
Help us, O God, to emulate our marvelous Lord Jesus

Yes, O God, and to You we shall forever sing out our praise
And to You we shall come with these offerings for eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 36:1-38 **(THE PEOPLE'S OFFERING)**

We're going to cover more verses today in a single sermon than I have ever presented before. And with many verses comes many details. It doesn't matter that 31 of the verses have been substantially given to you before, you probably don't remember 99.837% of what those details pertained to.

Because of this, instead of our usual 24 or 25 page sermon, we have 139 pages to get through. Lunch,,, no lunch. You'll be blessed if you're home by bed time. Ok, that won't happen. Other than the first seven verses, we won't go into any detail at all. But those seven verses have a lot of relevant detail which you can contemplate and apply to your own life in the presence of the Lord.

When we get towards the end of them, I'm going to highlight a group of people who tend to give more than any others. It almost seems like a universal truth, and it probably stems from the fact that those who don't have, don't worry about what they don't have. But those who do have always worry about keeping it. Solomon actually talked about this in Ecclesiastes –

Text Verse: *"The sleep of a laboring man is sweet,
Whether he eats little or much;
But the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep." Ecclesiastes 5:12*

From the verses today, we will see that some of the people probably didn't sleep the night through, but it was because they were preparing something for the Lord, not because they were worried about losing what they had. Their hearts were geared towards a good goal, and they were determined to meet that goal, laboring with their hands in order to make it come about.

Is this what you are doing with your time? Are you working towards meeting goals which are honoring of the Lord, or are you filling your time with all kinds of other things? Solomon tells us to enjoy our time and to find pleasure in the work of our hands, and in the blessings which that work provides, but he also makes us aware that we have responsibilities to the Lord. The people of Israel who are highlighted today, spent themselves for a good cause and they are remembered for it now.

Let each of us endeavor to act in the same way with these brief lives that we have been given. Soon enough we will be facing the Lord to make an account of ourselves. Such

truths are to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The People's Freewill Offerings (verses 1-5)

¹“And Bezalel and Aholiab, and every gifted artisan in whom the Lord has put wisdom and understanding, to know how to do all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary,

The chapter begins with this verse which curiously seems rightly placed at the end of chapter 35. In verses 30-35, Bezalel and Aholiab were named by Moses as the ones called by the Lord to accomplish the work set forth for the construction of the sanctuary.

Moses also noted their ability to teach all the others in the skills necessary to accomplish those tasks. He even said of Bezalel almost exactly what is said of him here again. In verse 31, he said that “He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom and understanding, in knowledge and all manner of workmanship.”

It is of note that there it said the Lord “filled him with the Spirit of God.” Now it says that “the Lord has put wisdom and understanding” in him. It is the Lord who gives the Spirit. Therefore, the wisdom and understanding are from the *Lord*. This is exactly what Jesus says of Himself in the New Testament –

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. ¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you.” John 16:12-15

It is another, of the innumerable verses of Scripture, which point to the fact that Jehovah of the Old Testament is Jesus of the New. The same Lord who directs the Spirit of God is found in both, because they are One and the same.

As far as the curious placement of this verse being place here instead of at the end of the last chapter which closed out with the words, “...those who do every work and those who design artistic works,” that spoke of Bezalel and Aholiab and it also spoke of all of

those who were to be directed by them. Because of this, it would seem that this first verse of chapter 36 should be placed in that section as a final clause. In fact, Adam Clarke argues that it is, in fact, misplaced –

“The first verse of this chapter should end the preceding chapter, and this should begin with verse the second; as it now stands, it does not make a very consistent sense.”

Adam Clarke

And yet, it is instead placed as an introductory clause to this new chapter! It is so curious, that there are two different ways in which this verse is translated. The first is in the past tense –

“Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whom the LORD put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the LORD had commanded.”

(KJV)

They have certainly done this with the assumption that it is a statement explaining what lies ahead as an accomplished fact. The second is in the future tense as is recorded in the NKJV and others. It is hard to be dogmatic on which is correct, but the reason for the curious placement is actually seen in the next words...

^{1 (con't)} **shall do according to all that the Lord has commanded.”**

Rather than being a concluding thought for the last chapter, this verse is given as an opening thought for this one. It thus ties the two together, and it shows that what the Lord has commanded is to be accomplished. What will be described from here on out is then exactly what was commanded by the Lord.

Though these men were chosen by the Lord, and though they were filled with the Spirit of God, they are not working independently of the commands of the Lord, but in accord with them. One cannot claim authority in speaking for the Lord without doing that which the Lord has commanded.

Wow! If people would simply realize this, they would very quickly turn from the false leaders of the world and to those who conduct their lives in accord with the word of God. Any church which has its own catechism, book of laws, or the like to which they are obedient has already started down the wrong path. Those can be amended by man who wrote them, but the word of God is fixed and unchanging. Only in an adhering to what the Lord has commanded can there be people who are truly led by His Spirit.

²Then Moses called Bezalel and Aholiab, and every gifted artisan in whose heart the Lord had put wisdom, everyone whose heart was stirred, to come and do the work.

Verse 1 was given as an introductory thought, directing the people to adherence to the word of the Lord. With that done, Moses is now noted as actually calling those who have the ability to perform that same word. There are those who have abilities, and the desire to perform the work of the Lord, but there still needs to be a calling of them for the ability and desire to be used.

And so several things are seen here which must all work together. 1) There are those who are capable, but not willing. 2) There are those who are willing, but are not capable. 3) There are those who are both willing and capable, but who are not called. 4) There are those who are willing and capable, and who also receive the call.

To call those who are capable, but are not willing will lead to frustration of the individual in his tasks. To call those who are not capable, but who still want to work, will lead to frustration for everyone else who has to make up for their deficiencies. And to call those who are not willing and also not capable will lead to complete frustration and failure in all regards. Only when the qualifications are met, and a need for them exists, should a call be made for the work of the Lord.

For now, those with the abilities and the desire to use them are called forward by Moses to accomplish the work. The verses which describe that work begin in verse 8 and go all the way through the end of chapter 39. They are going to have a ton of repetition to the instructions given to Moses in Exodus 25-30.

In those chapters, that which was expected to be done was spoken. In these chapters, that which is done is to be documented. The seemingly tedious repetition is given in order to demonstrate exactly what was given in verse 1 concerning the words, "...all that the Lord has commanded."

In other words, there is an expectancy that the word of the Lord will be fulfilled, even in the minutest detail. The accomplishment of this work in that same detail is given to show obedience to that word. If the work does not represent the instruction, then an incorrect presentation of the Lord's word would be the result.

As each detail of the instructions were given as anticipatory pictures of Christ, then any details not adhered to would present a false picture of Christ. In other words, it is

showing us two truths. The first is that there is the true Christ, and there are false Christs.

The second is that the true Christ is revealed in type and shadow in what is ultimately made, and then approved of by Moses. This adherence to the minutest details of what the Lord had spoken will be seen in the final words of this long and detailed section –

“According to all that the Lord had commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did all the work. ⁴³ Then Moses looked over all the work, and indeed they had done it; as the Lord had commanded, just so they had done it. And Moses blessed them.” Exodus 39:42-43

Understanding this, we will not skip over these three chapters of repetition, but will go through them – just not with the same minute parsing of each word that we went through before. Rather, we will simply and quickly follow them along and highlight the work as it goes. In the chapters ahead, I will also use what is being explained as a basis for following other avenues for us to pursue. Don’t lose interest in what lies ahead. These are repeated for your benefit and instruction, so cherish them with that in mind.

³ And they received from Moses all the offering which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of making the sanctuary.

Back in Exodus 25:8, the term *miqdash*, or sanctuary, was used to describe everything concerned with what is being constructed. Two other terms were given. One was the *mishkan*, or tabernacle, and the other was the *ohel*, or tent.

Some translations have followed the words precisely, stating them as intended each time they were used. Others, like the KJV, were regularly wrong in how they presented the tent and the tabernacle. This causes confusion as to what was being spoken of.

The word translated here as “sanctuary” is *ha’qodesh*, or literally, the holy. However, it is the same in meaning as *miqdash*, and so the word “sanctuary” is correct. Everything about the structure is holy, and it is a single unit which comprises the sanctuary.

Understanding this, all of the offering which is brought forward is for the purpose of making the sanctuary. The opening words of the verse are *v’yiqhu mil-liphne moshe*. Literally, “And received from before the face of Moses.” The mental image here is piles and piles of offerings which were first presented to Moses, and who then passed them on to the workmen for the required service.

³ (con't) **So they continued bringing to him freewill offerings every morning.**

The word *v'hem* or “And they” is emphatic here. It is speaking of the Israelites now. There were piles of goods which had been brought, but the people continued to bring more as a *nedabah*, or “freewill offering.” This is the first time this word is used in the Bible, and it is correctly translated as “freewill.” The people voluntarily gave, they did so with spontaneity, and they continued to give *ba'boqer ba'boqer*, or “by morning by morning.”

The fact that the offerings are specified as coming in the morning shows that the people labored to make whatever was requested, maybe spinning the yarn or preparing the animal hides, whatever. They worked into the night and excitedly got up and rushed to Moses to present their offerings.

Others surely lay in bed and thought, “Did I give enough yesterday,” or “Tom gave more than me and I feel embarrassed to have done so little.” The thoughts of the night compelled the people to search themselves out and to decide on what gift they would be willing to present the next day. At morning, they would come forward to ease the burden of the call upon their hearts.

⁴ Then all the craftsmen who were doing all the work of the sanctuary came, each from the work he was doing,

The word for “craftsmen” here is *ha'khakamim*. Literally, it means “the wise men.” In other words, they are those with the skills of the labor. They are noted here as suspending their work on the sanctuary, and so there must be an important reason for doing so...

⁵ and they spoke to Moses, saying, “The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded us to do.”

A new word is brought into the Bible here, *dai*, or enough. In this verse it is connected to the word *min*, and so it is being used in a comparative sense, thus “more than enough.” There was a need, and the need has been more than met. The Lord commanded the work, the people were asked for an offering, not out of compulsion, and the need is met and even more so. What the Lord has commanded will be realized. This same marvelous sense of giving is seen again in 1 Chronicles where the people gave for the building of the temple in Jerusalem –

“Then the leaders of the fathers’ *houses*, leaders of the tribes of Israel, the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the officers over the king’s work, offered willingly. ⁷ They gave for the work of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. ⁸ And whoever had *precious* stones gave *them* to the treasury of the house of the Lord, into the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite. ⁹ Then the people rejoiced, for they had offered willingly, because with a loyal heart they had offered willingly to the Lord; and King David also rejoiced greatly.” 1 Chronicles 26:6-9

And again, in the building of the second temple after the exile of Israel, the people gave as is recorded in both Ezra and Nehemiah. Today, even as we live and breathe, the people of Israel are giving for the building of the next temple. It is sad that it is a misdirected giving in that they have missed Christ in the process.

⁶ So Moses gave a commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, “Let neither man nor woman do any more work for the offering of the sanctuary.”

What the previous verse as well as this verse imply, without actually stating it, is the integrity of the workmen and of Moses. If they wanted to, they could have kept gathering up the things brought forward and lined their own pockets with the excess.

Moses could have said, “This will be our pay. Let them bring what they want.” But neither occurred. The workmen had enough for the work and they passed that onto Moses. He was interested in the work of the Lord which was now fully provided for, and so he made it known that it was time to stop bringing offerings.

What is more, the words, “Let neither man nor woman do any more work” indicates that it was the people who were offering things which required labor who seemed to be the most willing to give. The making of thread, yarn, dyed fabrics, and the like is what is specifically being noted. These would be the common people who probably had the least to give, and yet they gave abundantly out of their poverty.

This reminds me of the trip I took in 2010. I stayed with quite a few families as I went around the US. They were all exceptionally kind and took good care of me. But the family that went far beyond their ability to help was the poorest that I stayed with. They

literally lived hand to mouth and yet when I left, they had prepared enough food for a travelling army, sending me off with that.

The same was true in the poorest countries that I visited in the past. Those who had nothing, always gave beyond their ability to give, and yet in the more wealthy countries, it was never the case.

On the other side of this same note, it is this poorest group, those who have the least to give, who are always targeted by the false teachers and preachers of the gospel. They know this truth, and they take advantage of it in order to enrich themselves. They promise that the windows of heaven will be opened to their audience if they just give, knowing that they will be taking what cannot be afforded.

If they could, they would even steal the food, half-chewed, out of the mouths of their woefully-cheated flock. Moses will have none of it. He has been told of the surplus and he now speaks out the command to decrease and desist from bringing more. It is to such a noble group that the command now goes out.

⁶ (con't) **And the people were restrained from bringing,**

The word here for “restrained,” *kala*, means just that. It was first used in Genesis 8:2 when the Lord shut up the windows of heaven in order to restrain the rains after the flood. The word gives the sense of a purposeful restraining action. In this case, the people had to be so restrained from giving more. It shows the true desire of them to be considered as having taken a part in the construction of this marvelous edifice. Charles Ellicott notes of this verse –

“The humblest class of contributors would thus appear to have shown itself the most zealous. When will Christian liberality be so excessive as to require to be ‘restrained’?”

⁷ **for the material they had was sufficient for all the work to be done—indeed too much.**

The *dai*, or sufficiency, of verse 5 is repeated again here. This is bolstered by the use of the same word in the Hebrew to translate both “the material” and “the work.” In essence, it says, “And *the work* they had was sufficient for all *the work* to be done.” Although the verses so far reflect a strong desire for the construction of the sanctuary, we must go back and remember what the construction of the sanctuary implies to fully understand the importance of these verses. In verse 33:3, we read this –

“Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.”

The Lord had told Moses that He would not go up in their midst. This implied that the tabernacle would not be built and that they would only be led to Canaan, but would not be given the blessing and honor of having the Lord in their midst.

Because of this, the people stripped themselves from that time on of any ornaments. They were a people in mourning at their rejection by the Lord. From this act of contrition, and the mediation of Moses, the Lord relented and agreed to go up in their midst. The sanctuary was to be the proof of His presence and so the offerings were given with that in mind.

The people, in their giving, showed their strongest desire to uphold this covenant relationship with the Lord. And as is the case, it was the lowly and humble who were at the forefront of the process. It is a truth which Paul showed still exists in the church –

*“Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: ² that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. ³ For I bear witness that according to *their* ability, yes, and beyond *their* ability, *they were* freely willing, ⁴ imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.” 2 Corinthians 8:1-4*

The churches of Macedonia were poor and even needy, and yet, they gave beyond their means in order to minister to the saints in Jerusalem. This self-sacrificial giving is more often than not seen in the poorest of the people. They, like the widow whom Jesus highlighted at the temple, give much out of their poverty, while the rich normally give out little in compared to their wealth.

For the service of the Lord, here in His church

What are you willing to give?

Have you something to offer, or will you rest on your perch?

And vainly whittle away this life that you live

Have you a skill or an ability that is of use?

And are you willing to use it in the service of the Lord?

If you have and do not share, what is your excuse?

What other thing have you geared your life toward?

*Surely you have a talent or a treasure
Something that can be used to glorify the Lord
And so use it to the full; to the highest measure
Don't let your gifts to God simply be ignored*

*For He will reward you, and do so without measure
Seek His glory now and you will receive heavenly treasure*

II. The Construction Begins (verses 8-38)

As I said, much of the words of chapters 36-39 are almost identical to the words given to Moses on Mount Sinai in regards to the instructions for building the tabernacle. That section of repetition now begins with verse 8. In most cases, the tenses of the verbs are the only things that make any substantial changes in the details. It would not make any sense to cut and paste those sermon verses when they can be listened to on-line. Rather, we will cover the rest of the chapter today in one large brushstroke.

⁸ Then all the gifted artisans among them who worked on the tabernacle made ten curtains woven of fine linen, and of blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*; with artistic designs of cherubim they made them. ⁹ The length of each curtain *was* twenty-eight cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits; the curtains *were* all the same size. ¹⁰ And he coupled five curtains to one another, and *the other* five curtains he coupled to one another. ¹¹ He made loops of blue *yarn* on the edge of the curtain on the selvedge of one set; likewise he did on the outer edge of *the other* curtain of the second set. ¹² Fifty loops he made on one curtain, and fifty loops he made on the edge of the curtain on the end of the second set; the loops held one *curtain* to another. ¹³ And he made fifty clasps of gold, and coupled the curtains to one another with the clasps, that it might be one tabernacle.

¹⁴ He made curtains of goats' *hair* for the tent over the tabernacle; he made eleven curtains. ¹⁵ The length of each curtain *was* thirty cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits; the eleven curtains *were* the same size. ¹⁶ He coupled five curtains by themselves and six curtains by themselves. ¹⁷ And he made fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in one set, and fifty loops he made on the edge of the curtain of the second set. ¹⁸ He also made fifty bronze clasps to couple the tent together, that it might be one.

In these verses, from verse 8 until verse 18, the details correspond in an exact manner to Exodus 26:1-11. They were detailed in the sermon entitled “*The Tabernacle and the Tent*” (pg 1316). Marvelous pictures of Christ were seen at that time.

¹⁹ Then he made a covering for the tent of ram skins dyed red, and a covering of badger skins above *that*.

²⁰ For the tabernacle he made boards of acacia wood, standing upright. ²¹ The length of each board *was* ten cubits, and the width of each board a cubit and a half. ²² Each board had two tenons for binding one to another. Thus he made for all the boards of the tabernacle. ²³ And he made boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards for the south side. ²⁴ Forty sockets of silver he made to go under the twenty boards: two sockets under each of the boards for its two tenons. ²⁵ And for the other side of the tabernacle, the north side, he made twenty boards ²⁶ and their forty sockets of silver: two sockets under each of the boards. ²⁷ For the west side of the tabernacle he made six boards. ²⁸ He also made two boards for the two back corners of the tabernacle. ²⁹ And they were coupled at the bottom and coupled together at the top by one ring. Thus he made both of them for the two corners. ³⁰ So there were eight boards and their sockets—sixteen sockets of silver—two sockets under each of the boards.

³¹ And he made bars of acacia wood: five for the boards on one side of the tabernacle, ³² five bars for the boards on the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the tabernacle on the far side westward. ³³ And he made the middle bar to pass through the boards from one end to the other. ³⁴ He overlaid the boards with gold, made their rings of gold *to be* holders for the bars, and overlaid the bars with gold.

In these verses, from verse 19 until verse 34, the details correspond in an exact manner to Exodus 26:14-29. Those verses were mostly detailed in the sermon “*A Sure Foundation and a Steady Frame*” (pg 1335). Again, marvelously beautiful pictures of Christ were seen in every verse at that time.

³⁵ And he made a veil of blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and fine woven linen; it was worked *with* an artistic design of cherubim. ³⁶ He made for it four pillars of acacia *wood*, and overlaid them with gold, with their hooks of gold; and he cast four sockets of silver for them.

In these verses, from verse 35 and verse 36, the details correspond in an exact manner to Exodus 26:33, 34. Those details were seen in the sermon “*The Veil and the Screen*”

(pg 1353). It seems almost impossible to imagine all of the details of Christ which were seen in those verses, but the Lord fit them in for us to marvel over.

³⁷ He also made a screen for the tabernacle door, of blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and fine woven linen, made by a weaver, ³⁸ and its five pillars with their hooks. And he overlaid their capitals and their rings with gold, but their five sockets *were* bronze.

These last two verses of the chapter correspond to Exodus 26:36 & 37. They were also covered in that same sermon, *'The Veil and the Screen.'*

In all of these verses, there are some translational errors depending on which version you use. For example, in these final two verses, the NKJV continues with the word "tabernacle" of the previous verses in this chapter even though the Hebrew changes from *mishkan*, meaning "tabernacle," to *ohel*, meaning "tent."

Such errors in translation will easily cause confusion in the reader if they are attempting to do a detailed study such as we have done with the verses in the past. This is why, as I often note, it is really important to not get stuck on a single translation of the Bible. It is detrimental to a right understanding of many important areas of Scripture. It causes people to become myopic and their theology will surely suffer because of it.

In all, we have just gone through the same verses which once took us three complete sermons to get through. If you missed those, you missed more detail than you could really imagine. I would implore you to go back and review them and see what marvelous pictures of Christ are revealed in these 31 verses.

Other than the first seven verses of today's sermon, nothing new has been introduced to your ears, but those seven verses were enough, I hope, to prompt you to consider your willingness to give in the service of the Lord. And I am not merely talking about coming to the Superior Word. I am referring to what you are willing to do FOR the Lord.

There are skills which you possess, resources which you have, and opportunities which come your way continuously to share of yourself to others and for others. The people of Israel built a sanctuary for the Lord to dwell in. We are a part of a much more marvelous temple that is being built in which God will reside forever.

Each person that comes to the Lord through your efforts, or who is built up in the Lord because of your efforts, is another beautiful stone which is being set in that temple.

Don't hold back of yourself, but be willing to expend yourself for this marvelous edifice which God is erecting. And if you just happen to be here and are not one of the saved of Christ, let me tell you about His cross and what that means to you...

Closing Verse: *"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."* Ephesians 2:19-22

Next Week: Exodus 37:1-29 *Be sure to invite all your friends by email...* (Christ in Every Detail) (100th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The People's Offering

And Bezalel and Aholiab
And every gifted artisan
In whom the LORD has put wisdom and understanding
Yes, in each and every man

To know how to do all manner of work
For the service of the sanctuary
Shall do according to all that the LORD has commanded
The instructions meticulously, out you shall carry

Then Moses called Bezalel and Aholiab
And every gifted artisan too
In whose heart the LORD had put wisdom
Everyone whose heart was stirred, to come and the work do

And they received from Moses
All the offering which the children of Israel

Had brought for the work of the service
Of making the sanctuary; they had offered ever so well

So they continued bringing to him, as we read
Freewill offerings every morning; suitable offerings indeed

Then all the craftsmen who were doing
All the work of the sanctuary came
Each from the work he was doing, each task he was pursuing
Yes, all the craftsmen, just the same

And they spoke to Moses, saying
“The people bring much more than enough
For the service of the work
Which the LORD commanded us to do –
They have brought lots of stuff

So Moses gave a commandment
And they caused it to be proclaimed the camp throughout
Saying, “Let neither man nor woman do any more work
For the offering of the sanctuary; we have enough no doubt

And the people were restrained from bringing
For the material they had was sufficient
For all the work to be done—
Indeed too much, nothing requested was now deficient

Then all the gifted artisans among them
Who worked on the tabernacle
Made ten curtains woven of fine linen
And of blue, purple, and scarlet thread; the weaving they did tackle

With artistic designs of cherubim, them they made
They did marvelous work with their trade

The length of each curtain was cubits twenty-eight
And the width of each curtain cubits four
The curtains were all the same size
They were thus made properly for sure

And he coupled five curtains to one another, thus he did do
And the other five curtains he coupled to one another too

He made loops of blue yarn on the edge
Of the curtain on the selvedge of set one
Likewise he did on the outer edge
Of the other curtain of the second set; so it was done

Fifty loops he made on one curtain
And fifty loops he made on the edge of the curtain
On the end of the second set
The loops held one curtain to another, this is for certain

And he made fifty clasps of gold
And coupled the curtains, this job he did tackle
To one another with the clasps
That it might be one tabernacle

He made curtains of goats' hair for the tent
Over the tabernacle
He made eleven curtains, giving one hundred percent

The length of each curtain was cubits thirty
And the width of each curtain cubits four
The eleven curtains were the same size
And they were made properly for sure

He coupled five curtains by themselves, this he did do
And six curtains by themselves too

And he made fifty loops on the edge
Of the curtain that is outermost in one set
And fifty loops he made on the edge
Of the curtain of the second set, the loops he didn't forget

He also made fifty bronze clasps, so it was done
To couple the tent together
That it might be one

Then he made a covering for the tent of ram skins dyed red
And a covering of badger skins above that, just as the Lord said

For the tabernacle he made boards
Of acacia wood, standing upright, per the Lord's words

The length of each board was ten cubits, accordingly
And the width of each board a cubit and a half, you see

Each board had two tenons
For binding one to another, this challenge he did tackle
Thus he made for all the boards
Of the tabernacle

And for the tabernacle, boards he did make
Twenty boards for the south side, this task he did undertake

Forty sockets of silver he made, according to the Lord's words
To go under the boards twenty
Two sockets for its two tenons under each of the boards

And for the other side of the tabernacle, the north side
He made twenty boards, you see
And their forty sockets of silver
Two sockets under each of the boards, accordingly

For the side of the tabernacle to the west
He made six boards, just as to him the Lord addressed

He made two boards also
For the two back corners of the tabernacle
This is where they did go

And they were coupled at the bottom
And coupled together at the top by one ring
Thus he made both of them
For the two corners, he did accomplish this thing

So there were eight boards
And their sockets—sockets of silver, numbering sixteen

Two sockets under each of the boards
He did this according to the pattern Moses had seen

And he made bars of acacia wood:
Five for the boards on one side of the tabernacle
As was to him made understood

Five bars for the boards on the other side of the tabernacle too
And five bars for the boards of the tabernacle
On the far side westward, so he did do

And he made the middle bar to pass through, as the Lord did intend
The boards from one end to the other end

He overlaid the boards with gold
Made their rings of gold to be holders for the bars
And overlaid the bars with gold, just as he was told

And he made a veil
Of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, so he did entwine
And fine woven linen
It was worked with cherubim in an artistic design

He made for it four pillars of acacia wood
And overlaid them with gold, with their hooks of gold
And he cast four sockets of silver for them
He did this just as the Lord had told

He also made a screen for the tabernacle door
Of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, these three
And fine woven linen, made by a weaver
And its five pillars with their hooks, as it was intended to be

And he overlaid their capitals and their rings with gold
But their five sockets were bronze, just as he was told

Lord God, You have given us instructions in Your word
Things which we are to do as You determine are right
And so help us to be obedient, help us in this Lord
That we may walk in a manner which is pleasing in Your sight

Lord, surely in obedience to You, with this You are pleased
And in this obedience surely all our griefs are eased

And so with this we will press on, our eyes fixed on Jesus
Who is the greatest joy and the highest hope for each of us

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 37:1-29 (CHRIST IN EVERY DETAIL)

On the night before preparing this sermon, I was exceedingly distressed. I lay there asking the Lord for guidance on how to present these verses. Other than the tense of the verbs, they are almost identical to those for the instructions given to Moses.

Literally, there are a handful of words which are different than those previous instructions. To me, simply cutting and pasting those many sermons and repeating everything that was said would make no sense. And so I struggled with what to say.

In the end, I started typing, and out came today's sermon. It is more a theological rather than a pictorial presentation of Christ. I hope that in listening, you will have a better appreciation for the life of our Lord and how He fits into the marvelous plan of redemption which issues directly from the mind of God.

The things which are described in these verses all point to Him, as we have already seen. Rather than seeing how they picture Him, today, we will get a brief look at how what He did is fulfilled in them. It is a ton of verses to go through, but don't let the brevity of the analysis disappoint you.

The words are short, precise, and uncomplicated, but they all point to the majestic glory of Jesus Christ and what He has done for us.

Text Verse: *Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:*

*"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
But a body You have prepared for Me.*

*⁶ In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin
You had no pleasure.*

*⁷ Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—
In the volume of the book it is written of Me—
To do Your will, O God.'" Hebrews 10:5-7*

God prepared a body for Christ out of the stuff of the world. And then He stepped into that body and revealed Himself to us. All of the articles used for the construction of the sanctuary were simply given in anticipation of Him.

Each item chosen was with the intent that we would see Him and know about Him. The same is true with Him as a Person. God selected individual occurrences in history and

placed them in His word so that when He arrived, it would be obvious that He was who was spoken of in those ancient writings.

Unfortunately, most in His time didn't recognize it, and today people are still missing it. But for those who are willing to accept the inspiration of Scripture, and that this inspired word points to Him, the two merge into one magnificent masterpiece of marvel.

The stories tell of the One to come, and the details of those stories tell of what He did. Let us not miss this as we search out His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Ark and the Mercy Seat (verses 1-9)

¹Then Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits *was* its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height. ² He overlaid it with pure gold inside and outside, and made a molding of gold all around it. ³ And he cast for it four rings of gold *to be set* in its four corners: two rings on one side, and two rings on the other side of it. ⁴ He made poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold. ⁵ And he put the poles into the rings at the sides of the ark, to bear the ark.

In the instructions for the Ark, we saw that it pictured Christ in every single detail. In a broad stroke of the finer detail, it represents the Lord as the God/Man who is the fulfiller and embodiment of the law.

The gold, His Deity; the wood, His humanity. The molding around it signifies His kingly status. The four rings reflect the four gospels. The poles are the two testaments of the Bible. These, and a hundred other details, were all minutely described – word by word – so that you could see Christ in His work of fulfilling and embodying the law on our behalf.

This ark had to come about somehow, and so the size, materials, and details were given as pictorial representations of Christ to come. And Christ had to come about somehow as well. The Bible shows that He didn't just pop into existence in order to save us.

Rather, He came from God, perfect and pure in all ways. His infinite nature came forth to unite with His finite creation. And His human nature came from the line of humanity, not suddenly as if there was a person who God arbitrarily chose. Rather, the line of

humanity from which He came was meticulously recorded, even from the very first man who ever lived.

At key points in His ancestral records, individuals are highlighted, showing who they were and what they did, but also being recorded in who they came from, and thus who they would lead to. There was the first man Adam, who rebelled against his Creator, but who later demonstrated faith in the promise of restoration.

There was Enoch who is noted in such high regard that God took him so that he wouldn't see death. He was a man of faith and was rewarded for that faith. Noah was a preacher of righteousness and a man who found grace in the eyes of the Lord. In a world full of wickedness so great that God determined to destroy it, Noah kept his faith and became the inheritor of a new world.

The line continued on through others, great names that the world celebrates. But it also included some that the world condemns for their actions. Lot, the nephew of Abraham, is included in Jesus' genealogy, but in the surprising way in that it is through his two daughters that he leads to Christ.

Yes, through both of them. He slept with the first, and she had a son named Moab. Ruth, the wife of Boaz descends from Moab. He slept with the other, and she had a son named Ben Ammi. Solomon's wife, Naamah, who gave birth to Rehoboam, and who is in the genealogy of Christ, descended from Ben Ammi.

Again and again, surprising people show up in Jesus' genealogy. Some were faith-filled souls, and some were scoundrels. There was a prostitute of Jericho, meaning she was a descendant of Canaan, the cursed grandson of Noah. David, despite being a great man of faith, was also a fallible man who made great errors in his life.

Step by step, the history of Jesus' ancestry is recorded, quite often in such a way that it takes real effort to determine who is actually in it. But each story, which reveals each person, shows that God was watching all along, ensuring that the materials used were perfect for the body prepared.

Just as the ark was carefully and meticulously constructed, so was the human genealogy of Jesus carefully and meticulously arranged. And then, when it was ready, it was wrapped in the pure gold of God's Deity. The Ark was prepared, and the Man was ready to do what was purposed from the creation of the world.

He was born under the law, the meticulously recorded standard for the people of Israel. For any under that law, there was the need for perfect obedience to it. As the law itself says in the book of Leviticus, “You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I *am* the Lord” (Leviticus 18:5).

The entire time of the law, detailed records of the lives and actions of the people were kept. They often don’t seem to correlate to the purpose of the Ark of the Testimony at all, and yet they all do, perfectly. The time of the law is given to show us deep truths concerning the law –

- It is to show us God’s perfect, holy, and righteous standard.
- It was given to show us how utterly sinful sin is to God.
- It was given to show us that no one, not a single person in well over fifteen hundred years of Israel’s history, could perfectly meet the standards of that law.
- It was given to show us the need for God’s grace in the giving of the Day of Atonement, and God’s mercy in the covering which that atonement granted.
- It was given to show us that in the granting of the grace and mercy of the Day of Atonement, the person so forgiven was deemed as if he were sinless before God – forgiven and free from sin’s penalty for another year.
- It was given to show that the law could never take away sin completely because each year, they would have to come back and be forgiven again for the sins of the previous year, showing that the law could make none perfect.
- And thus, the law showed us our need for something else; something greater than the law itself. It showed us our need for Jesus.

If none could meet the standards of the law, except for a vicarious act carried out on the Day of Atonement, and if the Day of Atonement was incapable of making the sinner free once-and-for-all, then in order to be made perfect, a perfect Substitute would be needed. Enter the God/Man; enter Jesus.

He came, pictured by this marvelous ark. He faithfully lived out His life under the law, never violating its precepts. Thus, He embodies that law. This is pictured in the placing of the tablets of the Ten Commandments in the Ark of the Testimony. Just as it enclosed those tablets, Christ embodied what they represent.

But there is the truth that no top was detailed for this box in the instructions that we were given in verses 1-5. Its top remained open and the perfect law of God, that which could never be met by mere mortal, fallen man, was open and exposed to the world in that condition. It is a note of condemnation.

This Man, Christ Jesus did fulfill the law and we stand naked and exposed in His perfect presence. The law, which He embodies, condemns us. Moreover, the Man who radiates out that law stands as a witness against us. Thus condemnation is found in His presence.

Is that the end of the story? Is this where we perish? Do we look at Jesus, see God's perfection radiating out of Him, and thus become consumed by His perfectly pure glory? The answer is, at least for those who live by faith in Him, "No!"

As noted, within the law, there was a provision of mercy for those who failed to meet that law. It is found in what is known as the Day of Atonement. On this one day each year, the men of Israel were told to go to Jerusalem and confess their sins before the Lord.

Detailed instructions for this day are noted in Leviticus 16, in following these instructions – both by the people and by the high priest of Israel – the people were forgiven of their sins. The Day of Atonement centered on the shedding of the blood of an innocent animal. That blood was then applied to another piece of furniture, one distinct from, but directly connected to, the Ark itself...

⁶ He also made the mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits *was* its length and a cubit and a half its width. ⁷ He made two cherubim of beaten gold; he made them of one piece at the two ends of the mercy seat: ⁸ one cherub at one end on this side, and the other cherub at the *other* end on that side. He made the cherubim at the two ends *of one piece* with the mercy seat. ⁹ The cherubim spread out *their* wings above, *and* covered the mercy seat with their wings. They faced one another; the faces of the cherubim were toward the mercy seat.

Zahav tahor – pure gold. The absolute perfection of Christ is seen in the substance. The mercy seat, the place where God would pour out His forgiveness on Israel each year, was this spot. The law, contained within the Ark, was *covered* by this most holy seat of mercy, thus hiding it from sight.

If the tablets of the law were looked upon by man, only death could result. This is seen in the account of the Ark returning to Israel after having been captured by the Philistines. Eventually it was returned to Israel, and when it was, it came to Beth Shemesh. There, the people dared to look into the Ark and their lives were forfeit.

The mercy seat had been removed, and mercy was removed with it. But there is more to the mercy seat than just the gold. There was something applied to the gold which

brought about the mercy – blood. The people didn't receive mercy simply because there was a mercy seat. If they did, then they would have received it continuously, because the mercy seat never left the Ark.

Rather, it was only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, that propitiation for the sins of the people came about. And that came about through a specific ritual which involved the shedding of the blood of an innocent substitute. This innocent life was taken in place of the guilt of the people. The Lord received this payment as a temporary stay of His wrath, year by year.

It was the blood which provided the forgiveness, and it was the blood which rested upon the mercy seat. Without the covering of blood, mercy would not be granted. When the mercy seat was removed from the Ark at Beth Shemesh, the blood was removed as well. Only wrath was left. The substitute's blood was forsaken as the people looked upon God's law.

In type and picture, the pure gold Mercy Seat is Christ. It is His divine and perfect nature covered by the blood of His humanity which was shed to take away the sin of the world. What the innocent animal only pictured, Christ fulfilled perfectly. He had lived out the law without erring in any point. He thus embodied the law. But in order for that to be complete, He had to also die in fulfillment of the law.

Until He died, the law wasn't actually fulfilled because His death was a *necessary part of the law*, pictured by the death of the animal. Forgiveness cannot come for the sins of one, without the death of another. But, the one to die could not have sins of his own or he would simply die in his own sin. The law would be his judge, and the law would condemn.

Only a perfect Man, who had lived perfectly under the law, could both fulfill the law and die in the place of another. In this act, the blood would thus satisfy the law. And in its satisfaction, it would also make the law obsolete. A law which is fulfilled is finished. The law could no longer have mastery over Him.

Further, as He was innocent before the law, then His blood could take away the sins of any who received the payment, just as occurred with Israel on the Day of Atonement. But unlike Israel who had to come year by year because the law was not fulfilled in the death of an animal, in Jesus, the law *is* fulfilled for the believer – completely and perfectly.

There is no need to come back a second or a third time to be perfected before the law. Rather, we are perfected once and for all through the substitutionary work of Christ Jesus. But there is more. In the fulfillment and annulment of the law for us, there must be something to replace it.

The law was based on a covenant. In its termination, a New Covenant then came in to replace it. The law was never intended as a means to an end. It was, from its inception, regarded as a temporary step in the path to full and complete restoration with God. This New Covenant is explained by the author of Hebrews with words cited from the book of Jeremiah –

“‘This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,’¹⁷ *then He adds*, ‘Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’¹⁸ Now where there is remission of these, *there is* no longer an offering for sin.” Hebrews 10:16-18

In other words, in this New Covenant, *received by grace*, the sins of man are not counted against them. It says, “Now where there is remission of these,” meaning remission of the sins through the blood of Christ, “*there is* no longer an offering for sin.” Christ’s offering is a one-time and for-all-time offering for sin.

As this is so, then the sins of the Old Covenant, whatever they may be, are forgiven in Christ. Further, they can no longer be counted against that person. Man is dead to the law through the death of Christ. Go through the law, see what condemns your heart, and then lay it at the foot of the cross. It is forgiven in Him. We are no longer under law, but grace. Paul explains this in Romans 6 –

“Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.¹⁰ For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God.¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:8-11

In the act of receiving Jesus Christ, we are following a process which includes, literally, all of the precepts of the law. We may have never killed a person, but we are guilty before the law, just as if we did. If one violates any part of the law, the law is broken. In

receiving Christ, we partake in the death of the High Priest, and so our guilt in regards to the sixth commandment dies with Him.

Under the law, we are guilty for eating certain types of meat, but in Christ, that guilt is taken away. Sin can only be imputed where law exists. In Christ, the sin which results from a violation of the Old Covenant can no longer be imputed because in Christ, the law is made obsolete.

Like the cherubim on the Mercy Seat who looked towards the place of shed blood with wings held high, let us likewise look to the place of propitiation – where the blood of the sinless Son of God was shed. Let us look to Calvary with arms raised high in victory! Let us look to Jesus! Thank God for Jesus Christ who *is* the grace of God poured out for all who will but believe. He is our place of mercy and propitiation.

*Into His presence I came, the Ruler of all
I came boldly because the mercy seat was there
On the name of Jesus, I did call
And covered by His blood, with God, fellowship I could share*

*I was going astray, and was as lost as I could be
Yes, one of the world's many lost children
But in a mere moment, mercy found me
I was cleansed and purified – right there and then*

*It was at the spot where my Lord did die
And where His blood soaked into the ground
There at the place of mercy, for Him I did cry
And there at that place... mercy was found*

II. The Table of Showbread (verses 10-16)

¹⁰ He made the table of acacia wood; two cubits *was* its length, a cubit its width, and a cubit and a half its height. ¹¹ And he overlaid it with pure gold, and made a molding of gold all around it. ¹² Also he made a frame of a handbreadth all around it, and made a molding of gold for the frame all around it. ¹³ And he cast for it four rings of gold, and put the rings on the four corners that *were* at its four legs. ¹⁴ The rings were close to the frame, as holders for the poles to bear the table. ¹⁵ And he made the poles of acacia wood to bear the table, and overlaid them with gold. ¹⁶ He made of pure gold

the utensils which were on the table: its dishes, its cups, its bowls, and its pitchers for pouring.

A table of showbread with twelve loaves. The table and all its utensils clearly and perfectly displayed the work of Christ. We saw this as we looked at each verse and word. He, being the true Bread from heaven, is sinless and perfect. The loaves which were to be placed on this table reflect His people, His redeemed.

As the law is fulfilled and annulled in Christ, those who call on Him are granted His sinless perfection, pictured by the twelve loaves without yeast. As they are before Him in the Holy Place, it indicates that we are deemed as sinless and, therefore, are acceptable in His presence.

God made Christ Jesus our Substitute, counting to Him our sin. In exchange, we were granted His righteousness. Paul explains this to us with these words –

“For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

In being made our sin, He then took our punishment for the sins we committed and died for those sins. However, because He had no sin of His own, His death was only for those who sinned. Death could not hold Him because He never sinned.

With His work accomplished, He could truly be considered our Bread from Heaven. His resurrection proved it and His sinless perfection under the law was vindicated in that act. We can now participate in His life by receiving His work. From that, we become a part of the lump of Bread, His body.

And so not only is He *the* Bread of Life, He is *our* Bread of Life. He is the One who sustains us at the beginning of our walk and ever after as well. We are always acceptable in God’s presence because of Christ’s work. Sinless once, and sinless for all time. Thank God for Jesus Christ our Bread of life!

*He is our Bread of Life, the one who sustains us
And through His life, we have been given life too
A constant theme in the Bible, it does discuss
From the beginning to the end; yes, through and through*

*In Christ we can again draw near to the Lord
And in His presence forever remain
We are counted as holy, so says His word
Never again will God look upon us with disdain*

*Justified! We are allowed access once again
Through the blood of Christ, our fellowship is restored
Redeeming grace to Adam's race, the sons of men
For those who have not His calling ignored*

III. The Lampstand (verses 17-24)

¹⁷ He also made the lampstand of pure gold; of hammered work he made the lampstand. Its shaft, its branches, its bowls, its *ornamental* knobs, and its flowers were of the same piece. ¹⁸ And six branches came out of its sides: three branches of the lampstand out of one side, and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side. ¹⁹ There were three bowls made like almond *blossoms* on one branch, with an *ornamental* knob and a flower, and three bowls made like almond *blossoms* on the other branch, with an *ornamental* knob and a flower—and so for the six branches coming out of the lampstand. ²⁰ And on the lampstand itself *were* four bowls made like almond *blossoms*, each with its *ornamental* knob and flower. ²¹ *There was* a knob under the *first* two branches of the same, a knob under the *second* two branches of the same, and a knob under the *third* two branches of the same, according to the six branches extending from it. ²² Their knobs and their branches were of one piece; all of it *was* one hammered piece of pure gold. ²³ And he made its seven lamps, its wick-trimmers, and its trays of pure gold. ²⁴ Of a talent of pure gold he made it, with all its utensils.

In the Bible, like in life, there is a contrast between light and darkness. Light is life, light provides clarity, and light grants surety. Darkness is opposed to this. The lampstand, or menorah, symbolizes that which provides the true light, Christ Jesus.

The details of the menorah were so minutely given because it details the marvelous work of Christ which runs all the way throughout redemptive history. He is the Light of the World, and everything associated with Him gives us guidance and illumination as we trek westward, back to the very presence of God.

The menorah was designed so that six branches would all come out of one and be supported by that one. The middle branch is the Messiah, Christ Jesus. From Him, stems out everything else by which the workings of God are illuminated. As He Himself said –

“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” John 8:12

From Christ comes the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord which directs all aspects of both the creative and redemptive processes.

Concerning creation, from Him comes all of that which is created. And therefore, everything found in the six days of creation *rests* upon Him. It is all dependent on Him for its existence, both initial and on-going. He is also reflected in the seventh day, that of rest.

His human arrival at the year 4000, the very middle of the 7000-year span of human history, indicates that His advent is the true light which lights up all of time, from day 1, until the last day. In His coming, His life *is* that which gives rest to all who came before Him, and to all who have come since. Human history is centered on the Light which shines forth in His incarnation.

Concerning redemption, He is the center of the dispensations of time. In His advent and through His work, He bestowed God’s grace upon mankind. Thus, His work is that which illuminates all seven dispensations of redemptive history. Each hangs upon what He has done for us through the redemptive process.

There was Innocence. When that was lost, there came a corresponding Promise. There was Conscience, and with that came the corresponding Law. And there was Government, and with it will come the corresponding Millennium. All of these are ultimately dependent on, and illuminated by, the grace of God found in Jesus Christ.

And all of this is revealed in and by Him who lights up Scripture. The word is received from Him, it points to Him, and it is only properly understood by His illumination. And this illumination is two-fold. First, it is illuminated *about* Him. He is the Subject of it. Until this is realized, it is a book which really makes no sense at all. Secondly, it is illuminated *by* Him. He is the One to make it understood as He opens minds to its hidden truths concerning Him.

In all ways, Christ is the true Light of the world which brings sense, harmony, and even ever-lasting joy to that which would otherwise seem illogical, chaotic, and downright hopeless. Thank God for Jesus Christ, the Light of the world.

*The purest of gold, fit for a King
Was used to make a seven-branch lampstand
Seeing its beauty makes my heart sing
The workmanship marvelous; stunning and grand*

*Every detail is so beautiful, each knob and flower
The glistening of the branches as they catch the light
It shines in the dark for hour after hour
Illuminating the holy place throughout the night*

*The glory of God is seen in each detail
Every branch speaks out a marvelous story
And in what it pictures, nothing will fail
As the Lord reveals to us His unending glory*

IV. The Altar, the Oil, and the Incense (verses 25-29)

²⁵ He made the incense altar of acacia wood. Its length *was* a cubit and its width a cubit—*it was* square—and two cubits *was* its height. Its horns were *of one piece* with it. ²⁶ And he overlaid it with pure gold: its top, its sides all around, and its horns. He also made for it a molding of gold all around it. ²⁷ He made two rings of gold for it under its molding, by its two corners on both sides, as holders for the poles with which to bear it. ²⁸ And he made the poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold.

²⁹ He also made the holy anointing oil and the pure incense of sweet spices, according to the work of the perfumer.

The construction of the Altar of Incense is not listed in the same place as it was in the giving of the instructions. It was detailed, much, much later in the instructions. And the oil and the incense was detailed even later than that. The reason for their unusual placement in those instructions was explained, and we saw that it was for exceptionally profound reasons.

But in the construction of them, they are noted now because they pertain to the room in which they are to be placed and used, the Holy Place, before the Veil. Every detail of these things was carefully analyzed, and all of it pointed to Christ and His work for us and through us.

The incense itself represents prayer. Prayer is something that man has engaged in since the earliest times of human history, and it is something that has occurred at all points in history since then. It can be found in every culture and even among those who claim there is no God at all.

The altar pictures Christ as our means of acceptable prayer to God. The problem with man is that he has sin in his life. It is an infection which he is born with, and it is something that only increases as he continues to live out his life. And in that state, the Bible tells us the natural outcome that occurs –

“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened,
That it cannot save;
Nor His ear heavy,
That it cannot hear.
² But your iniquities have separated you from your God;
And your sins have hidden *His* face from you,
So that He will not hear.” Isaiah 59:1, 2

Sin separates man from God and so He will not hear our prayers. Christ came to remedy that. In His life, He lived out the law *for* us, and in His death, He removed our sin *from* us. It is through Christ, and through Christ alone, that our prayers can be heard. This is the amazing thing about the world. There are innumerable religions praying to God in an even larger number of ways, and yet it is simply wasted breath accompanied by useless offerings. That was reflected in our text verse. In Hebrews, it said, “In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin, You had no pleasure.” What do we think we can offer to God that He will be satisfied with?

We can’t bribe Him. He doesn’t need money, food, clothes, or any other thing. The Bible shows us the only thing that will, in fact, please Him, faith. For example, there is steady stream of speculation as to why the Lord accepted Abel’s offering and not Cain’s.

People pursue long theological discussions about animal sacrifice as opposed to grain and fruit offerings. They look to the crimson thread of blood offerings which fill the

Bible, and which point to Christ's shed blood. On and on the speculation goes, but the Bible simply and clearly explains the matter –

“By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.” Hebrews 11:4

The first two words explain it all – “By faith.” People come to God with offerings in an attempt to bribe Him into listening to them. But God rejects that. What He is looking for is one who *has faith* in what He has promised, both in what He has done in relation to that promise, and what He will continue to do in relation to it.

And the promise was given to the first man, Adam. It was the promise of a Messiah. Because of this, only faith in Messiah brings prayers to God's ears. For the world today, the Messiah has come. And so, only prayers that are in accord with this Messiah-revealed, meaning Jesus, are prayers that will be heard. No prayer outside of Him is acceptable, no not even from His chosen people Israel.

The Messiah *has come* and they must come through Him. And within the church, there are no secondary levels to His authority. We cannot pray to or through images of Him, saints, His mother, or to any living intermediary. We are either in Christ and our prayers to God are heard because they are offered to Him through Christ, or they are unheard by Him.

In the actual incense and the anointing oil, we saw that all of it pointed to Christ, to the word of God, and to the work which Christ fulfilled as is recorded in His word. God chose specific ingredients whose words came from particular root words to guide us to a complete and full appreciation of what each thing symbolized.

In Christ, those symbols are fulfilled. He is the fulfillment of each sweet smelling fragrance, and each dab of precious oil. Through Him, the Spirit is given, the mouth of the prophet speaks, and the word is inspired. Through Him, our prayers rise without hindrance to God who is pleased to hear them, and to respond to them according to His infinite wisdom.

Some prayers may go *unanswered*, but in Christ, none go *unheard*. Thank God for the precious Gift which He molded throughout all of human history in order to be a place, a body, in which He could dwell. Thank God for Jesus Christ our Mediator.

God worked meticulously and exactly to lead from Adam to Christ. On the way there, He worked in the same fashion in giving us pictures of Him by which and through which He worked for, and responded to, His people Israel. In Jesus, the Person is revealed, and in Christ, the pictures are fulfilled.

Let nothing hinder us from our devotion to Christ, and let nothing obscure our vision of Him. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. In His presence, we will stand in the very presence of God. Why should we look anywhere else now as we await that marvelous moment when we behold Him with our own eyes, and see the fulfillment of these mere types and shadows.

Let us be people of faith, who respond to the words of Scripture with a sense of awe and wonder as we behold the glory of Christ, letting it transform us into the same image, from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Though the world has come to the point where we are mocked for our faith, let us be those who stand approved and unashamed, holding fast to the great and eternal words which reveal that same faith that we profess. Be one of the greats in the kingdom of God by being one of the greats of faith now.

Stand and rejoice in Christ, even if though – for a little while – you may be grieved by various trials. Know and understand that the genuineness of your faith, which is more precious than pure gold which perishes, will be found to praise, honor, and glory when Jesus Christ is revealed. Stand on your faith in the One whom, even though you have not seen, Him you still love. Abide securely in His word, and revel in the marvelous promises which lie ahead.

Closing Verse: *“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.” John 5:39*

Next Week: Exodus 38:1-8 *We have no fear where shall end our earthly trod...* (Justified and Sanctified before Our God) (101st Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Christ in Every Detail

Then Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood
Two and a half cubits was its length, as it was intended to be
A cubit and a half its width, this was understood
And a cubit and a half its height, you see

He overlaid it with pure gold
Inside and outside, he did it overlay
And made on it a molding of gold all around
Such was done, as the Lord did say

And he cast for it four rings of gold
In its four corners, to be applied
Two rings on one side, as the Lord had told
And two rings on the other side

He made poles of acacia wood
And overlaid them with gold, as was understood

And he put the poles
Into the rings of the ark at each side
To bear the ark
To the instructions, he did abide

He also made the mercy seat of pure gold
Two and a half cubits was its length, as it was to be
And a cubit and a half its width
Such were its dimensions, you see

He made two cherubim of beaten gold
He made them of one piece at the two ends of the mercy seat
Just as he had been told

One cherub at one end on this side
And the other cherub at the other end on that side, a marvelous feat
He made the cherubim at the two ends
Of one piece with the mercy seat

The cherubim spread out their wings above
And covered the mercy seat with their wings, as was meet
They faced one another
The faces of the cherubim were toward the mercy seat

He made the table of acacia wood
Two cubits was its length, it was made just right
A cubit its width, as was understood
And a cubit and a half its height

And with pure gold he did it overly
And made a molding of gold all around it
Just as the Lord did say

Also he made a frame
Of a handbreadth all around
And made a molding of gold
For the frame all around; surely its appearance did astound

And he cast for it four rings of gold
And put the rings on the four corners
That were at its four legs, just as he was told

The rings were close to the frame, this is where
As holders for the poles, the table to bear

And he made the poles of acacia wood
To bear the table
And overlaid them with gold, as was understood
In fashioning this, he was found to be able

He made of pure gold the utensils
Which were on the table, as you see
Its dishes, its cups, its bowls
And its pitchers for pouring, each made exquisitely

He also made the lampstand of pure gold
He made the lampstand of hammered work
Its shaft, its branches, its bowls, its ornamental knobs, and its flowers
Were of the same piece, his duties he did not shirk

And six branches came out of its sides
Three branches of the lampstand out of one side
And three branches of the lampstand
Out of the other side, care to the instructions he applied

There were three bowls made like
Almond blossoms on one branch, you see
With an ornamental knob and a flower
He followed the directions carefully

And three bowls made like almond blossoms
On the other branch; the directions he did understand
With an ornamental knob and a flower
And so for the six branches coming out of the lampstand

And on the lampstand itself were four bowls
Like almond blossoms, so he made
Each with its ornamental knob and flower
So it was arrayed

There was a knob, so he did do
Under the first two branches of the same, it was his aim
A knob under the second two branches of the same too
And a knob under the third two branches of the same

According to the six branches extending from it
He did as the directions did submit

Their knobs and their branches were of one piece as he was told
All of it was one hammered piece of pure gold

And he made its seven lamps, again just as he was told
Its wick-trimmers, and its trays of pure gold

Of a talent of pure gold he made it
With all its utensils, just as the directions did submit

He made the incense altar of acacia wood
In this manner he made it as was understood

Its length was a cubit and its width a cubit
It was square, as by the instructions accordingly
And two cubits was its height
Its horns were of one piece with it too, you see

And he overlaid it with pure gold
Its top, its sides all around, and its horns as well
He also made for it a molding
Of gold all around it, following the instructions so well

For it, he made two rings of gold
Under its molding, as the details did submit
By its two corners on both sides
As holders for the poles with which to bear it

And he made the poles of acacia wood
And overlaid them with gold, as was understood

He also made the holy anointing oil
And the pure incense of sweet spices too
According to the work of the perfumer
All of these things Bezalel did as he was instructed to do

Lord God, it all is about Christ, so we see
And our faith is strengthened in Him through each detail
He is portrayed in this word so perfectly
And so our faith is bolstered, as we pass along life's trail

The care You have placed in this precious word
Leads us step by step to better knowing Jesus
In it we have confidence, through what we have heard
Confidence of Your great love and care for us

In Christ You are with us; Christ faithful and true
And because of Him we shall forever praise and glorify You

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 38:1-8

(JUSTIFIED AND SANCTIFIED BEFORE OUR GOD)

On the day I typed this sermon, which was 10 October 2016, I received word that a friend of mine had died. Jeff loved the Lord desperately and he often spoke to others about Him. He had a group on Facebook called “Homeward Bound” where he would post happy messages about Christ.

When I traveled the 50 states in 2010, I got to meet him personally and we shared a few hours together at a marvelous Greek restaurant. He also came to Florida to visit us for a few days sometime after that.

Jeff was saved by the Lord and He loved the Lord. But he also struggled with life. He had addictions that he couldn't overcome. He was often depressed and would email asking for prayer. “Charlie, I'm in a very low spot right now.” We would pray and I carried him with me often in my heart during these times.

He would also have extreme highs, and he *never* failed to thank the Lord for them. He loved his family, he cherished his friends, and he connected me with more Facebook friends than any other person I know. He was always sending me new friend requests to approve. I have come to cherish many of them. He had the knack of knowing how to fit the right people together.

Well, my friend Jeff is no longer Homeward Bound. He has arrived at His final destiny, there to live in perfect contentment and peace with his Lord.

Today, we are going to look at two different pieces of tabernacle furniture that describe two different functions in the process of redemption. We've already seen what they picture, and so we will look deeper into how those pictures are actually realized in the work of Christ in and for us.

The first is the Altar of Burnt Offering and it looks at the process of justification. The second is the Bronze Laver and it looks to the process of sanctification.

Jeff got the first process settled at the foot of the cross. He was pardoned for the sins of his life, once and for all, through the work of Christ. Jeff struggled with the second process. He would go in fits and starts through cycles of sanctification and then falling back into the world.

Thank God that the race isn't up to us to complete. The sanctification of this life is one which keeps us healthy and in a right walk towards Christ. The full and final sanctification, however, comes solely through the work of the Lord. We'll see that as we go along today. But I cannot stress to you enough the importance of these two processes.

Text Verse: *"Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:37-39*

To stand justified before the Lord means that we are free from condemnation. We have overcome and we are guaranteed a place at the heavenly banquet which has been prepared for the redeemed of the Lord.

To be sanctified in its fullest sense is something that is accomplished the moment we were justified. We are made acceptable to God at that time. However, to be sanctified in this life is something that we need to pursue, from day to day, and even moment by moment.

Like I said, Jeff struggled with this aspect of our walk, but we all do to some extent. If we can just look beyond the pains, the trials, and the struggles and let the word dwell richly in us, then the sanctification process is a lot easier. The more we have the word in us, the less likely we are to fall back into old ways.

Like a tap that must be opened in order to receive the waters, our growth in the Lord will only come through receiving the waters He provides. And that tap ain't opening itself. The book is there, and the amount of dust on top of it will tell how long it has been since you opened it up.

And once it is open, the amount of notes in it, whether there are many or few dog ears in it, and the number of pages falling out of it are indications as to how seriously you take it to heart. I am quite certain that Jeff's Bible was well worn and marked up, but I think that at times, the dust started to pile up on it. Those are certainly the times he would call or email and tell me things weren't going so well.

Don't squander your time, and don't ever feel that you can make it without this precious gift of God. Trust this word, rely on this word, and let this word fill your heart and soul –

in good times and especially in bad times. Pursue the word, and let it dwell richly in your soul at all times.

This is what the Lord would ask of you, and this is the lesson that is found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Justification (verses 1-7)

¹He made the altar of burnt offering of acacia wood; five cubits *was* its length and five cubits its width—*it was* square—and its height *was* three cubits. ²He made its horns on its four corners; the horns *were of one piece* with it. And he overlaid it with bronze. ³He made all the utensils for the altar: the pans, the shovels, the basins, the forks, and the firepans; all its utensils he made of bronze. ⁴And he made a grate of bronze network for the altar, under its rim, midway from the bottom. ⁵He cast four rings for the four corners of the bronze grating, *as* holders for the poles. ⁶And he made the poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with bronze. ⁷Then he put the poles into the rings on the sides of the altar, with which to bear it. He made the altar hollow with boards.

The concept of justification before God is given its greatest explanation to us from the hand of Paul in the book of Romans. There is a place where man's sins are atoned for. It is where the penalty for sin is paid. In the economy of the Law of Moses, that took place at the Altar of Burnt Offering.

Man would come before the Lord, place his hands upon an innocent animal which would then be slaughtered and burnt up on the altar. In this, an innocent would take the place of the guilty. The sin would be transferred to the innocent, and the sinner was considered, at least temporarily, "justified" before God. The penalty for his sin had been paid, and it was thus removed.

This was the standard for all of Israel throughout the time of the law, and of course, there was much more involved in the process. There were several types of sacrifices, and there were certain days where more was done than on other days, such as the Day of Atonement. But the common theme was that a substitute died in place of the guilty.

As we saw in the giving of the instructions for the altar described here, every single detail pointed to Christ. Thus, in the study of the altar, both of its construction and use, we find foreshadowings of the marvel to come. Concerning the concept of being

justified before God, it is all here in those types and shadows. Paul speaks of what it means to be “justified” in God’s sight in Romans 2 –

“For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law ¹³ (for not the hearers of the law *are* just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified...”

-Romans 2:12, 13

We are told that if one sins under the law, he will be judged by the law. Only a person who actually “does” the law, meaning adhering to it perfectly, will be justified. But Paul gives us an all-encompassing statement in Romans 3:19, 20 –

“Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. ²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.”

How can it be that only “the doers of the law will be justified” and yet, “by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight”? How can this be? It is because nobody is able to live out the law as it is written. It is an impossible task. Thus, within the law itself, there was a way given to obtain mercy from violations of the law. It was found in the sacrifices of the law, highlighted by the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement.

Without them, man stood guilty before God, but because of them, man could be pardoned for another year. But... the truth then follows that the removal of the sin was actually only temporary. If sacrifices needed to be repeated, year after year, then it means that there was a constant reminder of sin. This is explained in the book of Hebrews –

“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. ² For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. ³ But in those *sacrifices there is* a reminder of sins every year. ⁴ For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” Hebrews 10:1-4

This is why Paul says that “by the law no flesh will be justified” in the sight of God. There was only a temporary stay of God’s wrath, not a permanent taking away of sin.

However, there is good news...marvelous news for us. This altar and its associated sacrifices was only a temporary fixture which was intended to both picture, and lead us to, an understanding of the greater work of Christ. Paul continues to explain this in Romans 3:21-23 –

“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,²² even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...”

We are told here that “the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed.” In other words, this righteousness is one which is not at all associated with the law, meaning deeds of the law. He even tells us that the Law itself, along with the Prophets, bear witness to this. How can we know what is witnessed unless we study it?

Paul’s words have to be rooted in something, or they are meaningless. *This is why we study the law!* It is because in understanding the law, we can *then* appreciate the absolute marvel of what Christ has done for us.

We were just told that “all have sinned and all fall short of the glory of God.” It is the law which gives us the knowledge of sin. Without a law, there is no law to break. If there were no legal speed limit, then we could drive at any speed we wanted. But as soon as someone passes that dang law which restricts us to 70 mph, we will become lawbreakers when we drive at 71 or more.

Likewise, the law gives us the *knowledge* of sin, but it does nothing to *take away the guilt*. When the law is broken, it is broken. We can pay the fine, but the infraction remains as a permanent part of our history. Therefore, there must be something which comes apart from the law to remove our guilt, or we will always have that guilt in memory.

In the United States, we have a provision which actually fits this need quite well. It is call the Pardon. When the president pardons a person, their record is wiped clean. It is as if the law was never broken. It can never be brought up again, and it is to be released from all record and memory. This is a marvelous type of what occurs for the believer in Jesus Christ. Paul continues with the good news in Romans 3 –

“...being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,²⁵ whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to

demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,²⁶ to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

The Day of Atonement was a day of faith in the provision of God for another year. Now, in fulfillment of what that day signified, we see Christ Jesus. He was “set forth as a propitiation by His blood.” The animal that was slaughtered at the altar had its blood carried into the Holy of Holies where it was sprinkled before the Lord and on the mercy seat. Paul says that Christ *is* that Mercy Seat.

Here he uses the word *hilastérion*. It is the same word as is found in the Greek translation of the OT for the Mercy Seat. Christ is our place of propitiation and restoration. Again, this is explained in Hebrews 9 –

“For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;²⁵ not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—²⁶ He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” Hebrews 9:24-26

What we are being told, is that each of these articles was only a copy of something which heaven requires for our justification before God, and that Christ is the fulfillment of those things. He came under the law, fulfilled the law, and then put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Think of it! If He never sinned under the law, then the law has no power to condemn Him. And so in dying under the law, but without violating it, the law, through Him, is finished. Hence, His final gasping words of His torturous time on Calvary’s cross –

Tetelestai – “It is finished.”

In Greek, it is in the perfect tense. It is finished, completely and absolutely. Unlike the sacrifices of the altar which had to be repeated again and again (and again!), this was a one-time-for-all-time thing. But before the reality, came the types and shadows.

What God has done in Christ is first hinted at in these objects which were instructed by the Lord through Moses, and which are now being carefully and meticulously made by Bezalel and those who are appointed under him.

Now arises a question for us to consider. The people agreed to the law which was presented by the Lord. They placed themselves under both its protection and its penalties. Within the law, God provided them a means of being forgiven for violations of the law. Right? If they came forward acknowledging those violations, then it means that they *knew* they were guilty before the law, yes? Otherwise, they would have no need of coming forward.

And so, if they came forward and received God's needed mercy for the forgiveness of their sins, then could they turn around and boast about their forgiven state? Well, technically, they could. But it would be a vain boasting!

Being granted mercy implies that they simply did not receive what was justly deserved. They *were* guilty before the law and their guilt was mercifully transferred to an innocent. As this was temporary and only given in anticipation of the Christ to come, Paul asks the question for us, and then he follows up by answering it –

“Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.” Romans 3:27

If someone perfectly lived out the law, they wouldn't need to come and ask for mercy. Therefore, boasting is excluded. If we have faith that Christ died for us, it means that we needed Him to die for us! How can we boast in ourselves concerning what He has done? Rather, we are to boast in Him for what He has done.

This is what it means to be justified before God. All boasting is set aside, except for that boasting which is in the Lord. This is what the people are being taught in this marvelous piece of shittim wood and bronze.

And this is what we are taught as we carefully and meticulously wind our way through the pages of Scripture. We are coming back to God through the work of Another; through the work of God in Christ. Paul sums up the transaction here, pictured by this ancient wooden box which was lavishly covered in bronze –

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. ²⁹ Or *is He* the God of the Jews only? *Is He* not also the God of the

Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, ³⁰ since *there is* one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.” Romans 3:28, 29

The law was given to Israel, the Jewish people, but there is one God who created all people. The people *outside* of the covenant required justification before God, and the people *inside* of the covenant required the same justification. The badge of circumcision didn't nullify their need for justification; it highlighted it.

And so both Jew and Gentile must come to God in the same manner, by faith in the work of a Substitute. Only in this vicarious act can we stand justified before God. And so Paul's final question, and explanatory response, of Chapter 3 of Romans is given for us to consider.

“Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.” Romans 3: 30

What does it mean that “we establish the law?” It is that we acknowledge that the law exists, that it had power over us, and that we had no ability to meet its precepts. However, we further establish that Christ could and did. He lived out the law, and died in fulfillment of that same law – as is pictured in the sacrifices which were made at this very altar that Bezalel is so faithfully constructing for Israel.

Thus, by faith in what He has done, we “establish the law.” We acknowledge our guilt before God, place our hands on the Innocent, and the transfer is made from imperfect us, to our perfect Substitute. In this act, pictured by this transfer at the altar, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5 –

“For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

Paul will go on speaking of the process of justification throughout the book of Romans and throughout the rest of his writings as well. We have simply taken a very short trip through a long and detailed process which involves the most serious of contemplation and careful consideration.

This was the intent of presenting Israel with these implements, rituals, and practices. And yet, they failed to come to an understanding of what God was trying to show them. Even in the coming of Christ, they rejected Him and considered their own righteousness before God as an *inherent righteousness*.

They failed to see that the animals which died as their hands were placed on its head meant that they *were.not.righteous, but unrighteous*. The sacrifices were simply an act of “going through the motions.” Isaiah explained this to them as did many of the other prophets, but their eyes were glazed over and their ears were made dull. Here is how Isaiah explained it to them, right at the beginning of his writings –

Hear the word of the Lord,
You rulers of Sodom;
Give ear to the law of our God,
You people of Gomorrah:
¹¹ “To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?”
Says the Lord.
“I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams
And the fat of fed cattle.
I do not delight in the blood of bulls,
Or of lambs or goats. Isaiah 1:10-11

Just a few verses later, the Lord calls out for them to reason things through. If they failed to do so, there would be consequences...

¹⁸ “Come now, and let us reason together,”
Says the Lord,
“Though your sins are like scarlet,
They shall be as white as snow;
Though they are red like crimson,
They shall be as wool.
¹⁹ If you are willing and obedient,
You shall eat the good of the land;
²⁰ But if you refuse and rebel,
You shall be devoured by the sword”;
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Isaiah 1:18-20

If they, who had these articles and rites before their very eyes, failed to make the necessary connection to a right-standing with God, how much less likely are we to do so unless we pay heed to the word which has been given to us!

Don't ever assume that because you belong to a certain church, or because you have done certain things, or even that because you are of a particular blood line, that you

have somehow merited God's favor. That is the crucial mistake which only further removes a person from their Creator. Only by faith in what Jesus Christ did can we stand justified before our glorious God.

In our Thursday night Bible studies right now, we are going through the book of Romans. It is a long, detailed, and intricate book of explanation concerning these things. I would recommend that you put your best foot forward and join us for that marvelous trip each week.

*Justified! Free from sin; released from all guilt
Justified! In Christ my pardon is won
Through His life and death, when His precious blood was spilt
I am reconciled to my God; the work is done*

*O! That Christ would take the place for someone like me
What manner of love would bring this about?
There He hung, on the cross of Calvary
Until those final words, He did breathe out*

*It is finished! The price has been paid
For all who will place their sins at the foot of this cross
What a most exceptional trade
His righteousness as gain; my sin and guilt as loss*

II. Sanctification (verse 8)

⁸ He made the laver of bronze and its base of bronze, from the bronze mirrors of the serving women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

Like justification, sanctification is explained to us in detail in the New Testament. The Bronze Laver, though lacking in any significant detail, is the implement which pictures our process of sanctification.

Something is added into the details here that was not included in the details that the Lord gave to Moses on the mountain. It is that the laver was made from the bronze mirrors of the serving women. It is a detail which has great significance, and yet Bezalel probably never gave it a second thought.

But the Lord specifically included that information for us to consider and, pun intended, reflect upon. That is exactly what a mirror is, it is something which reflects who we are. We reflect on what we look like and then work to improve the shabby figure we see, adjusting ourselves until we look the very best that we can.

That is what the process of sanctification is for; to mold us into an image other than the one we started out as. As fallen, fallible sons and daughters of Adam, we have flaws and imperfections which are displeasing to the Lord. We were born that way and we often only make things worse as go from bad decision to bad decision.

We wind up as vessels which are wholly and completely unacceptable to God. Here is how Paul describes us when we come to this state –

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10

This is a real problem because even though this seems horrible in the extreme, it pretty much covers all of us in one way or another. God looks at us based on intent. Coveting is something that happens inside of us.

Nobody else may even know that we are coveting, but God does. I dare say that there isn't a person here who hasn't coveted something at some time in his life. We may or may not have done many of the things on the list, but we have all done some of them.

But through the process of coming to Christ, we are forgiven of sin's penalty and we receive the pardon which He purchased for us. Along with that, comes something more, something which we experience, at least positionally...

And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

-1 Corinthians 6:11

Christ's shed blood washes us from these things and we stand not only justified, but also sanctified. As I said, this is a positional sanctification. It is what allows us to immediately come into God's presence. Should we call on Jesus and die that same day, we would be considered acceptable to God because of what Jesus did for us.

Paul reiterates this type of sanctification in Ephesians 5. There he equates Christ's sacrifice of Himself directly with our sanctification...

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish."

-Ephesians 5:25-28

It is Christ, and Christ alone who sanctifies us and makes us acceptable before God the Father. Through Him, all past defilement is washed away. The things of the past are gone, and in Christ all things are made new – clean, and presentable to our heavenly Father.

But, there is another type of sanctification which the Bible speaks of. This is also what is pictured in the Bronze Laver. The priests would come to this laver to wash at certain times and before doing certain things. This instructed them that even though they were ordained as priests and acceptable to God to conduct their priestly duties, they still needed to purify themselves in the presence of the perfectly holy Lord.

In the New Testament, we are called a kingdom of priests, and we are expected to perform our priestly duties properly and with a sense of purity, just as Christ did. Paul gives us an insight into this process of sanctification in 2 Timothy 2 –

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. ²¹ Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. 2 Timothy 2:20, 21

It should be pretty obvious by evaluating ourselves that even after we call on Christ, we have a long way to go as far as living in the manner that the Bible expects of us. Some of us never progress in this way; others are full steam ahead, living out the word and growing in holiness before the Lord.

But even those who are ever striving forward still pick up the dirt of the world. None of us are exempt from this. And so we are to come to the laver and wash ourselves. It is the word of God which is being referred to. We read the word, apply it to our lives, and we are purified by the water.

This most precious gift of all is given to us to lead us into all righteousness, to purify us in our life's walk, and to make us acceptable vessels, useful for our Master. And yet, Paul tells us elsewhere that it is God who is the One who sanctifies us. He said this in his first letter to the Thessalonians –

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thessalonians 5:23

And yet there is more. The mystery is further explained by Paul in his second letter to the Thessalonians –

“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth...” 2 Thessalonians 2:13

It is the third member of the Trinity, God's precious Holy Spirit who is behind the process of sanctification. But how do we tie these things together so that they make sense? 1) We are told that we are to cleanse ourselves in order to be sanctified, and yet 2) we are told that God is the one who sanctifies us in this manner. And even more specifically, 3) it is the Spirit of God who does it.

How do we reconcile these verses so that they make sense? The answer is that in our sanctification, we passively receive from the Spirit as we actively cleanse ourselves with Him.

In the tabernacle and at the temple, the priests would go to the laver, open the spigot, and they would receive the water for cleansing of their physical bodies. The priests actively did something, and the water passively passed to them. And yet, it is the water which is what cleansed them.

In our lives, if we are willing to go to what the laver and its water picture, we will receive sanctification and cleansing. The water is the word of God, the Holy Bible. It was given to us by inspiration of the Spirit. We are, when we go to the word, washed and cleansed. We actively pursue the word, and we passively receive the Spirit. And yet, it is the Spirit which cleanses us.

There is a synergism which cannot be denied in this process, just as there is a synergism in our justification. On the Day of Atonement, the people had to actively come to

confess their sins, but as we saw, they could not boast in that. It would be utterly foolish to boast in receiving forgiveness for sins that we had just confessed that we committed!

Likewise, in Christ we must come to Him in order to be saved, but in coming to Him we are saved by Him. There is a synergism involved in the process. In the same manner, we must come to the word in order to be sanctified. When we receive what it says and apply it to our lives, we are sanctified.

It is an immensely sad thing to contemplate, but the water is right there for us if we desire it. The word is written; it was divinely inspired by the Spirit to lead us into all righteousness; its precepts are available to any and all who will pick it up and read it; and the yielding of our lives to it will bring us back into a holy and right standing with our heavenly Father. And yet so few avail themselves of this fount of spiritual blessing.

Bezalel's hands fashioned this laver with skill and care from the mirrors of the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. God fashioned the Bible as if from the mirror of His perfection through holy men of God, selected by Him.

When people looked at the Bronze laver, they would remember the story of where it came from. When we look at the Bible, we are likewise to remember where it came from. When the priests opened the spigot, they would feel the refreshing water purifying them for service to the Lord. When we as priests of the Lord open the Bible, we should naturally expect the same as it purifies us for our acceptable service to the Lord. How is it that we can be sanctified? Paul sums the thought up so well with these words –

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Colossians 3:16

In doing these things, we will keep ourselves from temptations, we will be kept from falling into evil practices, we will stay on the right path, and be able to resist the devil. He is there, setting snares for us each and every day, but in knowing the word and having it dwell richly in us, those traps will be evident long before they draw near to us. This is the power of the word of God to affect our lives. Like the water of the Laver, its contents are able to cleanse us fully. This is why Paul says to us in 2 Corinthians 7:1 –

“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

How can we know the promises unless we are told of them? And how can we cleanse ourselves unless we avail ourselves of the tool and manual which is given for this very purpose? Open it, read it, study it, live it, share it, teach it, and preach it. I do believe the time is short and we desperately need to use it wisely.

As a final note today, we need to remember who it was that was given charge of constructing these particular items, Bezalel. The name Betsalel is made of three different parts. The *el* at the end means "God." The "b" at the beginning signifies "in." and the middle part comes from the noun *tse/*, meaning "shadow."

And so his name means "In the Shadow of God." As shade is considered a protection in the Bible, such as from the heat of the sun, it is a metaphor for "In the Protection of God." Considering my friend Jeff who has passed on to the arms of Christ, we have no worries if his failings somehow separated him from God. Such is not the case.

The true Altar was designed by the Lord, and it was fashioned by He who dwells in the protection of God. If He died for Jeff, then Jeff was and is in that protection. And the same is true for each and every one of you who have called on Jesus. God has given us a place of safety and refuge from His wrath, there in His shadow. It is Jesus Christ the Lord. Let us avail ourselves of that by coming to His cross and confessing our sins before Him.

And then Bezalel made the next piece, the Bronze Laver. Its purpose and use is behind Jeff now, but for each of us, we have it available to us. If we consider and reflect upon those who have gone before us in various ways and in various states, maybe the Bible will have more meaning to us.

Jeff may have been able to endure the struggles of this life a little better if he had more of the word in him during his low spells. It is incumbent on us to do our very best to fill ourselves now and always with the precious, marvelous word. In so doing, we can more easily face the many trials and woes that come our way.

Life may be painful, but with the word in our hearts it will be less so. Our walk may be filled with many sorrows, but with the word open before our eyes, we can also find many comforts. Our days may be long and tedious, but when pondering the promises of the word, the time ahead takes on a new and an exciting meaning.

Let us remember these things and thank God who has done so very much for us, all of which is reflected in these two beautiful pieces of handiwork which stood in the

sanctuary and which were then used until they were no longer needed. The true Altar and Laver have come. Let us go to Christ so that we may stand approved, justified and sanctified, before our glorious Creator.

Closing Verse: *Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,²¹ make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” Hebrews 13:20, 21*

Next Week: Exodus 38:9-31 *He is the One we are to fix our eyes toward...* (The Always Evident Lord) (102nd Exodus sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Christ, Our Altar and Our Laver

He made the altar of burnt offering of acacia wood
Five cubits was its length and five cubits it was wide
It was square, as is understood
And its height was three cubits; with the instructions he complied

He made its horns on its four corners
The horns were of one piece with it
And he overlaid it with bronze
Thus he fashioned as the Lord did submit

He made all the utensils for the altar:
The pans, the shovels, the basins, working in his trade
The forks, and the firepans as well
All its utensils of bronze he made

And he made a grate
Of bronze network for the altar
Under its rim, midway from the bottom
His workmanship did not falter

He cast four rings for the four corners
Of the bronze grating
As holders for the poles
Here is where the altar and the poles were mating

And he made the poles of acacia wood
And overlaid them with bronze
From the directions, this was understood

Then he put the poles into the rings
On the sides of the altar, the directions he did follow
With which to bear it
He made with boards the altar hollow

He made the laver of bronze
And its base of bronze, as was called for
From the bronze mirrors of the serving women
Who assembled at the tabernacle of meeting's door

Lord God, we thank you with all of our soul
For what these things we have seen look forward to
We can have certainty that all is under control
And that every detail has been handled by You

Our destiny is secure; we stand justified
Because of Jesus Christ and the blood that He shed
Though His cross we have been purified
Our pardon is purchased and we are brought back from the dead

And through Your word, we can grow in sanctification
And we will daily become more like You
Walking in holiness through the Spirit's ministration
This is what coming to Your word will do

Help us, O Lord, to pursue Christ now, and always
May our lives be a pleasing offering in Your sight
O, for this to be true for all of our days
May we pursue Jesus with all of our might

And then in eternity's splendid glory
We will walk in Your light for unending days
We shall behold the unfolding never-ending story
And in that brilliant light, we shall give you eternal praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 38:9-31 **(THE ALWAYS EVIDENT LORD)**

As with the previous few passages, the majority of the verses today have been covered, almost exactly, in earlier sermons. And so once again, we will follow a different path as to how we can approach these already familiar words.

I titled this “The Always Evident Lord” because the courtyard was visible to any who passed by. Even from the outside, and without peering into the courtyard itself, a person could make many deductions about what went on inside the sanctuary by simply sitting outside and watching the daily activities.

If they were astute enough, they might even be able to put together more than initially meets the eye. The larger portion of those who were in Israel completely missed the Always Evident Lord, Jesus. He was there among them, everything He did was in fulfillment of the very words of Scripture that they listened to each Sabbath day, and His words proclaimed ever-so clearly who He was... and yet they missed Him. They are still missing Him to this day.

And yet, there are innumerable multitudes who have taken the time to open their eyes, compare the words of Scripture which have been presented to them about Jesus, find Him, and even come to know Him in such a detailed way that they understand Him better than the Jews understood the symbolism of their own temple. After all, if one understands the Person, they should be able to understand what the shadows which only pointed to Him mean.

Today, we’ll take a trip down the streets of Israel to the place where the sanctuary of the Lord stood. When there, we will contemplate its outer courts and what occurred there to see if we can find out anything about the God who resided there. If we can learn something about Him, then we might be able to find out how to approach Him.

Text Verse: *Oh, that I knew where I might find Him,
That I might come to His seat! Job 23:3*

Job wanted to know where he might find the Lord. A person walking along the streets in Israel might be curious about the edifice he passed by where the Lord God of Israel dwelt. If so, he might stop and ask some questions about the unusual edifice.

From there, he might decide to stay awhile and observe the goings on at that special place. If so, he might come across the answer to the dilemma that Job faced. If we know where He is, we might be able to determine how to come to His seat.

For us, the place has been described in detail, the way there has been explained, and the means by which we can take that way there is fully revealed. This is the infinite value of the Holy Bible. It explains where the infinite God resides, it explains the bridge between finite us and infinite Him, and it explains the means by which that bridge is made available. Further, the duration of our journey to know Him fully will be an infinite one.

We have this treasure right next to us and available to us. It is finite in size, and yet its value and its worth are infinite. Such is the marvel and the wonder of this superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Always Evident Lord (verses 9-20)

⁹ Then he made the court on the south side; the hangings of the court *were of fine woven linen, one hundred cubits long.* ¹⁰ There *were* twenty pillars for them, with twenty bronze sockets. The hooks of the pillars and their bands *were silver.* ¹¹ On the north side *the hangings were one hundred cubits long, with twenty pillars and their twenty bronze sockets. The hooks of the pillars and their bands were silver.* ¹² And on the west side *there were* hangings of fifty cubits, with ten pillars and their ten sockets. The hooks of the pillars and their bands *were silver.* ¹³ For the east side *the hangings were fifty cubits.* ¹⁴ The hangings of one side *of the gate were fifteen cubits long, with their three pillars and their three sockets,* ¹⁵ and the same for the other side of the court gate; on this side and that *were* hangings of fifteen cubits, *with* their three pillars and their three sockets. ¹⁶ All the hangings of the court all around *were of fine woven linen.* ¹⁷ The sockets for the pillars *were* bronze, the hooks of the pillars and their bands *were* silver, and the overlay of their capitals *was* silver; and all the pillars of the court had bands of silver. ¹⁸ The screen for the gate of the court *was* woven of blue, purple, and scarlet *thread,* and of fine woven linen. The length *was* twenty cubits, and the height along its width *was* five cubits, corresponding to the hangings of the court. ¹⁹ And *there were* four pillars *with* their four sockets of bronze; their hooks *were* silver, and the overlay of their capitals and their bands *was* silver. ²⁰ All the pegs of the tabernacle, and of the court all around, *were* bronze.

The courtyard of the sanctuary was the part which was evident to all the people. From outside, people knew that there was a structure which had a set and specific purpose. It would be unique, and thus it would bring the curious to wonder about it. And certainly this is the intent of what we know it pictures.

A simple question by anyone could be asked of those who went in and out as to what its purpose was. And a simple answer was all that was needed to explain the overall purpose of it –

“Excuse me, Sir, what kind of dwelling is this?” “It is the dwelling of the God of Israel, the true God. What you see is only the outer courtyard, and above the outer court hangings you can see the top of the tent where He dwells.”

This exterior view would be available to both Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free man. Any who were curious about what they saw needed only to ask. And if they were shy, they could make logical deductions about what it was and what its purpose was.

But it is speculated that the outer hangings themselves would allow a bit more to be seen. The word which describes the hangings indicates “a hanging,” but also a sling for slinging stones as if the hangings were loosely woven. That doesn’t tell us much, but the Greek translation of it indicates a sail. Because of this, it is believed by some scholars to be a fabric which was woven in such a way that the inside of the court could be seen through it.

And so we have here an edifice which would attract attention to itself, but not in an ostentatious manner. It would then at times make those outside curious enough to see more. They would long to peer in and see what was so special about this “God of Israel.”

Even from the outside, it would be evident that there was order and harmony here. There would also be a great deal of diversity. From the outside, without even peering in, there would be various materials evident to the eye. White fabric; bronze bases; poles of metal or wood; silver hooks, pillars and bands; and the front screen would have been a beautiful mixture of colors.

Surely the person curious about the exterior would want to know more about the interior. And so they might get closer in order to let their peering eyes gaze through the outer hangings and into the courtyard itself. What they would see then is the extent of the always-evident Lord. Other things would be concealed, but everything facing out into the courtyard would be evident.

And this is what the world around us pictures still. There is a world, filled with people, who know nothing about the true God as He has specifically revealed Himself. They go about life unknowing, and therefore, normally uncaring. It isn't that they don't necessarily care about the things of God, but one cannot truly care about something they have no comprehension of.

You certainly don't care a thing about the planet Gypsar which is in the Tulovian galaxy because you have never heard of it. But if you knew of the marvelous treasures that were there, you would read all about it. Until someone sees the sanctuary, they can never care about what the sanctuary pictures, nor would they care about the God who resides in it.

God to them is simply a god of whatever their traditions, culture, or their minds have established. And so when the Lord designed the tabernacle, He did it in such a way that any passerby would be curious, hopefully even tantalized, to know more about Him.

As this sanctuary in every detail pictures Christ, as we well know, then it must be comparable to how Christ is evident to the world today. There is the edifice, there are the priests coming in and going out, and there are also common people coming and going.

Along with the entries and exits of the people, there would be animals being brought in alive, and none exiting alive. Any person, sitting for a spell and watching the activity, would be able to make conclusions about what they were seeing.

The people go in with a lamb, there is the sound of bleating which is suddenly interrupted by the sound of the death of the animal, there is a temporary lull in what one could see, and then... There! Above the courtyard smoke is rising. The smoke smells like the fragrant burning of a lamb. Aha! A sacrifice! Right there at the front of the courtyard.

Without even looking through the hangings, but just simply sitting outside, one could really learn a lot about the always-evident Christ. We can even back up for a moment. Today, just within the past hour, three groups of people came to the sanctuary at the same time. A priest came out to meet them and they chatted. After that, he bent over and inspected each animal very carefully. One of them was turned away. It was evident, even from where we are sitting and watching, that it had a defect.

Though the words were spoken in a different language, one not understood, it was unmistakable that the animal was rejected because it was marred. Only the very best

was to be offered to this “God of Israel.” You see how easy it is! Just sit awhile and watch, and you will learn so very much.

And what about the people, will the people tell us anything as they come and go? Well, there is certainly a very, very rich man. Look at those fancy clothes. And yet, he is the one whose animal was turned away as unacceptable!

But that person to his right must be the poorest person ever seen. He and his family are literally in rags. And yet, they have saved all that they had in order to bring a lamb. And it is the most precious lamb I have ever seen. They must have paid extra for the chance to have it. Or, if they raised it, they were the most blessed of all. Surely they are giving of their very, very best in order to present a pleasing offering to this God of Israel.

I cannot even look upon that lamb without the greatest sense of awe and wonder. God, if there truly is a “God,” must have taken the highest delight in fashioning that lamb – so innocent and pure, and yet, these people have decided that offering the lamb back to Him is more important than anything else.

I can tell that money is not the issue here with this God. The richest man I have ever laid my eyes on has had his offering rejected, and the poorest bunch of hillbillies I have ever seen have had theirs accepted, and even gladly. The high priest himself marveled at the perfection of this precious lamb.

No, it is not about money at all. It is something much more valuable... it is about faith. One family demonstrated faith in the provision of the Lord, even in their poverty. The other demonstrated a complete lack of faith, trusting in his own status before this God of Israel. One was accepted; the other was rejected. This God, and the rites given to honor Him, is a God of any and all who come to Him by... faith.

I know this because the third family that came was well-to-do. They drove up on high performance donkeys with their servants and offerings in tow, and yet they too have been accepted. Their offerings were without blemish, and they were offered with a sense of humility, even gratitude, for the honor of serving this God of Israel. They didn't trust in their wealth; they demonstrated faith.

I am indeed impressed with what I have seen. Let me tarry here and ponder more. I am truly curious about this “God of Israel.” He appears different than all the rest. The other temples I have passed by didn't care at all about the type of offering, as long as there was a lot of money to go into the back pocket of the priest. A wink, a nod, the passing of some silver, and all was settled.

And that brings me to the silver. Even from outside, I can see that there are items of silver along the border of the courtyard. It is that upon which the hangings are hung. Other than the screen at the front, the hangings are all the finest white. In fact, while sitting here, one was taken down because it had a mar on it. Only the purest white, like snow, even like purity itself, is seen.

And that purity was hung from *silver*. It reminds me of the silver being passed from the people to the priest at the other temples, but this silver is pure and polished. There is nothing underhanded or dirty here. And so if silver be silver, the purpose remains the same. Money was passed and a deal was made... REDEMPTION!

The silver pictures a purchase, and thus an act of redemption. It is all so clear. The purity of the hangings is hung upon the silver of redemption. I like this God! This God of Israel! There is order and harmony here. And I can see, sitting here pondering these marvelous courts of the house of the Lord God of Israel, that the posts are set in bronze.

If the other materials have meaning, this must also. Bronze. It is hardy, it has a specific color because of the copper in it which other metals except gold lack, it is a very enduring metal, it is used as the base of the poles, and in fact, it is used for the pegs as well. It is the foundation of everything else that I can see.

I have already seen that there is judgment going on inside of the court. The sudden termination of the bleating, and then the rising of the smoke tells me this. It is the first thing that happens, just inside the entry to the sanctuary. It is the basis for everything else that occurs, just as the bronze is the base of everything I see from out here.
JUDGMENT!

Simply by sitting outside, I can tell that the bronze signifies judgment. Yes, there is order and harmony here. There is wisdom on display. This sanctuary has intent and purpose; it has logic in all of its parts. Thus, the God inside that inner tent is different than all others.

I have passed through many lands and seen many gods. I have seen countless offerings, including human sacrifice – babies for some gods, and martyrs of war for others. There is no wisdom there. There is not logic there. There is no order or harmony. There is only chaos and death. But this sanctuary is different. I will tarry a bit longer...

Now, comes another thought to mind, this courtyard that I am looking at is facing east and west. The entrance is east, so those who enter to face the place of their God will be

facing west. Isn't that curious! The sun rises in the east. One might think this sanctuary would be turned around the other way for the people to face the rising sun.

Instead, they have the sun to their backs, rejecting it as any type of god. Their eyes look west. It reminds me of an ancient story, one where there was a land of exile to the east, but a place of delight to the west. It is an ancient story, but it is in my memory. These people are looking west, maybe in hopes of the land of delight. I need to learn more about this God who dwells *to the west*...

This makes me think about another part of this sanctuary. If their God resides in the west, then they are coming from the east, out of that place of exile I heard about. You might think that the whole east end would be opened wide then, so that any and all could flood in. But this isn't the case.

Instead, there is a screen at the entrance. There is a simple and small way to gain access into the courtyard. Think of it! The whole world is rushing along, busily seeking out "God" in whatever manner they choose. The path is wide to fit all of those people. But if this God that these people serve is the true God, then what a narrow means of gaining access into His presence!

One must be heading west, they have to go through just the right door at just the right location, they must come with an offering, and that offering is rejected if it isn't pure and spotless and perfect. If these expectations are met, then they come up to this screen and its limited means of access. And what a marvelous screen! It is made of the richest colors – blue, purple, and scarlet thread which are intricately woven. It is a masterpiece of beauty.

I asked one of the people about the colors. He happened to speak my language and he told me that the blue stands for their law, the law of their God. The purple speaks of royalty. Their God is their King. As their King, He exercises the power of a king, upholding the law, executing war, and judging. These are a combination of blue and red which merge into purple.

And the red, how deep it is. It is the finest scarlet color I have ever seen. He told me that the red speaks of shed blood, but then he curiously said that the shed blood is what grants life. This is the strangest thing I can imagine. I need to learn more about this God who gives life from death. These things are so curious, and yet they seem so reasonable at the same time. And so I am tempted to get closer now and peer through the hangings to see the inside of the court better.

As I peek in, it is just as I expected. I can see an altar, standing before the entrance, west of the screen. It is bronze too. JUDGMENT! I've already figured out what the bronze stands for and why would I expect this to be any different? I'll sit here quietly and see what happens. Maybe I'm right...

Sure enough, this altar is where a lot of activity is going on. The people bring in their animals, hands are placed on their heads, words are uttered, and then the animal is sacrificed. Its blood is collected and is handled by the priest.

Is this what it means that shed blood is what grants life? Is there some sort of a transfer from this innocent animal to the people, and from the people to the animal? That must be what the man meant. The people come in carrying a burden, the burden is transferred to the innocent animal, and the people's burden is lifted.

It all makes sense. I've seen this type of thing in other temples, but it never seemed so effective. I don't know how I know it, but I just know it. Here, there is such a sense of order and meticulous care, that I can tell what they are doing makes perfect sense. It is like a dream come true seeing what is happening here.

The only other thing I see outside of the main tent area within the courtyard is a wash basin. It is bronze too. JUDGMENT. The priests go to it to wash their hands and their feet. Now isn't that curious! They are priests, so they must have been ordained as priests. And yet, they need to go back to this basin to clean themselves, as if they are defiled.

How can a priest be defiled? They must pick it up as they live their regular lives. They don't wash their whole body though, just their hands and their feet. So, if they are priests who are acceptable to their God, and yet they are defiled, then the defilement must come as they walk with their feet and as they work with their hands.

I think I understand this. Even those cleansed by God still need to continuously purify themselves in order to be acceptable to perform the priestly duties. This God that they worship is so holy that *even His priests* must continuously be purified. The only word I can use to describe this is that they "sanctify" themselves. It's funny, they are sanctified, and yet they need to be sanctified. I will ponder this as I browse some more. ...

Well, isn't that interesting. It sure seems rather odd to me is that this courtyard doesn't have any other furniture. There are no chairs for the priests to sit at; there is no place

for them to lie down. They just keep working... one sacrifice after another. And yet, the people seem content and pleased with how things are going.

I need to find out why, and there is just the guy to ask. He is an old man with a long beard and many years of life scarred into the wrinkles on his face. He must have been coming to the sanctuary a long time. If anyone knows the scoop, it must him.

And bonus, no translator needed. He also speaks my language. It seems that this God of theirs has every detail figured out in advance for me. In asking him what all of this meant, he stretched out his ancient eyes and looked back towards the tent inside the courtyard. He thought about it and then spoke.

“Our people worship God. The God. The one true God. He gave us His law and we were asked to live by it. A covenant was cut and we were accepted as His people. In the law, there are penalties *for* sin, but there is also forgiveness *from* sin as provided by the law. “We come here to sacrifice in accordance with the law and our sin is forgiven. And we come here a lot. Year after year, we are reminded of our sin, and so we know that our *sins* are forgiven, but our *sin* is not taken away. If it was, we wouldn’t have to come back time and time again.

“But... in our law are included ancient stories of our history, even to the beginning of time itself. Right at the beginning, we were told of One who would come and who would destroy the evil one who brought sin into our lives. Until He comes, we present ourselves at this sanctuary to do what He will someday take care of for us.

“When He does this, I mean when He destroys the power of the one who brought evil into our lives, we won’t have to come back here, year after year. Instead, not only will our *sins* be forgiven, but our *sin* will be taken away. This is what we are waiting for.

“This sanctuary is telling us a story. Each pillar, and each color tells a part of it. The altar and the screen tell us a part of the story. I’ve contemplated this sanctuary for the past 87 years of my life, and each time I think on it, the story becomes a little clearer to me.

“There are parts of this sanctuary that no one is allowed to see, except the priests of course. And there is one part that only the high priest may see, and he can only see it once a year. And when he goes in, he must bring the blood of a sacrifice made for himself before he enters. He also takes in incense to obscure his vision of the most holy objects that are there. That tells us a story too.

“All of this is temporary, but all is necessary. We, as a people, are learning a most important lesson, if we will but learn. We’re a stiff-necked group. Our God has told us as much, and I fear that terrible times lay ahead, but we will still hold out for the promise of this One we call “Messiah.” He will make all things new.

The old man stopped there and said, “This, this is the answer to your question. Now I have a question for you. Life is precious and it passes by all too quickly. There is hope in the God of Israel. Would you like to come and rest in the shadow of His wings?”

I pondered his question. I’ve seen enough. I’ve seen the logical construction of this sanctuary. I’ve counted its poles and hangings. I’ve noted its sizes and dimensions. I’ve contemplated its materials and colors. I understand the sacrifices, and I believe that they are effective in making the people acceptable to their God – “the God.” I’ve seen so many things, and yet I have not even stepped inside. That is what I want to do next.

“Yes sir. I believe that I would. I would like to come and dwell among your people, and I want to share in what your God offers. I will do what is required to become a part of your people, the people of the God of Israel.”

Obviously, this has been a story, but it is a reasonable story. The courtyard of the sanctuary was what anyone who passed by could see. It was intended to keep people out, but it was also designed to let people in. For those who were of Israel, they could come inside the courts. For those who were not of Israel, they could still look in through the hangings in order to see and understand.

And what was it that both Israel and the Gentiles was to understand? It was that the God who resided within the tent which was within the hangings of the courtyard, was the same God who had done so much for Israel. He had done the miraculous in the past, and He had made promises for the future as well.

The courtyard was the always-evident Lord. One could understand so much about Him by just contemplating what their eyes could see. He is loving; He has provided a way of fellowship with His people. He is just; the people’s sins required judgment. He is merciful; He provided forgiveness through a substitute.

He is compassionate; He allowed the forgiveness of sins many times. He is righteous; His forgiveness was not arbitrary, nor was it withheld when it was petitioned as He laid out for the people. He is holy; the substitute could have no blemish, but rather it needed to be perfect.

The lesson of the courtyard is the lesson of our lives in the Lord. The people of the world may only see the true God through our lives, and so we are to be the always-evident Lord to them. Not that we *are* the Lord, but that we are the ones to make the Lord known to others.

If we, you or I, are all that some people will ever see in order to know Christ, will we be a suitable example for this to happen? Are we willing to put ourselves on display so that people will say, "I want to know more about what is inside the courtyard."? Will they want to come through the screen, come to the altar, place their hands on the Lamb, and confess their sins over Him?

Each aspect of the courtyard is an aspect which pertains *to you*. The white hangings are the righteousness of Christ imputed *to you*. The bronze is the judgment which was rendered upon Christ *for you*. The silver is the redemption upon which *your righteousness* was purchased. We can go through every detail of this courtyard and apply what the always-evident Lord has done *for you*.

In turn, you should make yourself a shining example of this always-evident Lord for others to see and desire. Until they are justified, they cannot be sanctified. And until they are sanctified, they will never be glorified. The access to the throne of God is found in one place for all people, and you may be the only one to bring that knowledge to some of them.

You are on a journey heading west, back to the land of delight. Be sure that you bring along as many people as you can in the process. Should you fail, their destiny will be a far, far different one. As I noted, there is no chair and no sofa in the courtyard. There is no bed either. The priests worked and never sat down. You too need to spend your time wisely, working out your presentation of the always-evident Lord, so that when someone asks you about Him, you will be ready with a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.

*How lovely is Your dwelling place, O Lord
How marvelous are Your courts which do surround
And how beautiful is Your gate, it pulls my heart toward
The marvelous place, there on the dry ground*

*I long to enter into the place where You dwell
And to smell the burning of the sacrifice*

*Accept my offering O Lord, and be pleased to tell
That we are again in fellowship, so sweet and so nice*

*How lovely is Your dwelling place, my God
I long to stay here with You for eternal days
And to gaze upon the beauty of my Lord
And with my soul, forever to sing Your praise*

II. The Inventory (verses 21-31)

²¹ This is the inventory of the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the Testimony,

These words are debated. Is this speaking of the inventory of the things already mentioned, or the metals which will next be numbered? What is probably correct is that it brings us all the way back to chapter 35, and it carries all the way through until verse 20 of this chapter. Further, it will also include the metals when they are mentioned.

Everything that was offered, collected, and constructed was detailed and described. Even if the exact amount of the materials wasn't noted, such as how much acacia wood was used, the materials were accounted for in the construction of the items.

In this verse, it places everything under the umbrella of *ha'mishkan mishkan ha'eduth* – "The tabernacle, [the] tabernacle [of] the testimony." The reason for this is that the entire sanctuary, including the tent and the courtyard, was designed and constructed as extensions of the tabernacle itself.

And the tabernacle was erected specifically for the purpose of enclosing the two stone tablets of *ha'eduth* – the testimony. It is the testimony against sin which is contained within the Ark and upon which sat the Mercy Seat.

^{21 (con't)} which was counted according to the commandment of Moses, for the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar, son of Aaron the priest.

This counting of the materials was according to Moses' command and was intended to be as a service of the Levites. The word "for" is not in the Hebrew and it gives a faulty sense of what is said. The service wasn't *for* them, it was administered *by* them at the direction of Ithamar, the youngest son of Aaron.

It is curious that as the youngest he would be selected, but maybe the meaning of his name gives us a clue as to why. The name Ithamar means “Island of Palms” or “Land of Palms.” The *tamar*, or palm, is a symbol of uprightness. Thus the Levities are considered as an island of upright people who are administering a service before the Lord.

²² Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all that the Lord had commanded Moses. ²³ And with him *was* Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver and designer, a weaver of blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and of fine linen.

The initial call of Bezalel and Aholiab was made in Exodus 31. The men, their work, and even their names were chosen specifically for us to see pictures of Christ. If you skipped that sermon, you are directed to go home and watch it.

²⁴ All the gold that was used in all the work of the holy *place*, that is, the gold of the offering, was twenty-nine talents and seven hundred and thirty shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary.

The gold mentioned here was not for the “holy place” but for the sanctuary. The gold was used in the holy place, the most holy, place, and on the pillars which supported the screen entrance into the tabernacle. The total amount of gold is estimated to equal out to 4245 troy pounds. (\$62,543,198.10 / 7 Dec 2016)

Although it is an exceptional amount, it is not so much as to be inconceivable. If there were 2,000,000 people who left Egypt and each family requested articles of gold from their neighbor, this would only amount to a portion of what was carried out.

²⁵ And the silver from those who were numbered of the congregation *was* one hundred talents and one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary: ²⁶ a bekah for each man (*that is*, half a shekel, according to the shekel of the sanctuary), for everyone included in the numbering from twenty years old and above, for six hundred and three thousand, five hundred and fifty *men*. ²⁷ And from the hundred talents of silver were cast the sockets of the sanctuary and the bases of the veil: one hundred sockets from the hundred talents, one talent for each socket. ²⁸ Then from the one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five *shekels* he made hooks for the pillars, overlaid their capitals, and made bands for them.

Although this is new information in the Bible, we have already reviewed it in a previous sermon, having gone forward to this passage in order to understand where the silver for the sockets, hooks, bands, and overlay came from.

That sermon was detailed in Exodus 26:15-30. If you missed that, you are directed to go home and pull it up on YouTube. If you watch it during dinner, order pizza or something else that you can eat by hand so that you don't miss any details.

As a squiggle for your brain, this is the second and last time that the *beqa* is mentioned in the Bible. The first was in Genesis 24:22. The *beka* comes from *baqa* which means to cleave or to split. Hence a *beqa* is a split, or half, shekel.

Verse 26 is also an important number concerning those who are considered as adult males in Israel at the time. The age is twenty and above, and there are 603,550 men. This is in accord with the number given in Exodus 12:37 and it, therefore, allows a close reckoning of how many people actually departed from Egypt.

The number is not exact, but it is close enough to estimate the total population who probably came out. That would be somewhere around 2,000,000 souls. The total amount of silver today would equal about 14,602 troy pounds. (\$3,457,169.52 / 7 Dec 2016).

²⁹ The offering of bronze was seventy talents and two thousand four hundred shekels. ³⁰ And with it he made the sockets for the door of the tabernacle of meeting, the bronze altar, the bronze grating for it, and all the utensils for the altar, ³¹ the sockets for the court all around, the bases for the court gate, all the pegs for the tabernacle, and all the pegs for the court all around.

The use of the brass and what it pictures concerning the work of Christ was previously noted in our sermons. If you missed them, and there are several, you will need to just start all over with the tabernacle series and watch each sermon. Be sure to take notes as I will be giving a written exam before you get your certificate of completion. The total amount of bronze today would equal about 10,277 troy pounds.

In all, the need for every detail set out by the Lord was met by the giving of the people, and all of it was voluntary with the exception of the ransom money taken during the numbering of the people. The Lord had a plan, the minutest details of which are being overseen by Him, and it is being worked out moment by moment in the stream of time.

Our Lord Jesus is the fulfillment of every one of these types and shadows which He has brought to the pages of His word. He is there for us to see and to understand. Be pleased as you pick up this precious treasure each day to look for Him there.

In the end, we are on a journey back to the arms of our heavenly Father. Christ is the path, and Jesus is the finish line at the end of that path. Let us fix our eyes on Him and let us not waiver in our devotion to Him. Let us be found pleasing in the sight of the Lord as we look for Him in His superior word.

Closing Verse: *“Give to the Lord, O families of the peoples,
Give to the Lord glory and strength.*

*⁸ Give to the Lord the glory due His name;
Bring an offering, and come into His courts.*

*⁹ Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!
Tremble before Him, all the earth.” Psalm 96:7-9*

Next Week: Exodus 39:1-43 *When I give you the title, please don't, hem or haw, haw or hem... (And Moses Blessed Them) (103rd Exodus Sermon)*

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Courtyard and the Inventory

Then he made the court on the south side
The hangings of the court, according to the word
Were of fine woven linen
One hundred cubits long, as specified by the Lord

There were twenty pillars for them
With twenty bronze sockets also
The hooks of the pillars
And their bands were silver, as we know

On the north side the hangings
Were one hundred cubits long, as was said
With twenty pillars and their twenty bronze sockets

The hooks of the pillars and their bands were silver
As the instructions read

And on the west side there were
Hangings of fifty cubits, as we are told
With ten pillars and their ten sockets
The hooks of the pillars and their bands were silver, not of gold

For the east side the hangings were fifty cubits
The hangings of one side of the gate
Were fifteen cubits long
With their three pillars and their three sockets
As the record does state

And the same for the other side of the court gate
On this side and that were hangings of cubits fifteen
With their three pillars and their three sockets
Bezalel's adherence to the details here is seen

All the hangings of the court all around
Were of fine woven linen; surely its appearance did astound

The sockets for the pillars were bronze
The hooks of the pillars and their bands were silver also
And the overlay of their capitals was silver
And all the pillars of the court had bands of silver, as we know

The screen for the gate of the court
Was woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread
And of fine woven linen
It was accomplished just as the Lord had said

The length was twenty cubits
And the height along its width was cubits five
Corresponding to the hangings of the court
For perfection Bezalel did strive

And there were four pillars
With their four sockets of bronze too
Their hooks were silver

And the overlay of their capitals and their bands
Was silver through and through

All the pegs of the tabernacle
And of the court all around, were bronze
Every detail Bezalel did minutely tackle

This is the inventory of the tabernacle
The tabernacle of the Testimony
Which was counted
According to the commandment of Moses, you see

For the service of the Levites, from the first to the least
By the hand of Ithamar, son of Aaron the priest

Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur
Of the tribe of Judah, so we know
Made all that the LORD had commanded Moses
And according to the detailed instructions also

And with him was Aholiab the son of Ahisamach
Of the tribe of Dan, an engraver and designer was he
A weaver of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and of fine linen
Working out his works so carefully

All the gold that was used in all the work of the holy place
That is, the gold of the offering
Was twenty-nine talents and seven hundred and thirty shekels
According to the shekel of the sanctuary, such was the proffering

And the silver from those who were numbered
Of the congregation was one hundred talents, so we see
And one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels
According to the shekel of the sanctuary

A bekah for each man; that is, half a shekel
According to the shekel of the sanctuary
For everyone included in the numbering
From twenty years old and above, counted accordingly

For six hundred and three thousand, five hundred and fifty men
The number was taken at Sinai, there and then

And from the hundred talents of silver
Were cast the sockets of the sanctuary and the bases of the veil
One hundred sockets from the hundred talents
One talent for each socket did entail

Then from the 1775 shekels
He made hooks for the pillars, this he did do
Overlaid their capitals
And made bands for them too

The offering of bronze was talents seventy
And two thousand four hundred shekels accordingly

And with it he made the sockets
For the door of the tabernacle of meeting, so he made
The bronze altar, the bronze grating for it
And all the utensils for the altar, plying in his trade

The sockets for the court all around
The bases for the court gate, bases which did abound
All the pegs for the tabernacle
And all the pegs for the court all around

Thank You, Lord for the wonderful detail we see
Every word is precious for us to ponder
And all of it points to Jesus ever so marvelously
Thank You for sharing with us such splendid wonder

Hear our thanks as we praise You for all of our days
Forever and ever we shall sing to You with joyous praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 39:1-43 (AND MOSES BLESSED THEM)

Today's passage is like the past few. It deals with the actual work which was accomplished in accord with the details which had previously been given. Therefore, like those past few sermons, we will find a parallel thought to look over which relates to the work being conducted rather than minutely analyzing the verses as we already have.

As the verses today deal with the garments of the priesthood, it would be good to look at how those garments actually demonstrate the *inferiority* of the Law of Moses and the priesthood of Aaron, to that of the covenant given in Christ's blood which is administered by the priesthood of the Lord.

It should never be our intent to find fault in the Law of Moses in the sense that it was an inappropriate aspect of God's workings in the dispensations of time. And yet, the author of Hebrews says concerning this law, "For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second."

What then was faulty concerning the covenant, if not the covenant itself? The answer is, the human aspect of it. It was administered by a fallible man, its priesthood was carried out by fallible men, and the people under the law were never made perfect by the law itself. Paul tells us in Romans that "the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good."

However, because man is fallen, the law can only highlight our sin, it was never intended to remove it by our efforts. Rather, it was given to show us that we needed something more. The law could remove our sin, but only in its fulfillment. And that could only come about by One who had no sin of His own. Enter Jesus. It is He whose work was needed in order for the law to make us holy...

Text Verse: *"Let Your work appear to Your servants,
And Your glory to their children.*

*¹⁷ And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us,
And establish the work of our hands for us;
Yes, establish the work of our hands." Psalm 90:16, 17*

Only after Christ fulfilled the law could the work of our hands be established. And only through the administration of a New Covenant, in the mediation of a better High Priest, can we hope to please God. Thank God for Christ Jesus who does all of this for us! Yes, it's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Better Priesthood (verses 1-31)

¹ From the blue, purple and scarlet yarn they made woven garments for ministering in the sanctuary. They also made sacred garments for Aaron, as the LORD commanded Moses.

² They made the ephod of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen.

³ They hammered out thin sheets of gold and cut strands to be worked into the blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen—the work of skilled hands.

⁴ They made shoulder pieces for the ephod, which were attached to two of its corners, so it could be fastened.

⁵ Its skillfully woven waistband was like it—of one piece with the ephod and made with gold, and with blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and with finely twisted linen, as the LORD commanded Moses.

⁶ They mounted the onyx stones in gold filigree settings and engraved them like a seal with the names of the sons of Israel.

⁷ Then they fastened them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod as memorial stones for the sons of Israel, as the LORD commanded Moses.

⁸ They fashioned the breastpiece—the work of a skilled craftsman. They made it like the ephod: of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen.

⁹ It was square—a span long and a span wide—and folded double.

¹⁰ Then they mounted four rows of precious stones on it. The first row was carnelian, chrysolite and beryl;

¹¹ the second row was turquoise, lapis lazuli and emerald;

¹² the third row was jacinth, agate and amethyst;

¹³ the fourth row was topaz, onyx and jasper. They were mounted in gold filigree settings.

¹⁴ There were twelve stones, one for each of the names of the sons of Israel, each engraved like a seal with the name of one of the twelve tribes.

¹⁵ For the breastpiece they made braided chains of pure gold, like a rope.

- ¹⁶ They made two gold filigree settings and two gold rings, and fastened the rings to two of the corners of the breastpiece.**
- ¹⁷ They fastened the two gold chains to the rings at the corners of the breastpiece,**
- ¹⁸ and the other ends of the chains to the two settings, attaching them to the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front.**
- ¹⁹ They made two gold rings and attached them to the other two corners of the breastpiece on the inside edge next to the ephod.**
- ²⁰ Then they made two more gold rings and attached them to the bottom of the shoulder pieces on the front of the ephod, close to the seam just above the waistband of the ephod.**
- ²¹ They tied the rings of the breastpiece to the rings of the ephod with blue cord, connecting it to the waistband so that the breastpiece would not swing out from the ephod—as the LORD commanded Moses.**
- ²² They made the robe of the ephod entirely of blue cloth—the work of a weaver—**
- ²³ with an opening in the center of the robe like the opening of a collar, and a band around this opening, so that it would not tear.**
- ²⁴ They made pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen around the hem of the robe.**
- ²⁵ And they made bells of pure gold and attached them around the hem between the pomegranates.**
- ²⁶ The bells and pomegranates alternated around the hem of the robe to be worn for ministering, as the LORD commanded Moses.**
- ²⁷ For Aaron and his sons, they made tunics of fine linen—the work of a weaver—**
- ²⁸ and the turban of fine linen, the linen caps and the undergarments of finely twisted linen.**
- ²⁹ The sash was made of finely twisted linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn—the work of an embroiderer—as the LORD commanded Moses.**
- ³⁰ They made the plate, the sacred emblem, out of pure gold and engraved on it, like an inscription on a seal: HOLY TO THE LORD.**
- ³¹ Then they fastened a blue cord to it to attach it to the turban, as the LORD commanded Moses.**

The idea of a priest is that of someone who has authority to perform religious ceremonies on behalf of himself and others. The first actual mentioning of a priest in the Bible is that of the mysterious Melchizedek in Genesis 14 –

“Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he *was* the priest of God Most High. ¹⁹ And he blessed him and said:
‘Blessed be Abram of God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;
²⁰ And blessed be God Most High,
Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.’
And he gave him a tithe of all.” Genesis 14:19, 20

This is all that is recorded here about this mysterious man. There were certainly priests since the time after the fall. Adam would have performed the function on behalf of his family, but the idea of a priest who administered on behalf of others is really only first seen in Melchizedek. This Melchizedek is reintroduced into the Bible in the 110th Psalm where David reaches back into the words of Genesis and makes a prophecy based on a most profound deduction; certainly inspired by the Spirit of God –

“The Lord has sworn
And will not relent,
‘You *are* a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek.’” Psalm 110:4

David foresaw a Person who would come who would be a priest forever, and he explains this with the words “according to the order of Melchizedek.” One would have to be extremely astute to understand all that this simple sentence means.

In fact, even with a detailed explanation of it in the book of Hebrews, people still often fail to grasp the full significance of David’s amazingly deep, and yet short and simple proclamation. This is the only other time in all of the Old Testament that Melchizedek is mentioned.

And of course this is proper because the Law of Moses had a priest, it had a priesthood, and it also had a place where the priests were to minister. Along with that, the priests had all of their duties and responsibilities laid out. For the law of Moses, and the Aaronic priesthood which served that law, Leviticus details the majority of their responsibilities.

And, inclusive of all of these other things, the garments of the high priest, and his associate priests, are all given in minute detail here in the book of Exodus. The law is given, the sanctuary along with all of its furniture is described, and so it is natural that

the ordination process for the priests, and the garments of the priests, are described at this time now as well.

Those priestly garments were called for by the Lord, and now their actual manufacture is detailed in obedience to the Lord's word. This is the purpose of verses 1-31 of this chapter. The significance of these things, and their amazing prophetic pictures of Christ, were explained in several sermons already, and to understand their meaning, you can go back and read or watch them. It truly is an astonishing study which would be well worth your time.

And so as far as the Aaronic priesthood, it has been called for, it is being prepared, and it will be fully ordained and established in the pages ahead. Most of the duties of that priesthood will be minutely described in Leviticus. This priesthood will last about 1500 years.

It was superseded by the greater priesthood of Christ Jesus, but it still continued until AD70 when the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and the people were exiled. Amazingly, and in fulfillment of Scripture, this same priestly line has been identified through modern DNA analysis, and people of that line today are being prepared for reinstating this ancient priesthood.

A high priest has already been selected, and the garments and associated implements necessary for conducting their duties have been fashioned. Though this priesthood is obsolete through the work of Christ, God has shown that it would, in fact, be reinstated for a set period and for a specific reason. That is detailed in Daniel 9.

In verse 24 of Daniel 9, it says that a period of 70 "weeks," or periods of 7-year intervals, would lay out the entire future prophetic scenario for the completion of the time of the Law of Moses, including its priesthood. That then is a 490-year period. Until the time of Christ's death, it was a period of 483 years.

At that time, the prophetic calendar was stopped. The temple sacrifices were no longer acceptable to God, and as I said, the temple was destroyed in AD70, exactly 14,000 days after the cross of Christ. That, however, still leaves a 7-year period left unfulfilled. It says in Daniel 9:26 that the city and the sanctuary would be destroyed, but then in Daniel 9:27 it says this –

“Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week;
But in the middle of the week
He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.”

If there are sacrifices and offerings noted after the death of the Messiah, and the further destruction of the temple in AD70, then it means that verse 27 is speaking of a future date when they will be reinstated. It is future to us now, but it won't be long before it comes about. We are living in extraordinarily exciting times as the fulfillment of Bible prophecy is being realized before our eyes.

All of what we are seeing now in the re-establishment of this Aaronic priesthood goes back to these passages in the book of Exodus, including the *details of the garments* we are looking at today. Observant Jews in Israel need only to pick up a copy of the Bible and read what we are looking in this passage in Exodus in order to know what to make and how to make it.

But, because these things only pointed to Christ, and because David spoke of a priesthood on the order of Melchizedek which was to come, and because Jeremiah spoke of a New Covenant for Israel, and finally... because we have already seen an explanation for all of the things in this passage today in past sermons, we will look at what actually *replaces* Aaron's priesthood, and why the efforts of Israel in reestablishing the priesthood are only a stepping stone to the final termination of the Law of Moses. As I said, David made that seemingly off-handed reference to Melchizedek in the 110th Psalm. Unless you stop and really contemplate it, you might just keep on reading without ever giving a second thought to what he says. But the author of Hebrews was determined to explain what we might so cursorily pass by. And so he re-introduces this Melchizedek in Hebrews 5, and then he talks of him briefly in chapter 6 and more especially in chapter 7, explaining why he is such an important figure. Here is what he says in Hebrews 5 –

“So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but *it was* He who said to Him:

‘You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.’

⁶As *He* also says in another *place*:

‘You *are* a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek’;

⁷who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, ⁸though He was a Son, *yet* He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. ⁹And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, ¹⁰called by God as

High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,”¹¹ of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.” Hebrews 5:5-11

The author directly quotes David’s words of the 110th Psalm and explicitly tells us that these words are speaking of Jesus. David, under inspiration of the Spirit, wrote words of a coming High Priest. However, that His priesthood would be according to the order of Melchizedek brings in some obvious problems. They will be explained by him as he goes along.

In Hebrews 6, the author speaks of the immutability of God’s promises, and the surety we have therefore in the oath of God, noting that God cannot lie. In this, he is referring to the word of the Lord through David concerning the High Priest to come. Remember what the Lord said through David in Psalm 110 –

“The Lord has sworn
And will not relent,
‘You *are* a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek.’” Psalm 110:4

To close out chapter 6 of Hebrews, and to prepare us for his detailed explanation in chapter 7, the author states these words –

“This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the *Presence* behind the veil,²⁰ where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” Hebrews 6:19, 20

The hope of God is in the oath of God, and in His trustworthiness in fulfilling that oath. This hope is that Jesus is the coming High Priest that David spoke of, a high priest forever. What is he talking about? Chapter 7 of Hebrews explains it, and we will look over his words, but we can only do so briefly. A full evaluation of what he says would take innumerable pages of commentary.

As we proceed, remember why we are even looking at the passage. It is because we are currently going through Exodus and are evaluating those things which are a part of the establishment of the Aaronic priesthood. Was this to be a permanent priesthood? If so, then there would be no need for Jesus.

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,² to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated “king of righteousness,” and then also king of Salem, meaning “king of peace,”³ without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

-Hebrews 7:1-3

The author notes the name and positions of Melchizedek. He is the king of Salem and the priest of the Most High God. He doesn't question or dispute this. He is speaking of a real person, who really filled the offices of both king and priest, something not allowed under the Law of Moses. Under the law, the two offices were not to be mixed. When someone attempted to mix them, bad things resulted. One such account is recorded about King Uzziah –

“But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to *his* destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense.¹⁷ So Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him were eighty priests of the Lord—valiant men.¹⁸ And they withstood King Uzziah, and said to him, “*It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed! You shall have no honor from the Lord God.*”

¹⁹ Then Uzziah became furious; and he *had* a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the Lord, beside the incense altar.²⁰ And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and there, on his forehead, he *was* leprous; so they thrust him out of that place. Indeed he also hurried to get out, because the Lord had struck him.

²¹ King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death. He dwelt in an isolated house, because he was a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord.”

-2 Chronicles 26:16-21

The next thing the author of Hebrews notes is that he filled this king/priest role at the time of Abraham. Thus, Melchizedek precedes both the priesthood of Aaron and the kingship of Israel, typified by David who wrote the 110th Psalm. Next, he explains the meaning of his name and title – Melchizedek is from *melek*, or “king,” and *tsaddiq*, or

“righteous.” He is further *melek shalem*, or “king of peace.” Thus, in both titles, he typifies Christ.

But he further typifies Christ in that the Bible gives no record of his genealogy, birth, or death. Because of this, his priesthood is considered an eternal one. This doesn't mean it literally is, but that in record, this is all that God wanted us to know in order to make the typological picture of the Lord.

⁴ Now consider how great this man *was*, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. ⁵ And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; ⁶ but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷ Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. ⁸ Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. ⁹ Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, ¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. Hebrews 7:4-10

The point here is to show the superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood over that of Aaron. Aaron descended from Levi who came from Jacob who came from Isaac who came *from Abraham*. Greatness within the Bible is reflected in the preceding generation. Thus a father is considered greater than the son. Abraham is the father of the Hebrew people and is thus the greatest of that race.

However, Abraham gave a tenth of his spoils to Melchizedek, demonstrating that Melchizedek was *the greater*. This is supported by the subsequent blessing of Abraham by Melchizedek. The greater blesses the lesser. Levi received tithes from Israel, and the Aaronic priesthood, administered by the sons of Levi, therefore is said to have paid tithes through Abraham to Melchizedek.

The reason for this is that Levi was still in Abraham's loins when Abraham presented his offering to Melchizedek. It is the same concept as the transfer of original sin. Charlie Garrett was in the loins of Adam when Adam sinned. Thus, I have sinned through Adam, just as Levi paid tithes through Abraham.

And so we have established several things already about Melchizedek. He is a king and a priest; something *greater* than that belonging to the priesthood of the law which was

separated from kingship under the law. He also preceded the priesthood of the law, and yet his priesthood is, from a biblical context, still in effect; it is eternal. The Aaronic priesthood had a beginning when the law was introduced. It also had an ending with the establishment of the New Covenant. Therefore, the priesthood of Melchizedek is greater in this respect.

Further, Melchizedek is typical of the Son of God because he has no recorded genealogy. Thus, his priesthood is greater than that of the law which was administered through Moses and which began with the man Aaron – both of whose births and deaths are recorded. Also, because Melchizedek is shown to be greater than Abraham, and Abraham is greater than Levi, then the priesthood of Melchizedek is also greater than that of the priesthood of Levi.

David said that someone was coming who would have a priesthood on the order of Melchizedek. Thus, this coming priesthood would be *greater* than that of Aaron in each of these respects. To support this, the author now asks an obvious question...

¹¹ Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need *was there* that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? ¹² For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. ¹³ For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. Hebrews 7:11-13

The author now brings in the idea of making subjects of the law perfect. Did this occur? The answer is, “No.” If people were made perfect through the law, then offerings would have been made one time and they would have ended.

But they never ceased. They were offered continuously, and year after year. They only made people *aware* of their sin, but never could *remove* the sin. Instead, they only temporarily covered them until the next offering for sin.

But even more, if the people were made perfect under the law, there would be no need for another priesthood. But David promised that someone coming would be a priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Why would there be a need for such a priesthood if the priesthood of Aaron sufficed in perfecting the people? There would be none. But David proclaimed differently.

And if there was to be a change in priesthood, then there – by default – must be a change of the law. The law already had a priesthood. In fact, the two were dependent on one another. If the priesthood ended, so would the law which mandated the priesthood. And if the law which mandated the priesthood ended, then the priesthood mandated by the law would be of no effect.

And even more yet. These things are being written about Jesus. But Jesus was not of the line of Levi, and therefore, He *could not be* an administrator of the law of Moses which prescribed that the priesthood was of Levi. Jesus descended from another tribe...

¹⁴ For *it is* evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. ¹⁵ And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest ¹⁶ who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. ¹⁷ For He testifies:

“You *are* a priest forever

According to the order of Melchizedek.” Hebrews 7:14-17

The author’s logic is impeccable. David spoke of a priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek. That priesthood is fulfilled in Christ. But Christ descended from Judah. Therefore, there must be a change in regards to the law itself. This is not a change *in* the law, but a change *of* law.

And this law which He will administer is not one according to a high priest who will die and be replaced with another, but it is one according to the order of Melchizedek who has no recorded death, and thus it is an eternal life designed for an eternal priesthood.

¹⁸ For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, ¹⁹ for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is the* bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

²⁰ And inasmuch as *He was not made priest* without an oath ²¹ (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him:

“The Lord has sworn

And will not relent,

‘You *are* a priest forever

According to the order of Melchizedek’”),

²² by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.

-Hebrews 7:18-22

If Christ's priesthood is in effect, which it is clearly established that it is, then the former commandment, meaning the Law of Moses, is annulled. It was weak and unprofitable because it could save no one. It couldn't even save its own high priest, whose death is recorded. After him, each subsequent high priest died as well.

However, in Christ, there is an indestructible life and a better hope which accompanies the covenant which He administers. It is a hope by which we can, through Him, draw near to God. And again, the author uses impeccable logic in telling us that the first covenant came without an oath concerning the ordination of the priests. They were appointed, served, and died. However, the words of David, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and thus coming from God who cannot lie, are spoken by oath –

“The Lord has sworn
And will not relent,
'You *are* a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek”

Thus again, the superiority of the priesthood of Christ is evidenced. In all ways, His priesthood is “Better than.”

²³ Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. ²⁴ But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. Hebrews 7:22-25

The garments which were made for Aaron, and which are exactly detailed in today's verses from Exodus, were transferred from high priest to high priest. When Aaron died, the transfer was noted, thus setting the pattern for all future sons of Aaron who filled this position –

“And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor by the border of the land of Edom, saying: ²⁴ “Aaron shall be gathered to his people, for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the children of Israel, because you rebelled against My word at the water of Meribah. ²⁵ Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up to Mount Hor; ²⁶ and strip Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; for Aaron shall be gathered *to his people* and die there.” ²⁷ So

Moses did just as the Lord commanded, and they went up to Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. ²⁸ Moses stripped Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there on the top of the mountain. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain.” Numbers 20:23-28

The importance of recording this act cannot be understated. Aaron died, and the garments of his priesthood passed on to his son. Aaron was prevented, by death, from continuing in his priesthood. Thus the line of priesthood *remained*, but the occupant of that priesthood *was changed*. The garments of the priesthood were a profound testament to the fallible nature of the priesthood. They stood as a witness that the law could perfect none.

However, Christ died in fulfillment of the law. At the same time, He offered a New Covenant in His blood. In His death, the law died with Him. It could no longer have any possible power over Him. And yet, He never sinned under the law. As the wages of sin is death, then death could also not hold Him. It was impossible for Him to remain dead. Peter testifies to this fact in Acts 2.

Christ died *apart from His garments*, as is recorded in Scripture, and thus it is *the Man*, and not *the garments* which are the focus of His priesthood. Under the law, it was the *garments* and not the *man* which was the focus of the priesthood. Aaron was not considered fully ordained to the priesthood *until* he was clothed in the priestly garments. When his tenure as priest ended, his garments were removed from him, and then he died – in that order.

And so we see that in Christ’s resurrection, it is to Jesus, and not changeable garments which our eyes are to be directed. The garments He wears now merely signify His eternal priesthood which already exists in His eternal Being.

He is risen apart from the law; He can never die again. Aaron died and his ministry ended. Christ lives eternally and therefore He continues forever in an unchangeable priesthood. Because of this, the author tells us that Christ can save us to the uttermost when we come to God through Him. Paul explains this in Romans 6 –

“Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. ¹⁰ For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God.” Romans 6:8-10

As He lives to God, He always lives to make intercession for us. He is perfectly qualified to do so as the author next explains...

²⁶ For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; ²⁷ who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. ²⁸ For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, *appoints* the Son who has been perfected forever. Hebrews 20:26-28

Christ has been, as it says, “perfected forever.” This doesn’t mean that He was not “forever perfect,” but that under the law and as a Man, *if* He had sinned He would not have been perfect, nor could He have been “perfected forever.” But, He was sinless before the law and died in fulfillment of it. Thus, the law now has no power over Him. He is, therefore, perfected forever. He can never be found with fault under the law again. In Him, the law is annulled.

Unlike the high priests of Israel who had to first offer for their own sins, and only then could they offer for the sins of the people, Christ offered Himself in His perfection before the law, for the sins of the people. What the high priest of the Law of Moses could never do for the people, Christ has done for His people.

If you wonder why there has been such minute detail concerning the garments of the priests of the law, hopefully you are now seeing why that detail is so important. In type and picture, each detail points to Christ, but in reality when worn by the human mediator of the law, it pointed all the more to his imperfections, not his perfections. Only in Christ are the perfections realized. As a side note to the idea of priests, the last time the term is mentioned is in Revelation 20 with these words –

“Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” Revelation 20:6

Those who willingly refuse the mark of the beast during the tribulation period will be granted a high honor. They will be raised to life and can never die again, and they will be priests of God and of Christ during that marvelous millennial period. It is fitting that the

idea of a priesthood enters Scripture with the enigmatic Melchizedek, who pictures Christ, and it ends with those who are made priests through faith in the work of Christ.

*The LORD has sworn and will not relent
You are a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek, with that intent
Christ is our High Priest, ceasing never*

*With Him as our High Priest
We have a sure confidence. Imagine the grace!
His mercies are forever, never being ceased
Though Him we are shown the favor of God's face*

*Thank God for our High Priest, Christ Jesus
And for the work that He has done and continues to do
The beautiful work that He has done for us
Our great High Priest, ever faithful and true*

II. So the Children of Israel Did All the Work (verses 32-43)

With the final verse of chapter 39, the long repetition of the verses from the previous chapters is ended. The instructions were given, and the instructions were followed through with – being meticulously recorded as evidence of that fact. And so now we come to the final verses of the chapter...

³² Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished.

The minute details of the previous chapter find their culmination in this verse. First, the work is said to be finished. Two descriptions are given. It says *mishkan ohel moed* – tabernacle, tent of meeting. The tabernacle is the dwelling place, and the tent is what covers the dwelling place. The two are noted separately and yet belonging one to the other, almost as a pleonasm intended as emphasis. The two will be mentioned separately in verse 33.

³² (con't) And the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord had commanded Moses; so they did.

The second aspect of this verse is that the work was not only accomplished, but it was done “according to all that the Lord had commanded Moses.” This takes us back 34

sermons to the words of the Lord in Exodus 25:40 which said “...see to it that you make *them* according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.” Just as Moses was shown, just as the people were instructed, so the work was accomplished.

³³ And they brought the tabernacle to Moses, the tent and all its furnishings: its clasps, its boards, its bars, its pillars, and its sockets;

³⁴ the covering of ram skins dyed red, the covering of badger skins, and the veil of the covering;

³⁵ the ark of the Testimony with its poles, and the mercy seat;

³⁶ the table, all its utensils, and the showbread;

³⁷ the pure *gold* lampstand with its lamps (the lamps set in order), all its utensils, and the oil for light;

³⁸ the gold altar, the anointing oil, and the sweet incense; the screen for the tabernacle door;

³⁹ the bronze altar, its grate of bronze, its poles, and all its utensils; the laver with its base;

⁴⁰ the hangings of the court, its pillars and its sockets, the screen for the court gate, its cords, and its pegs; all the utensils for the service of the tabernacle, for the tent of meeting;

⁴¹ and the garments of ministry, to minister in the holy *place*: the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and his sons’ garments, to minister as priests.

These verses confirm in one place all of that which was made. The only word of exceptional note in all nine verses is that which is translated as “set in order” in verse 37. It is a new word in the Bible, *maarakah*. It means an array, and is most commonly used in the idea of a battle array, where an army is lined up for war.

The lamps of the Menorah were so set up, as if a battle of the goodness of light is dispelling the evil of darkness. What a marvelous picture of Christ the Lord, the Light of the world shining forth through the darkness.

⁴² According to all that the Lord had commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did all the work.

This is a reaffirmation of the words just spoken in the second clause of verse 32. It noted they did what was commanded, then what was done was noted, and now it again notes that they have done all that was commanded. In six months or less, all of this work was

engaged in, and completed, according to the minute specifications of the Lord. It really is an amazing feat to consider.

43 Then Moses looked over all the work, and indeed they had done it; as the Lord had commanded, just so they had done it.

The chapter's final verse shows that Moses inspected every detail. He had been shown the pattern on the mountain, and he had been admonished to follow it exactly. The directions were given, the work was accomplished, and now the chief inspector carefully evaluated each item to ensure that it met the requirements of the Lord. As it did, the record now, for the third time, notes that the children of Israel accomplished the tasks as required. With that note of achievement, we come to our final words of the chapter...

43 (fin) And Moses blessed them.

It is possible that Moses blessed the people with the words of the 90th Psalm which formed our text verse of the day.

“Let Your work appear to Your servants,
And Your glory to their children.
¹⁷ And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us,
And establish the work of our hands for us;
Yes, establish the work of our hands.” Psalm 90:16, 17

Whether with these, or other words of commendation, the leader of the people was pleased with the work and he so blessed them for their efforts. The tabernacle was ready, the law would be continued, and the Lord would dwell in the people's midst. Moses' blessing now was an affirmation of these facts.

Today we have seen that the law was only a stepping stone to the greater work of Christ. If the law was served by such marvelous items, and was regarded with such minute detail and care, then surely how much more precise and glorious is the greater ministry of Christ for us!

Again, if the Lord was willing to dwell among the people in a sanctuary wrought by fallible hands and corruptible materials which were glorious non-the-less, just imagine the splendor which lies ahead for those who are in Christ.

The people labored towards the day when the Lord would occupy His dwelling. How much more willing should we be to labor towards the day when we will dwell with Him! Let us never tire in our efforts to speak of the goodness of the Lord. And whatever be the labor of our hands, may the beauty of the Lord Jesus be upon us so those labors will be established. Let it be so now, and even until the Lord takes us home to be with Him in His eternal dwelling place.

Closing Verse: *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 15:58*

Next Week: Exodus 40:1-16 (Seven “I AM’s”)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Work is Accomplished

Of the blue, purple, and scarlet thread
They made garments of ministry
For ministering in the holy place
As the Lord intended it to be

And made the holy garments for Aaron as well
As the LORD had commanded Moses, as He did tell

He made the ephod
Of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread
And of fine woven linen
He followed the details, as the Lord had said

And they beat the gold into thin sheets
And cut it into threads as well also
To work it in with the blue, purple, and scarlet thread
And the fine linen, into artistic designs, as we now know

They made shoulder straps
For it to couple it together; as we see
It was coupled together at its two edges
Thus it was made accordingly

And the intricately woven band of his ephod
That was on it was of the same workmanship as well
Woven of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread
And of fine woven linen, as the LORD to Moses did tell

And they set onyx stones
Enclosed in settings of gold so well
They were engraved, as signets are engraved
With the names of the sons of Israel

He put them on the shoulders of the ephod
As memorial stones for the sons of Israel
As the LORD had commanded Moses
As the LORD to Moses did tell

And he made the breastplate
Artistically woven like the workmanship of the ephod
Of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread
And of fine woven linen, just as he was showed

They made the breastplate square by doubling it
When doubled, a span was its length and a span its width

And they set in it four rows of stones
This as the Lord did show
A row with a sardius, a topaz, and an emerald
Such was the first row

The second row, a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond
The third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst
The fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper
They were enclosed in settings of gold in their mountings
No detail was missed

There were twelve stones according to the names
Of the sons of Israel
According to their names
Engraved like a signet, as well

Each one with its own name, certainly
According to the twelve tribes, as we see

And they made chains for the breastplate
At the ends, like braided cords of pure gold
This as the Lord did state

They also made two settings of gold and two gold rings
And put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate
He accomplished each of these things

And they put the two braided chains
Of gold in the two rings
On the ends of the breastplate
Again, he faithfully accomplished these things

The two ends of the two braided chains
They fastened in the two settings, as the Lord did relay
And put them on the shoulder straps
Of the ephod in the front, just as He did say

And they made two rings of gold
And put them on the two ends of the breastplate, as showed
On the edge of it, as he was told
Which was on the inward side of the ephod

They made two other gold rings
And put them on the two shoulder straps, as per directions at hand
Underneath the ephod toward its front
Right at the seam above the ephod's intricately woven band

And they bound the breastplate
By means of its rings to the ephod's rings
With a blue cord, so that it would be above
The intricately woven band of the ephod, he did these things

And so the breastplate would not come loose from the ephod
As the LORD had to Moses showed

He made the robe of the ephod of woven work, all of blue
Doing exactly as he was instructed to do

And there was an opening in the middle of the robe
Like the opening in a coat of mail
With a woven binding all around the opening
So that it would not tear; there was to be no wardrobe fail

They made on the hem of the robe pomegranates, so they did do
Of blue, purple, and scarlet, and of fine woven linen too

And they made bells of pure gold
And put the bells with the pomegranates between
On the hem of the robe all around between the pomegranates
A beautiful design upon the hem was seen

A bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate
All around the hem, as the directions demanded
Of the robe to minister in
As the LORD had to Moses commanded

They made tunics, artistically woven
Of fine linen for Aaron and his sons, this they did do |
A turban of fine linen, exquisite hats of fine linen
Short trousers of fine woven linen too

And a sash of fine woven linen
With blue, purple, and scarlet thread
Made by a weaver, as the LORD had commanded Moses
Yes, just as the LORD had said

Then they made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold
And wrote on it an inscription, attending to the word
Like the engraving of a signet
HOLINESS TO THE LORD

And they tied to it a blue cord
To fasten it above on the turban
As commanded to Moses by the LORD

Thus all the work of the tabernacle
Of the tent of meeting was finished too
And the children of Israel did according to all
That the LORD had commanded Moses; so they did do

And they brought the tabernacle to Moses
The tent and all its furnishings, as we know
Its clasps, its boards, its bars
Its pillars, and its sockets also

The covering of ram skins dyed red
The covering of badger skins
And the veil of the covering; just as the Lord had said

The ark of the Testimony with its poles
And the mercy seat
The table, all its utensils, and the showbread
These pieces they did complete

The pure gold lampstand with its lamps, it was fitted right
(The lamps set in order)
All its utensils, and the oil for light

The gold altar, the anointing oil, and the sweet incense
The screen for the tabernacle door
The bronze altar, its grate of bronze, its poles, and all its utensils
The laver with its base also, but still even more

The hangings of the court, its pillars and its sockets
The screen for the court gate, its cords, and its pegs as well
All the utensils for the service of the tabernacle
For the tent of meeting, as the word does tell

And the garments of ministry
To minister in the holy place

The holy garments for Aaron the priest
And his sons' garments, to minister as priests before the LORD's face

According to all that the LORD had commanded Moses
So the children of Israel did all the work
Then Moses looked over all the work
And indeed they had done it, not a detail did they shirk

As the LORD had commanded, just so they had done it
And Moses blessed them; a blessing he did to them submit

Lord God, establish the work of our hands
And let the beauty of the Lord be upon us
So may it be for each who understands
Of the marvelous wonder of Christ Jesus

Thank You O God, to You we send our highest shouts of praise
And they shall be lifted to You now, and even for eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

Exodus 40:1-16
(Seven “I AM’s”)

As always, Sunday night I was concerned about the sermon typing coming up on the next day. There is, once again, a great deal of repetition in these verses as the obedience of Moses to the command of the Lord is being evaluated.

I asked the Lord for His hand to be upon me as is my custom, and then in the morning I asked Him to prepare my fingers for the battle which lay ahead. As I got going, I began to realize that there is a pattern which seemed to match things going on in another book of the Bible. Being a bit dull, it took me several verses, maybe even half the sermon, to realize that the pattern didn't just match that other book's pattern, but it matches it exactly.

Considering that Exodus was written at the time of Moses, almost 1500 years before the coming of Christ, and considering that John wrote from memory what he had heard, and finally... considering that this pattern was (at least to my knowledge – I did an internet search) never seen before 31 October 2016, it shows, once again, that the word of God has many secrets waiting to be revealed.

How can it be that countless scholars have poured over this book, time and time again, and yet the pattern remained unknown? It is because it wasn't yet ready to be revealed. But as we go on, you will see that it is precise, and it is also as obvious as the nose on your face, once you see it. What a gift! What a treasure! And yet, we find more time to watch sports or movies than we do reading this precious jewel, handed to us by God through the inspiration of His Spirit. Where are our priorities? Where indeed...

Text Verse: *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” Deuteronomy 29:29*

The Bible is literally filled with secret things. In His own providential timing, the Lord whispers them out to us. He opens our ear and speaks softly into it. Or maybe He wakes us up late in the night with a spark of His divine will filling our mind with something that we had never considered before.

Or, He may even open our eyes to something while we are reading the word. When He does, we need to grab the moment, seize the opportunity, and search out what He is telling us. It is true that not everything people think they find is actually valid.

Far too often we find those who claim they have found something that is so far off base that we blush in embarrassment, looking for a way to tell them they've missed the target, but there are a lot of targets that won't be missed as well.

One of them is seen in today's passage concerning the erection of the sanctuary and its consecration. This is then followed up with the consecration of Aaron and his sons. But it matches something going on in the book of John in a marvelous way.

And... it is all to reveal to us Jesus. Yes, it's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Setting up the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting (verses 1-8)

¹Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

v'dabber Yehovah el mosheh lemor – these exact words haven't been spoken to Moses since Exodus 31:1. That was seventeen sermons ago, a time which included the incident with the golden-calf and everything that transpired since then.

Now the words are spoken again to introduce an entirely new thought, one which has actually been anticipated since Exodus 25 and the calling of the people by the Lord to donate for the construction of a tabernacle. That was a full 37 sermons ago.

Once again now, the words of introductory preparation are written for us to stop... and to consider what lies ahead. Something new and marvelous is one thought away. What will it be?

²“On the first day of the first month

What is to be done will be done at the turn of the year. It is a new time, and a new season. The chosen first month for the redemptive calendar year was given in Exodus 12:2. It was the month of their deliverance from Egypt, and the Lord told them that it would be the first of their months from that point on –

“This month *shall be* your beginning of months; it *shall be* the first month of the year to you.” Exodus 12:2

The name of the month, Aviv, was specifically given in Exodus 13:4. It is to be on the first of this month, and exactly 345 days after departing from Egypt and 300 days since arriving at Sinai, that this new instruction was to be carried out.

Thus, it will occur on the first day of their first full year of freedom, and it will be the first day of the designated redemptive year in the year 2515AM, or “in the year of the world.” And that instruction is...

² (con't) **you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting.**

The words are correct. Both the term *mishkan*, or tabernacle, and *ohel moed*, or tent of meeting, are used. The words are placed in apposition, meaning that they are grammatically almost parallel, but the tabernacle resided within the tent. It being set up first, and then the tent being raised over it.

Further, it is the “tent of meeting,” not the “tent of the congregation” which is used by the KJV. The tent of meeting is where the Lord would meet with His designated representative, not the congregation.

Though the many parts of the sanctuary had been made by the people, and though they had been approved by Moses as meeting the specifications given by the Lord, it was not just completed and caused to be raised.

Rather, the Lord has determined the appointed times and seasons for all redemptive workings. This included the erection of this marvelous edifice which had been so painstakingly fashioned in order to picture the Person and the work of Christ to come.

By having it raised on the first day of the first month, the entire ordination process for it would be complete in time for the celebration of the first Passover which would be held on the fourteenth of the same month.

As this is the approximate time of the Spring equinox, the rising sun would be directly to the east, and thus it would be to the backs of those who would be worshipping towards the Most Holy Place where the Ark was to be located.

Further, as the first day of the month is the day of the New Moon, there would be no moon visible in the sky at that time. In both cases, it is a direct challenge to any notion of sun or moon worship. The Creator, not the creation, was to be worshipped by the people Israel. The precedence was being set in this selected timing.

Another reason for selecting the New Year was to set up the hearts of the people for a new beginning. The year past had shown them failing many times in their devotion to the Lord, culminating in the tragic instance of the golden calf. Now, with the new year, there would be a new beginning, and a chance to serve the Lord all the better in the year to come.... hopefully.

³You shall put in it the ark of the Testimony,

The very purpose of building the sanctuary was for a place where the ark could reside. It is, in essence, the soul of the entire sanctuary. It is the spot where the presence of the Lord would reside, and where the high priest, once a year, would come to petition the Lord for mercy for the sins committed by the people.

And the ark itself was only a receptacle for the tablets of the Testimony. Without the tablets, the ark was just a wooden box, splendidly ornamented with gold. And so it is with us, we can be the most splendid example of humanity – being a hulking weight lifter, or the most beautiful movie star – but without adherence to the word of God, we are just another person which happens to be more ornamented than those around us.

In Christ alone is there an embodiment of the word of God, and thus He is the very soul of the Lord's temple. For those who are in Christ, we are there with Him, in the Most Holy place, having satisfied the law, not through our own efforts, but through the work of Jesus. The importance of what this ark pictures cannot be understated. It needs to be repeated like a children's story – again and again until it is ingrained in our very being.

This placing of the Ark in the Tabernacle is parallel to John's words which *begin* his gospel –

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John 1:1

^{3 (con't)} and partition off the ark with the veil.

The Hebrew says, *v'sakota al ha'aron eth ha'paroketh* – “And cover against the ark the veil.” The ark is not covered *with* the veil, but it is a covering none-the-less. The word *sakak* was used when the Lord said that He would place Moses in the cleft of the rock and cover him with His hand.

The veil would stand between the Holy Place where the priests ministered daily, and the Most Holy Place where the Lord resided. It was to signify the unapproachable nature of the Lord. There was a division, or a fracture, between Him and man, even between Him and the priests ordained to minister before Him.

The priests were kept from profaning His presence, and they were protected from being destroyed by Him by the placement of this veil. And as a reminder, on this veil were woven cherubim, as if guardians of the Presence. It is a picture of the cherubim which guard the way back to Eden.

This veil will remain for almost 1500 years, until the time of Christ's crucifixion where it will be torn asunder, allowing all who will come, to simply come. Any may enter the Most Holy Place and that land of delight once again by a mere act of faith. In Christ, the fracture is healed and the divide is removed. The guardian angels rest their flaming swords, and peace with God is restored. The veil, as we have seen, represents Christ's physical body. This corresponds to John 1:14 –

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

⁴You shall bring in the table and arrange the things that are to be set in order on it;

The “Table of Showbread” was minutely described in Exodus 25. It is the first piece of furniture to be brought into the Holy Place. As you certainly remember, it pictures Christ, our Bread of life. This is as He Himself proclaimed in John 6:35 –

“I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”

Thus, this table pictures the Lord coming, in a limited way, into the Holy Place to commune with His people. As John Lange describes this –

“By this symbolic communion with the priests He discloses to the people the hope of fellowship with Him, the fellowship of His Spirit, of His blessings.”

The “things that are to be set in order on it” have not yet been described, only the implements, but not what they held. This shows us that some of the book of Leviticus was probably already being compiled prior to the raising up of the tabernacle. Here is what is to be set in order which is described in Leviticus 24 –

“And you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it. Two-tenths of an *ephah* shall be in each cake. ⁶ You shall set them in two rows, six in a row, on the pure *gold* table before the Lord. ⁷ And you shall put pure frankincense on *each* row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, an offering made by fire to the Lord. ⁸ Every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually, *being taken* from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. ⁹ And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it *is* most holy to him from the offerings of the Lord made by fire, by a perpetual statute.” Leviticus 24:5-9

⁴ (con't) **and you shall bring in the lampstand and light its lamps.**

Only after the table was brought in was the menorah to be brought in. If the table signified a feast, then the lights are lighted in order for that feast to be held. It is of note that Jesus first proclaimed Himself the Bread of life in John 6, and then proclaimed this in John 8:12 –

“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”

Thus, His proclamations match the order of the furniture which have been brought into this Holy Place. The instructions here are to light its lamps, but this was done specifically at a prescribed time of the day each day, a time known as “between the evenings,” and thus about 3 pm.

⁵ **You shall also set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the Testimony,**

The term “before the ark of the Testimony” means outside the veil in the Holy Place, and directly in front of where the Ark sat behind the veil. The table was to the south; the menorah was to the north, but with its lamps illuminating the south.

As the presence of the Lord symbolically comes to fellowship with the priests through the veil in the placement of the Table of Showbread, so likewise, the prayers symbolically go through the veil and into the Most Holy Place by the wafting of the incense which is offered on this altar.

Despite there being a fracture, or divide, between the two, communion was possible through these two points. As the bread can be equated with the word of God which

nourishes, and as the incense can be equated with the prayers of the people, the Lord fellowshiped with His people through the word and they with Him through prayer.

How much more now can we truly fellowship with the Lord when we have the full word of God available to us, and we have the Holy Spirit who receives our prayers and sends them directly through our Mediator to God the Father!

We have full and unhindered access to the very Throne of Grace, and we have the full revelation of God available at this time in the completed word. Truly, this dispensation we live in is the most blessed of times yet for those who are eager to fellowship intimately with God.

⁵ (con't) **and put up the screen for the door of the tabernacle.**

The screen, or *masak*, is that which separates the Holy Place from the outside courtyard. This screen is what is at the *pethakh*, or “doorway,” for access into the tabernacle. And once again, in order, we have Jesus’ claim that He is the Door, in John 10:7 –

“Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.”

The order of His proclamations follows in a remarkable way with the order of these items now being set up.

⁶ **Then you shall set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting.**

The altar is next mentioned, and it is said to be “before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting” despite it having the laver between it and the actual tent. This placement then answers to that of the altar of incense and the ark. Just as those two are being connected together, so are the brazen altar and the door.

Why would this be unless there was more symbolism which is calling out to be seen? What is it about the altar and the door which is so intricately connected? Again, we just need to go to the book of John and see which I AM statement of Jesus is next. In John 10:7 and again in John 10:9, He said that He is the Door. Immediately after this in John 10:11, He says –

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”

The altar is where the sacrificial lamb was slaughtered for the sins of the people. And so Christ who gave His life is detailed directly after the door in the setting up of the sanctuary, and directly after the door in the book of John. Only by dying for the sins of the people can Christ be the Door by which we again have access to the Father.

There is a continued precision in the word which spans thousands of years, and the writing of these men who were inspired by the Spirit of God to write and record these things.

⁷ And you shall set the laver between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and put water in it.

Oddly, the NKJV changes the terms here from what should be “tent of meeting” to “tabernacle of meeting.” The KJV sticks with “tent” but says “of the congregation.” Both are incorrect. It is *ohel moed*, or “tent of meeting.”

It is before this, “tent of meeting” that the laver is next to be set up. However, the laver is closer to the tent than the altar, and it begs the question, “Why wasn’t this then detailed first?” We have partially answered this. The altar answers to the Door. One cannot enter the Door until the sins are paid for by the death of the sacrifice.

However, one who is dead cannot enter anything. If we simply died on the altar with Christ and nothing more happened, we would have a hard time moving. But something wonderful happens to those who die in Christ. They are raised to new life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The laver, in a sense, is a foreshadowing of our baptism in Christ. When we are baptized, we are making a picture of what Christ has done for us. This is why the one baptizing should make two proclamations during the baptism. 1) Buried with Christ in His death – this is when the person is dunked under, and 2) Raised to newness of life by the power of the Holy Spirit – this is when the person is brought back up out of the water.

And this is what makes our continued journey possible. We don’t merely die with Christ, we are raised with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenly places. We gain access through the Door and continue heading west to the Land of Delight. And this is what the next I AM statement of Jesus proclaims. In John 11:25 –

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.”

One cannot wash and be sanctified if they are not resurrected. The laver is the seal that the resurrection has come about, and new life is granted. We are justified in Christ's death; we are sanctified through the resurrection and the sealing of the Spirit. Paul tells us this in 2 Thessalonians 2:13 –

“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth...

It is of note that the Hebrew of this verse specifically says *v'natata sham mayim*, or “and you shall put into it water.” They could have filled this laver first, but the Lord specifically calls for it to be placed *and then filled*. The reason is that one must first receive Christ, dying to sin before then being granted the Spirit. The order of the placement of each item is detailed and it is beautiful.

⁸You shall set up the court all around,

The tabernacle and tent weren't just exposed to the pagan world around them. They were instead enclosed by a court which kept the Holy Places separate from the world, and which also kept out any who would come near with empty hands. But, unlike Eden which was also closed off from the world, with no seeming possibility to reenter, we see that there is, in fact, a means of access...

^{8 (con't)} and hang up the screen at the court gate.

There was a *masak*, or covering, here as well. This is the same word that was just used in verse 5 for the screen at the doorway, but this time it leaves off the term *pethakh*, or door. Instead, it uses the term *sha'ar*, or “gate.” A *different word* is used to describe essentially the same thing. Why would this be? The answer is that once again, the terminology is given to show us the I AM proclamation of Christ. In John 14:6 comes that next statement –

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

There was one means of access into the sanctuary for the outside world – one and only one. Likewise, Jesus claims to be that exclusive access which this screen only pictures. He is the way back to restoration with God which was lost at the very dawn of man's time on earth.

The world hates the concept of a single path to God, but Moses gave us a foreshadowing of it in Genesis 3, he continues to give us a taste of it in the details of the tabernacle, and Jesus boldly proclaimed that *He alone* is able to make these pictures and symbols come to life through His life, His work, and His being. We ignore these marvelous clues at our own great peril.

*I Am the Lord who is here for you
I Am with you always, so have no fear
Be strengthened through My word, this you shall do
And through this word, to you I will come near*

*Trust in Me and know that I Am with you always
In your walk don't be terrified or afraid
Instead, cling to this word throughout all of your days
And never let your heart from Me be swayed*

*Seek Me diligently and by you I shall be found
Look to Me and let Me be your delight
I Am here with you, as if by sight and by sound
I Am with you all the day, and throughout each long night*

II. The Rite of Consecration (verse 9-16)

⁹“And you shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle and all that *is* in it; and you shall hallow it and all its utensils, and it shall be holy.

That everything associated with the tabernacle was to be anointed with oil is a clear reference to the presence of the Spirit. Without the life of the Spirit, nothing effectual for the redemptive process is possible. But when the Spirit is present, the anointing is both from the Spirit and for the Spirit.

If you missed the sermon on the holy anointing oil, it would be worth your time to go back and watch that. In it, you will gain an immensely detailed understanding of the work of Christ which is seen in every single detail. Just as the entire edifice was anointed, so the Spirit of Christ is behind every single aspect of the building of His church. Nothing occurs apart from Him, and all of it is for Him. As Paul says in Romans –

“For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen.” Romans 11:36

¹⁰ You shall anoint the altar of the burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar. The altar shall be most holy.

Only after mentioning the tabernacle and all that is in it is that which is outside then anointed. However, in this verse it says that the altar shall be “most holy,” whereas the previous verse said that the tabernacle and all of it was said to be “holy.” The scholars at Cambridge seem to find a contradiction in this by stating –

“It is remarkable that, while in Exodus 30:29 ...the Tent of Meeting with all the vessels belonging to it, are, by anointing, made ‘most holy’ ..., here the altar only is ‘most holy,’ and the Tent of Meeting and all its contents are only ‘holy.’” Cambridge

As is typical with them, they try to introduce doubt into the minds of their readers as to the consistency, and thus the reliability, of the word. However, the difference in terminology does not signify any higher or lesser degree of holiness.

Instead, the terms are used as a caution for the priests and the people. The people could come no nearer to the Lord than the altar of burnt offering. It is termed “most holy” here as a warning that no layman could touch it, lest they become devoted to the Lord.

The “holy” of the other implements implies “most holy,” because only the priests could come near them. The holiness of the altar had to be precisely stated as “most holy” so that the people would not err and die.

¹¹ And you shall anoint the laver and its base, and consecrate it.

Nothing is said of the laver and its base being holy or most holy, and yet, it is consecrated through anointing. This may seem odd, but the laver is after the altar where the common people could not pass. This implies that anyone who was at the laver was already acceptable to touch the altar, and thus they were holy.

However, the laver is for washing of defilement, something which is *not holy*. And so the laver itself must be most holy in order to wash away the defilement in order for the priests to be acceptable to go on, meaning into the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.

Everything about the laver speaks of a sanctification process which is needed for the already accepted priest of God to continue in his duties. It is the place where cleansing occurs as he goes about his business; it is the word of God – the Bible.

We come to it with stains and impurities, and we leave it cleansed and purified, and yet it never picks up our defilement. It is a constant and endless stream of water available to purify the soul of the believer.

Understanding this, are you using it as such? When you pick up the stains of life each day, do you come to it and wash yourself clean once again? You cannot move forward without it, and so come to it often and cleanse yourself with the healing water of the word.

¹² “Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the tabernacle of meeting and wash them with water.

Again, it is the tent, not the tabernacle. Make a note if your Bible says otherwise. The Bible is a book of beauty and precision, and so consistency in translation is always something to be desired.

It is at the door of the tent of meeting that Aaron and his sons were to be brought. This is speaking of where the laver stood, and it is from this laver that they would be fully washed, signifying their acceptability, once and for all, to be priests.

It is symbolic of the full washing that occurs the moment a believer comes to Christ. He is cleansed and he is purified from all unrighteousness. After this, the priests will only wash their hands and feet, signifying their on-going purification which was needed to keep them acceptable to perform their duties. The same is true for us, which is what is pictured in these ancient rites and rituals.

¹³ You shall put the holy garments on Aaron, and anoint him and consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest.

Aaron, though a fallen man, was a type of Christ as our High Priest. He was to be set apart and consecrated in order to serve as a priest. Likewise, as we saw in the details for the consecration of Aaron in Exodus 29, Christ Jesus was set apart for His duties as our true High Priest. That is referred to in the gospels, but it is most detailed and explained for us in the book of Hebrews.

For almost 1500 years, the priestly line of Aaron was invested with these holy garments which pointed to and pictured the coming Messiah. What is both exciting and saddening, is that there is a person alive today who has been selected as the next high priest of Israel. He will be washed, anointed, and consecrated for his duties, but there will be no true life in his investiture or in his actions.

Instead, Israel missed the boat and is heading down a misguided path of works under the law once again. The good of this is that eventually that path will lead them to their true Messiah. But it will be a path filled with pain and suffering before they get there.

¹⁴ And you shall bring his sons and clothe them with tunics.

The sons of Aaron are emblematic of the sons of God, through the work of Christ. It is we who they only picture. Their white tunics symbolize the pure white righteousness that we possess because of Him. These sons though, for the dispensation of the law, were those who ministered before the Lord in their daily duties.

¹⁵ You shall anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may minister to Me as priests;

The timing of the ordination of Aaron and his sons is often speculated to be later than that of the sanctuary. This is because it is detailed in Leviticus 8. However, this needs to be argued against for several reasons. The first is that though the command is given and only later enacted, the same is true with the sanctuary itself.

The Lord has given the command to erect it, and it will be erected after the command at the time specified. There is no reason to assume that just because the *details* of the priest's ordination are written later, that they are actually conducted any later than that of the tabernacle itself. Secondly, in the raising up of the tabernacle, in verse 30-32 of this chapter, it says –

“He set the laver between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and put water there for washing; ³¹ and Moses, Aaron, and his sons would wash their hands and their feet *with water* from it. ³² Whenever they went into the tabernacle of meeting, and when they came near the altar, they washed, as the Lord had commanded Moses.”

Therefore, the details are already out of any chronological order, even as the erection of the details are being given. And thirdly, if the tabernacle and all of the associated

furniture was considered holy through the consecration process, but Aaron and his sons were not, then they would not be able to serve as priests, or they themselves would incur guilt and die.

Rather, the recording of all of these details is done in specific categories rather than chronologically. The categorical details are kept together for a logical reading of each step of the process.

^{15 (con't)} for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations.”

The priesthood of Aaron was anointed at this time, and it passed down to each subsequent generation after him. Any new anointing of later High Priests is glaringly left unstated, especially at the time of the transfer of the garments from Aaron to his son at Aaron's death. However, from Leviticus 21:10 it does appear that each next high priest did have anointing oil poured over his head. From this, the priesthood was passed down as “an everlasting priesthood.”

Unfortunately, these words, everlasting priesthood, lead to one of the frequent questions I receive concerning the Law of Moses and its duration. How can we not be required to observe the law if it was for an everlasting priesthood throughout the generations? The question is faulty, because it doesn't read the *intent* of the passage. The translation into English, though not incorrect, is vague. Further, it does not take in the whole counsel of Scripture.

An everlasting priesthood does not mean an eternal priesthood. The word *olam* simply means “to the vanishing point.” Whatever point in the eternal counsels of God that Christ would come and annul the first covenant, the priesthood would likewise be annulled. This is stated by the author of Hebrews –

“Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need *was there* that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? ¹² For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. ¹³ For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar.” Hebrews 7:11-13

The priesthood ended because it had reached its vanishing point. We serve God under a New Covenant. If you are still stuck under the Old, you err in your walk and you are not pleasing to God. Finally in this verse, it cannot go without note that this ordination process of Aaron and his sons corresponds directly to Jesus' final I AM proclamation. In John 15, He said the following –

“I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. ⁸ By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

-John 15:5-8

Only when one is in Christ can they be productive in Christ, but not all who are in Him are productive, nor does His word abide in them. The priests of Israel were ordained to be priests to God, just as we are called to be. They were to be about the Lord's business and to be effective stewards of His. If His word failed to abide in them, there would be consequences.

As a confirmation of this, we read the following account of Aaron's two oldest sons. They failed to let the word abide in their lives, and the fire consumed them, just as Jesus' words say about what will happen to us –

“Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. ² So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. ³ And Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the Lord spoke, saying:

‘By those who come near Me

I must be regarded as holy;

And before all the people

I must be glorified.’

So Aaron held his peace.” Leviticus 10:1-3

The seven “I AM's” of Jesus are reflected in the process of raising the tabernacle and in its consecration, and of that for Aaron and his sons. This cannot be by chance, but was by the guiding of the Holy Spirit each step of the way.

Let us now consider why the Ark and the Veil have no I AM statement attached to them. First, the Ark, which bears the word, pictures that which always existed – the Word of God. This is why it is introduced first as a statement of fact in John 1:1.

Next the Veil, which is explicitly said to be the body of Christ, was prepared by God for Christ to dwell in. That is why John 1:14 follows after the statement of John 1:1. Only then are the Seven I AM's stated.

However, there is still one glaring omission concerning the furniture. There is no I AM statement for the Altar of Incense which is placed in front of the Veil between the Table of Showbread and the Menorah. Why would this be?

The reason is the same as the order in which it was instructed to be made. The Ark, the Table, and the Lampstand were all detailed in Exodus 25. However, the Altar of Incense wasn't detailed until Exodus 30.

The placement of the Altar had to be noted in order here as the furniture was set up, but the purpose for it did not take effect until all of Christ's work was finished. Only after the last I AM statement by Jesus in John 15 comes Jesus' High Priestly Prayer of John 17.

The prayer of His for us, and our continued prayers today, took effect when Christ's work was complete. Only when one is in Christ can their prayers be acceptable to God. As we noted earlier, the placement of this altar answers to the placement of the ark and veil, just as the placement of the Altar of Burnt offering answers to the door of the tent of meeting, bypassing the laver.

The precision in the layout, as is then matched by what occurs in the book of John, is simply astonishing. And so it is for us. Each step is logical and orderly as we move from understanding the work of Jesus to applying it to our lives. When we do, we are able to come boldly to the Throne of Grace where our prayers and petitions are heard once again.

Like the Ark and the Veil, no I AM statement is necessary for this altar. The work was fulfilled, and the nature of the Person is understood through what He has done. He is our Mediator, and through Him, our prayers, signified by the incense, is passed through Him to God.

Ark of the Testimony (containing the Word of God) / John 1:1

Veil (The Body of Christ) / John 1:14

Seven I AM's

Table of Showbread – I AM the Bread of Life / John 6:35

Menorah – I AM the Light of the Word / John 8:12

Screen Door to Tent – I AM the Door / John 10:7

Altar – I AM the Good Shepherd / John 10:11

Laver – I AM the Resurrection and the Life – John 11:25

Screen to Courtyard – I AM the Way the Truth and the Life / John 14:6

The Anointing of Priests – I AM the True Vine / John 15:5-8

Altar of Incense / Jesus' High Priestly Prayer of John 17

¹⁶ Thus Moses did; according to all that the Lord had commanded him, so he did.

This verse is rather similar to final words of the previous chapter –

“According to all that the Lord had commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did all the work. ⁴³ Then Moses looked over all the work, and indeed they had done it; as the Lord had commanded, just so they had done it. And Moses blessed them.” Exodus 39:42, 43

The difference is that Moses was the one to approve the work of the people, and so he looked it over and approved it and blessed the people. In this verse, Moses is himself being obedient to the word and the word itself is commending him for his actions. And so from construction to completion, the work is noted as having been accomplished according to all that the Lord had commanded.

As I said at the beginning of the sermon, and during it as well, the way in which these several points have followed the seven “I AM's” of Jesus is more than remarkable. The divine fingerprint is to be found all the way throughout Scripture; each page validating that more than human wisdom was involved in the process.

The many places it was compiled, the many personalities involved in it, and the length of time in which these things took to be recorded is a validation all its own that we are holding in our hands the very word of God.

But adding on to that is the fact that many of these patterns, such as the one today, have been left unseen for the 2000 years that this book has been studied by faithful scholars. How is it that such patterns can suddenly come forth, and yet people deny that there is a deep wisdom behind the word?

Let us not fall into such skepticism, but rather, let us behold the beauty of this word, treasure its secrets in our hearts, and continue to look for more remarkable patterns which are waiting still for curious eyes to gaze upon and bring to light, to the glory of God who has placed them there.

And as we have seen numerous times today, these patterns reveal Christ. God is trying to wake us up to our need for Christ. And so, once again today, I would like to explain quickly, and with care, how you too can share in God's marvelous offer of peace which is granted through Him...

Closing Verse: *"Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.'" John 8:58*

Next Week: Exodus 40:17-38 *I tried to find a word to rhyme, so I didst...* (The Lord in Their Midst) (105th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

I AM

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
These are the words He was then relaying

On the first day of the first month, do not forget
The tabernacle of the tent of meeting, up you shall set

You shall put in it the ark of the Testimony, please understand
And partition off the ark with the veil, per my command

You shall bring in the table
And arrange the things that are to be set in order on it

And you shall bring in the lampstand
And light its lamps, to this you shall commit

You shall also set the altar of gold
For the incense before the ark of the Testimony
And put up the screen for the door of the tabernacle
Follow this order as given by Me

Then you shall set the altar of the burnt offering
Before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting

And you shall set the laver between
The tabernacle of meeting and the altar
And put water in it
No portion of this detail shall be allowed to falter

You shall set up the court all around, as I now state
And hang up the screen at the court gate

And you shall take the anointing oil
And anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it
And you shall hallow it and all its utensils
And it shall be holy, as I to you submit

You shall anoint the altar of the burnt offering
And all its utensils, and the altar consecrate
The altar shall be most holy
This condition of it I now to you relate

And you shall anoint the laver and its base
And consecrate it, there in its place

Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door
Of the tabernacle of meeting and wash them with water
On them the water you shall pour

You shall put the holy garments on Aaron
And anoint him and consecrate him too
That he may minister to Me as priest
These things to him you are to do

And you shall bring his sons
And clothe them with tunics, so shall it be
You shall anoint them, as you anointed their father
That they may as priests minister to Me

For their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood
Throughout their generations, as is to be understood

Thus Moses did; each and everything as he was bid
According to all that the LORD had commanded him, so he did

Heavenly Father, how precious is your word
And how marvelous it is to read it and find Jesus
Each page that we turn, it reveals our great Lord
Who has done such wonderful things for us

O God, our hearts are directed to You
And so be with us in all that we do
Let us never stray from the path which is true
And each day through Your word, please – our souls renew

And in this we will give You our highest praise
As we wait on our Lord's return – that most marvelous of days

Hallelujah and Amen...

EXODUS 40:17-38

(THE LORD IN THEIR MIDST)

Today is our last set of verses in the book of Exodus. This is our 105th sermon for the book as well. It has been an amazing adventure and the perfection of God's word has been seen in countless different ways during our trip through it.

We have learned history, there have been innumerable moral lessons which have been presented to us, there have been prophetic pictures of things to come, and there has been an astonishing array of symbolism of Christ and His word revealed in every passage we've looked at.

These verses reveal the completion of an amazing journey which began when Moses ascended Sinai in Exodus 25. It has been an extraordinary 39 sermons since he was first told that the Lord was going to build a sanctuary to dwell in, there in the midst of Israel.

He immediately began to give details of what was to come, and as He did, He was revealing hidden pictures of the glory that those things only symbolized... Christ! Christ was being described in the minutest detail. His Person, His work, His word, His grace and mercy, His judgment, and His purifying glory.

And one picture which was being presented is now realized in His church. The tabernacle where the Lord would dwell was simply a picture of the church, the people of God, which is being built into a greater and more perfect temple for Him to dwell. Paul tells us this in our text verse of the day –

Text Verse: *“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” Ephesians 2:19-22*

Moses, who has been a marvelous type of Christ on numerous occasions, will erect the tabernacle in today's passage, and the Lord will move into His dwelling. When He does, the refulgency of God will shine forth in such a dazzling display that it will be impossible to approach near.

Now imagine what it will be like when God's people are glorified, and Christ comes to dwell among us for all eternity. The glories which lie ahead for the people of God make all of the distasteful trials of this world seem like they never happened. There is a hope which lies ahead for the faithful in Christ which will supersede anything we can possibly imagine.

Personally, I can't wait for the day. And may that day be soon. Mere hints of what lies ahead will close out the book of Exodus for us. What a joy this book has been as the Lord has unfurled countless treasures concerning Himself and His marvelous plan of redemption.

We have this final passage to go. A passage which is a wonderful part of His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Setting up the Tabernacle and the Most Holy Place (verses 17-21)

¹⁷ And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first *day* of the month, *that* the tabernacle was raised up.

As according to verse 2 of this chapter, the words are fulfilled now. It was on the day of the new year, when the first year of freedom turned to the next according to the redemptive calendar which was given to Moses by the Lord, that the tabernacle was raised up.

It is exactly 345 days after departing from Egypt and 300 days since arriving at Sinai that the instructions were carried out. It is now the year 2515AM, or "in the year of the world.

For the time spent on the actual work of the tabernacle, the eighty days that Moses was on the mountain have to be deducted. Also, the giving of the law itself, and any intervals between these events needs to be deducted as well. In all, the work was fully accomplished in about one half of a year. With it having been approved by Moses, it would now be assembled in a single day...

¹⁸ So Moses raised up the tabernacle, fastened its sockets, set up its boards, put in its bars, and raised up its pillars.

There is dispute among scholars as to whether the word “fastened” is correct or not concerning the sockets. Various translations say, “put in place,” “set down,” “laid,” and “installed.” The word is *nathan*, from where our modern name Nathan comes from. It means to “give” or “put.”

The bases were extremely heavy, but some scholars think they were still not heavy enough to support the weight without tipping over. Therefore, they speculate that they were wedge-shaped, and they were actually partially buried in the ground. Whether this is the case or not, the tabernacle, once joined as a unit and secured with cords and pegs, would be one sturdy structure.

¹⁹ And he spread out the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering of the tent on top of it, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

This would have certainly been the most difficult part of the entire operation. If you’ve ever worked with tents, you know this. But these people had been tent-dwellers for countless generations and could take down and put up their tents in a most trouble-free manner. Even today, the Bedouins move their large tents, breaking them down and setting them up, with little trouble.

The verse here shows, and even highlights, the great distinction between the two separate units. There is the tabernacle, and then there is the tent over the tabernacle. One covers over the other, and in almost all instances, the title “the tent of meeting” is used rather than “the tabernacle of meeting.” The tabernacle was raised, and then the tent which comprised both the ram skins dyed red and then the outer covering of the skins of sea animals was placed over the tabernacle.

²⁰ He took the Testimony and put *it* into the ark, inserted the poles through the rings of the ark, and put the mercy seat on top of the ark.

This verse should rightfully say, “He **had taken** the Testimony and put it into the ark.” The two tablets of the Ten Commandments, meaning the Testimony, were placed in there when Moses came down from the mountain. This is recorded in Deuteronomy 10:5. The only other explanation is that Deuteronomy 10 was referring to this time. If so, then the Ten Commandments were left outside of the ark for quite some duration of time. This is unlikely.

Either way, the rest of the Ark was probably not assembled until now. It is at this time that the Testimony would be covered with the mercy seat and the poles were placed on the ark. Out of all 20 translations that I look at for these sermons, only the NKJV says that he “inserted the poles through the rings of the ark.”

The Hebrew never mentions the rings, and so their translation is more of an explanatory paraphrase. Unfortunately, they didn't italicize those words, and so it must be considered a bad translation of this verse, even though it is a correct idea. As this is God's word, precision should be made in matters like this.

²¹ And he brought the ark into the tabernacle, hung up the veil of the covering, and partitioned off the ark of the Testimony, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

This would have been the last time that the Israelite people would have seen the ark for many, many hundreds of years. From this moment on, the ark was never to be seen by anyone except the high priest, and that only once a year. However, during the time of the movement of the tabernacle, it would also be seen by the priests designated to cover it before it was transported from place to place. This is recorded in Numbers 4:5.

Other than these exceptions, the ark was to forever remain behind the veil, showing the people that there was a fracture, or divide, between them and the Lord. The veil, with its cherubim woven into it, was to remind them that man had been cast out of Eden and could not enter the Lord's presence, except through a mediator. What a profound and sobering picture of the work of Christ whose coming and whose ministry was as of yet unknown to them.

What is surprising is that even to this day, the Jews don't get it. They are in the process of making a new veil for the coming temple in Jerusalem. On that veil will be cherubim like those of old. They are willingly demonstrating that they have no access to God and to His paradise which is prepared for those who come to Him through Christ.

Thank God for Jesus Christ who rent the veil through His work. Thank God for Jesus Christ who restores to us the intimate fellowship which was lost to man at the very first moments of his long and weary existence on this earth.

*The Most Holy Place, where the Lord does dwell
The place where all of His goodness is known
We had lost access to that place for a long, long spell
But hints of how to return us there have been shown*

*There in the place where peace is to be found
Where the Lord resides, and from where shines His glory
A marvelous place where joy does abound
Is revealed to us in the gospel story*

*Entering through the veil, the torn body of the Lord
And placing our sins at the foot of the cross of Calvary
We have full access, yes peace is restored
This is what God has done through Christ for you and for me*

II. Setting up the Holy Place (verses 22-28)

²² He put the table in the tabernacle of meeting, on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the veil;

With the veil set, the attention is next turned to the Holy Place of the tabernacle. The first item to be placed there is the table of showbread. The Tabernacle points to the west with its entrance at the east. This then means that the north side is on the right. There the table was to be placed.

As a correction here, the Hebrew says, “And he put the table in the tent of meeting on the north side of the tabernacle.” Two different words are used – tent and tabernacle. But the translators erringly overlook this and call it the tabernacle both times.

In another sad state, but one which is too often repeated, one scholar incorrectly commented on this verse concerning the placement of this table, and from that it was repeated by others. The comment was that until this point, there were no instructions given for where this table would be placed. Here is what the Pulpit Commentary states –

“No direction had been given upon this point, but Moses probably knew the right position from the pattern which he had seen upon the mount.”

This is what happens, one person says something, and then it becomes accepted without checking. In fact, the placement for this table was noted when it was first mentioned in Exodus 26 –

“You shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand across from the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south; and you shall put the table on the north side.” Exodus 26:35

When reading commentaries, never allow your brain to squiggle until you first check to see if the commentary is correct. If such an obvious error is possible with such a simple thing as this, imagine how much more important it is to check on doctrinal matters which can affect your entire walk with Christ, and even the matter of your salvation!

²³ and he set the bread in order upon it before the Lord, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

This is the “bread of the Presence,” or the “bread of the Faces” as it literally is translated in Exodus 25:30. According to Leviticus 26, it was to be set in two rows, six loaves to a row.

Because the instructions for this are given afterwards in Leviticus, it shows that the book of Leviticus is not necessarily a chronological record of what was instructed. Instead, it is a compilation of what the Lord commanded which was then placed in the order as divinely inspired by the Lord.

²⁴ He put the lampstand in the tabernacle of meeting, across from the table, on the south side of the tabernacle;

The lampstand is the next item set in the Holy Place within the tent of meeting. It will be on the left as one enters to minister. Its arrangement was to be so that it was over against the table so that the light would shine to the north and illuminate the table.

²⁵ and he lit the lamps before the Lord, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

In this verse is a Hebraism that is translated in one of two ways. The words are *va'yaaal ha'nerot*. Some translators say, “And he set up the lamps.” Others say, “And he lit the lamps.” Only Young’s Literal Translation gives a direct rendering of the Hebrew. He says, “And he causeth the lamps to go up.” It isn’t that he set up the lamps, it is that he lit them, thus making the light go up before the Lord. The Holy Place was illuminated through this work of Moses.

It should be noted here that it is Moses who is doing these duties. He certainly had help with the setting up of the tabernacle and the tent and each piece of furniture, but he is the one to oversee the entire process. Aaron is not mentioned as having done any of these things because he is not yet ordained to do them.

Only Moses is set apart to be the one in charge of the duties at this point. This will end in just a few days, when the rite of ordination is complete, but until then, it is his responsibility to ensure that each step is carried out. And as the process continues, we read again that he accomplishes the task “as the Lord commanded.” He is being a faithful steward of the tasks that he is charged with.

²⁶ He put the gold altar in the tabernacle of meeting in front of the veil;

This is the altar of incense, now called “the gold altar.” This is to distinguish it from the brazen altar which will be outside of the tent. It’s placement is just before the veil which would put it half way between the table and the menorah.

There before the veil, the smoke and smell of the incense would be the only thing to pass through the veil and into the Most Holy place each day. It signifies that the prayers of the people, through the Lord’s designated representative, would be received by God there in His dwelling place.

²⁷ and he burned sweet incense on it, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

The incense would be lit and burned twice each day at the same times that the menorah was tended to. Again, this was a duty only authorized for the priests, and so once again, it says “as the Lord had commanded Moses.” It is a note that despite the fact that Moses was not the selected and ordained high priest, he was given the command to accomplish these tasks until Aaron and his sons were properly installed.

It is also worthy of note, once again, that the incense is called “sweet” or “fragrant.” The reason why this is so important is because not just any incense could be presented before the Lord. In just a few more chapters, and in just a few days from this very moment that Moses is working, two sons of Aaron will present unauthorized incense before the Lord, and they will be consumed by fire for their irreverence.

As this incense pictures acceptable prayers to God, the profane incense pictures unacceptable prayers to God. For us to mix our prayers with those of unbelievers, acknowledging their prayers as acceptable before the Lord, is a deed worthy of death.

We are not to pray with people of other religions as if we are praying to the same God. It is a direct affront to Him when we do this. There is one God, there is one Mediator between God and man, and there can be no fellowship between light and darkness.

²⁸ He hung up the screen at the door of the tabernacle.

This hanging is the covering of the entranceway into the Holy Place. It was visible to the people from outside of the Tent of Meeting and anyone who was curious could watch the ministering priest go through this entryway, but their peering eyes could see no further than this.

*The Holy Place where there is the Bread of life
The Holy Place where the Light of life shines so bright
The Holy place where prayers are raised to end all strife
There in the Holy Place the Lord came to cure our hopeless plight*

*His perfect life was ended so that we could live
His light was covered over so that we could shine
For us to His Father His prayers He did give
And to the world He has given His marvelous sign*

*Look to the cross and to our Bread of life
Look to the cross for the Light of the world
Pray through the One who has ended the strife
And give glory to the Lord who has His banner unfurled*

III. Setting up the Courtyard and its Furniture (verses 29-33)

²⁹ And he put the altar of burnt offering *before* the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and offered upon it the burnt offering and the grain offering, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

The altar of burnt offering is connected directly to the door of the tabernacle in this verse. There is no connecting preposition in the Hebrew. Without this altar, there could be no access. One cannot minister to the Lord until he first offers to the Lord. Thus Moses has the altar placed in direct line with the entrance way and then it next notes that he made his offering, just as the Lord commanded.

³⁰ He set the laver between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and put water there for washing;

Despite the altar of burnt offering being connected to the door, this laver is still placed between the altar and the tent of meeting. The general speculation is that it was placed just off to the south side so that the priests would not have to go around it, but this is

unstated in the Bible. Its purpose has been described already, washing. But the Lord once again states it and further defines it...

³¹ and Moses, Aaron, and his sons would wash their hands and their feet *with water* from it.

The tense of the verb is frequentative. In other words, it indicates that washing took place at any given time. At this time, Moses would be the one to wash. When Aaron and his sons were installed, Moses would no longer perform priestly functions and he would no longer wash, but Aaron and his sons would. The verse simply explains the placement and use of the laver.

³² Whenever they went into the tabernacle of meeting, and when they came near the altar, they washed,

The importance of the laver is seen in the exceptional amount of explanation given for it. So far, we have reviewed all of the furniture to be used in the sanctuary, and only this one piece has gotten so much detail concerning its use. If you don't remember the symbolism of the laver, or if you didn't see that sermon, you should go review. In short, it signifies our on-going sanctification which preeminently comes from knowing and adhering to the words of Scripture.

If you wonder how the Lord feels about the time you spend in the word, all you need to do is look at the amount of detail that He is giving us now as to the use of the laver. He wants you in it day and night. If you're not filling yourself with the word, you are filling yourself with something else, probably something completely non-productive in regards to your relationship with the Lord.

^{32 (con't)} as the Lord had commanded Moses.

This is the last of eight times that this is said of Moses' adherence to the duties he was prescribed. If you add in his supervision of the work of the people from the previous chapter, it is a full 18 times that the obedience of Moses is highlighted, just as the Lord commanded. With each step of the process, the Bible meticulously notes the adherence to what the Lord had previously spoken.

It is an especially poignant note for us to consider, because the word of the Lord to Moses is exactly the same word from the Lord which is recorded for us. Whether in part

or in whole, when we receive the word of the Lord, our obedience to it, and our adherence to it is being gauged.

Moses was told, “Do this,” and the Bible then records, “Moses did this as commanded.” We are told, “Do this,” and when we stand before the Lord, the record will either read, “He did this,” or “He didn’t do this.” An eternity of rewards can be very easily lost in the purifying fire of the Lord’s judgment, simply because we failed to heed. Let’s not let that happen to us!

³³ And he raised up the court all around the tabernacle and the altar,

The court around the tabernacle stretched out for about 150 feet on the north and south, and it was about 75 feet across on the west and on the east. In all then, it was approximately one half the size of a football field. It wasn’t just a court, but actually an enclosure. The tabernacle would have sat inside of it.

Flavius Josephus states that the tabernacle was placed in the middle of the court (Antiq. III 6, 3), but most photos or depictions you see have centered and all the way to the back of the courtyard. From a pictorial aspect, what Josephus says makes more sense. The placement of the ark, the very heart of the entire edifice would be there in the center of the sanctuary.

³³ (con’t) and hung up the screen of the court gate.

This is the last detail mentioned for the entire sanctuary. It is the screen by which access into the court itself was obtained. As this is shown to clearly picture Christ – the Way, the Truth, and the Life – it is fitting that it is the last item mentioned. It is a note that in order to get through all of the other objects, and to the very throne of the Lord, one must come through Christ. There is no end-around for the people of the world. It is either Jesus, or one is left without access. Thank God for Jesus Christ!

³³ (con’t) So Moses finished the work.

va’kal moshe eth ha’melakah – The words are simple and without any fanfare, “And finished Moses the work.” He was given a task, and he saw it through to its completion. The sanctuary was now complete in every detail.

As a note before we go on, the details of lighting lamps, burning incense, burning offerings, and washing with the laver – and so on – all of these details were certainly

done after this final verse, but they were mentioned before to show that those functions were accomplished in accord with the use of the respective item.

Further, though the anointing of these items for their consecration isn't mentioned until Leviticus 8, it is probable that it was accomplished directly after the final setting up of the sanctuary and as the week-long ordination of Aaron began.

*It is I who consecrates Israel
It is by My glory that this is so
And it is I who can consecrate You as well
To you My holiness I will show*

*For those who call out from Egypt's chains
I will respond and break them free
Nothing of the previous bondage now remains
For those who have been released by Me*

*I am the Lord who sanctifies His people
It is by My glory that this is so
So let them sing their praises from under the steeple
They are mine; let the world know*

IV. The Cloud and the Glory (verses 34-38)

³⁴ Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

The sign of the Lord's approval of all that has taken place, and of His entry into His new residence is now given in a stunning display. The cloud which had led them from the Red Sea all the way to Mt. Sinai, and which had rested upon either Sinai, or Moses' tent when he went to meet the Lord there, now enveloped the tent of meeting.

And from within the tabernacle, the glory of the Lord dazzlingly radiated out, filling the entire temple. The promise to dwell in the midst of Israel had now come to its realization.

Regardless of the actual timing of the events concerning the anointing of the tabernacle and all of the furniture, and also the timing of Aaron's consecration, the temporary nature of the Levitical priesthood is made perfectly obvious by the placement of this

final passage at the end of the book of Exodus instead of within the book of Leviticus. In Exodus 29, the Lord said these words to Moses –

“This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet you to speak with you. ⁴³ And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by My glory.” Exodus 29:42, 43

At that time, I explained that the words “the tabernacle” were inserted by the translators. All it says is, *v’niqdash bikbodi* – “...and I will sanctify by My glory.” The question then was, “What will the Lord sanctify by His glory?” Of 20 English translations, the options were – “the place,” “it,” “the tabernacle,” “that place,” “the tent,” and “the altar.” Does anyone remember which was correct?

The answer was, “None of those.” Rather, the only entity mentioned in the verse was “the children of Israel.” It is Israel who is sanctified by the presence of the Lord. The proof of this was that His glory filled the tent of meeting.

The Lord had told them after their sin of the golden calf that He would not dwell in their midst. Through the mediation of Moses, the Lord agreed that He would dwell in their midst. Now, with the sanctuary complete, the promise is realized. He has come to dwell in their midst, and Israel as a people is sanctified by His glory.

During their exile, this was the very promise made to Israel through Ezekiel. He told them that a time was coming when He would be with them and once again sanctify them by His glory –

“My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ²⁸ The nations also will know that I, the Lord, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.” Ezekiel 37:27-28

But that never happened after the exile. There is no record of the presence of the Lord filling the second temple. The time is yet future to them even now, and it is connected not to this covenant, mediated by Aaron. Instead, it is connected to the covenant which is mediated by the Messiah to come as was promised through Jeremiah the prophet.

This marvelous truth is hinted at now in the placement of this passage in Exodus, not Leviticus. Even before the consecration of Aaron and his sons, *while still under the mediation of Moses*, the glory of the Lord fills the temple. This law administered by

Moses, even after his death, was thus only temporary until the time of it being superseded by what it only pointed to, the better and more perfect covenant found in Christ Jesus.

³⁵ And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

What this seems to imply is that Moses, in fact, attempted to enter the tent of meeting, just as he had done when he met with the Lord in the previous tent of meeting outside the camp. However, the brilliant splendor of Yehovah was so radiant and marvelous that he could not. It was beyond his ability to do so. What a sign to all of the people of the marvelous workings of the Lord on their behalf!

Verses 34 and 35 are repeated in what occurred at the building of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. In 1 Kings 8, we read this –

“And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy *place*, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, ¹¹ so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.”

-1 Kings 8:10, 11

But notice the main difference between the two. In Exodus, it says that *Moses* was not able to enter. In 1 Kings, it says that *the priests* could not continue ministering. It is not the ministrations of the priests that brings the Lord's presence near, nor is it the law of Moses, which is still not complete – many more laws are coming.

Rather, the glory of the Lord coming among the people to sanctify them *precedes* the Aaronic priesthood, and it is also *precedes* the *full giving* of the Law of Moses. Therefore, neither of these things can be considered necessary for the coming of the Lord to dwell among His people.

Rather, the things *which have been erected* are what brought it to pass, and these things are merely types and shadows, as we have seen, of the coming Christ. As Christ is the fulfillment of them all, then it is the Lord Jesus in whom the glory of the Lord dwells in its full and resplendent glory.

If we would just pay heed to the details, even of seemingly obscure events in the Lord's word, we would know where to put our trust, our hope, and our attentive eyes.

³⁶ Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys.

At some point, the magnificent glory which filled the entire tabernacle retreated into the Most Holy Place and was to be found only there above the mercy seat and between the cherubim as was promised to Moses in chapter 25.

However, the cloud of glory remained above the tabernacle. It no longer moved from Sinai to tent and back to Sinai. Instead, it remained there above the tabernacle at all times until it was time to move. Only in this instance would the cloud move. And when it did, the people were expected to break camp and follow.

³⁷ But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up.

This verse is more fully explained in Numbers 9. The people remained where they were and only moved when directed –

“So it was, when the cloud remained only from evening until morning: when the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they would journey; whether by day or by night, whenever the cloud was taken up, they would journey. ²² *Whether it was two days, a month, or a year that the cloud remained above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would remain encamped and not journey; but when it was taken up, they would journey.*” Numbers 9:21, 22

It was solely by the direction of the Lord that the people moved. His plan was being executed, and His timing would prevail in having all things turn out as He had determined from the very beginning.

³⁸ For the cloud of the Lord was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

The cloud of glory had two distinct aspects. One was a covering cloud during the day, the other was the appearance of fire by night. This is not to be taken allegorically, but rather it is exactly what the people saw, and thus it was always visible to them.

With the presence of the cloud above the tabernacle, and in in full sight of all of the people, they would never again have to ask the question, “Is the Lord among us or not?” It would be evident to all that he was. It adds a touch of security to the obedient heart,

but Israel is not known for its obedience. And therefore, it also adds a note of dread, and that assured judgment lies ahead for them.

We don't even need to turn the pages to guess this, the Lord has said as much concerning the stiff-necked demeanor of the people. And yet, because of the faithful mediation of Moses, they have received the granting of their desires. They are now truly and inextricably the people of God, with all of the associated positives *and negatives* that this includes.

The positives will stem from their faithfulness to Him, and the negatives will stem from their rebellion against Him. The Lord is unchanging, and *this* the people will find out. The chapter and the book close out with this final verse. The people became enslaved to Pharaoh at the beginning of the book, and they had now become servants of the Lord at its ending. Whereas the book of Genesis spanned well over 2000 years of human history, Exodus spanned less than 100.

After this, the next three books combined will span less than 40. The Lord chose His line of people, they had come to the point of their redemption, and now they will come to be refined as His people in order to enter the Land of Promise.

Unfortunately, the refinement of a people is not congenital. Each generation must heed the lessons of the past, or they too will fall under the expected punishments of the Lord. Israel failed to teach their children and they were twice exiled.

By God's mighty hand alone, they have been returned once again to the Land of Promise. However, this time instead of being refined in advance of their arrival, they will be refined only afterwards. It will be a terrifying lesson as their numbers are whittled down through the process, but there will be an end to that refinement, and a time of great glory lies ahead for them yet again.

The cloud and fire is promised once again to the people of God who dwell in Jerusalem of the future. Isaiah tells us of the marvel that the people will behold –

“And it shall come to pass that *he who is* left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem. ⁴ When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning, ⁵ then the Lord will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire

by night. For over all the glory there *will be* a covering. ⁶ And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.” Isaiah 4:3-6

Again, this passage from Isaiah is not to be allegorized. It is to be taken as a literal manifestation signifying the presence of the Lord over Jerusalem during the millennial period. It will be the time which occurs only after He has “washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion.”

That day cannot be far off. The time of Israel’s exile is ended, the time of the falling away by the church has surely come close to reaching its climax, and the just punishment upon the nations of the world is close at hand.

The Lord led Israel by cloud, and He leads His church by His written word. We fail to pay heed at our own peril. In His magnificent, superior word there is a promise of great and marvelous things which lie ahead for the redeemed of the Lord. Let us hold fast to these promises and not lose heart as we await their sure coming. The Lord of glory is there, and He is willing to accept all who come to Him by faith. Let us not fail to heed the call when it is made. And let us not fail to seek Him while He may be found.

Closing Verse: *“But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. ²⁴ And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. ²⁵ Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). ²⁶ And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. ²⁷ But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.” Revelation 21:22-27*

Next Week: Jonah 1:1-3 *With this new series you will never be bored!* (From the Presence of the Lord) (1st Jonah Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Lord in Their Midst

And it came to pass
In the first month of the second year
On the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was raised up
To this command Moses did adhere

So Moses raised up the tabernacle
Fastened its sockets, set up its boards too
Put in its bars, and raised up its pillars
As he was instructed, so he did do

And he spread out the tent
Over the tabernacle
And put the covering of the tent on top of it
As the LORD had commanded Moses, so he did tackle

He took the Testimony and put it into the ark
Inserted the poles through the ark's rings
And put the mercy seat on top of the ark
He followed through with each of these things

And he brought the ark into the tabernacle
Hung up the veil of the covering
And partitioned off the ark of the Testimony
As the LORD had commanded Moses, so he did this thing

He put the table in the tabernacle of meeting
On the north side of the tabernacle, as the Lord did tell
Outside the veil; its place of seating
And he set the bread in order upon it as well

It was there before the LORD
As the LORD had commanded Moses
According to His word

He put the lampstand
In the tabernacle of meeting, this job he did tackle
Across from the table
On the south side of the tabernacle

And he lit the lamps before the LORD
As the LORD had commanded Moses
According to His word

He put the gold altar
In the tabernacle of meeting
In front of the veil
This, the place of its seating

And he burned sweet incense on it
As the LORD had commanded Moses
As the Lord did submit

He hung up the screen at the door
Of the tabernacle, and then he continued to do more

And he put the altar of burnt offering
Before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting
And offered upon it the burnt offering and the grain offering
As the LORD had commanded Moses; the task he was completing

He set the laver
Between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar
And put water there for washing
In attention to this duty he did not falter

And Moses, Aaron, and his sons
Would wash their hands and their feet with water from it
These people only; they the only ones

Whenever they went into the tabernacle of meeting
And when they came near the altar too
They washed
As the LORD had commanded Moses to do

And he raised up the court
All around the tabernacle and the altar; this duty he did not shirk
And hung up the screen of the court gate
So Moses finished the work

Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting
Surely this was a marvelous sight
And the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle
The tabernacle was completed just right

And Moses was not able
To enter the tabernacle of meeting even if he willed
Because the cloud rested above it
And the glory of the LORD the tabernacle filled

Whenever the cloud was taken up
From above the tabernacle moving forward
The children of Israel
Would go in all their journeys onward

But if the cloud was not taken up
Then they did not journey
Till the day that it was taken up
They waited for it to move; they waited obediently

For the cloud of the LORD, this marvelous sight
Was above the tabernacle by day
And fire was over it by night
In all of the house of Israel's sight, throughout all their journeys
It guided them as they went on their way

Lord God, thank you for this wonderful book
Exodus! What a marvel to have studied it
Into every detail possible we took a look
And to You our thanks and praise we now submit!

Hallelujah to Christ our Lord!
Hallelujah for Exodus, a marvelous part of Your superior word!

Hallelujah and Amen...