



THE BOOK OF EXODUS



Mike Glover

INTRODUCTION

The five books of Moses were collectively called the Pentateuch, a word of Greek origin meaning ‘the five-fold book.’ The Jews called them the Torah, i.e., ‘the law.’ It’s probable that the division of the Torah into five books proceeded from the Greek translators of the Old Testament.

The names by which these several books are generally known are Greek. Genesis through to Deuteronomy is known as the Torah, which means Law. In Greek, the word Pentateuch is ‘Pente’, which means five and ‘uch’, which means Law.

THE BOOK

The Book of Exodus is basically a follow-up on the end of the Book of Genesis. The word ‘exodus’ simply means ‘going out’. When we read through the book, we see that the focus is on the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt.

Several years have gone by between the time of the events described in the closing chapters of Genesis and those of the beginning of Exodus, four hundred and thirty years in total, **Exodus 12:40-41**. At the end of the book of Genesis, the Hebrews were living in the fertile land of Goshen and were being fed from the granaries of Egypt.

At the beginning of the Book of Exodus, the Hebrews are seen as slaves of the Egyptians, a nation without a country or a nation totally unaware that this was part of God’s plan. Exodus shows the growth of Israel and the birth of a nation, and the promises of God to Abraham beginning to be fulfilled.

AUTHOR

It’s commonly accepted that Moses is the writer of the Book of Exodus, **Exodus 17:14** and in the New Testament, Jesus Himself says Moses wrote it, **Mark 1:44 / John 5:46-47 / John 7:19-22 / Acts 26:22**. Moses’ life can be broken into three sections of forty years.

He spent the first forty years of his life in Egypt preparing to carry out God’s plan to lead Israel out of Egyptian captivity. Because he was raised in the Egyptian palace by the daughter of Pharaoh, Moses was trained in all the skills of Egyptian leadership.

He spent the next forty years fleeing for refuge in the wilderness; it’s here that he learned the skills of desert dwelling at the feet of his father-in-law, Jethro. After being called by God to deliver Israel out of Egypt, Moses spent another forty years using his skills of leadership to lead the nation of Israel and lead them to the promised land.

OUTLINE

The sufferings of Israel. Exodus 1:8-7:7

A manifestation of God’s providential guidance of Israel, illustrated by the ten plagues. Exodus 7:8-13:16

The guiding of the people of Sinai. Exodus 13:17-18:27

The making of the covenant at Sinai, together with the reception of the Ten Commandments. Exodus 19:1-24:18
 Directions for the building of the tabernacle. Exodus 24:18-31:18
 The renewing of the covenant after the sinful actions of the Israelites in connection with the making of the golden calf. Exodus 32:1-35:3
 The actual building and dedication of the tabernacle of the Lord. Exodus 35:4-40:38

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In Exodus 1-7, we are introduced to Moses and the Israelites in bondage in Egypt. This setting is approximately 400 years after Joseph and his family were living in Goshen at the end of Genesis. God protects baby Moses and spares his life, as Moses is adopted by Pharaoh's daughter and is raised as an Egyptian. God calls Moses with a special revelation, through a burning bush, to release His people from slavery in Egypt. Moses obeys and, with his brother Aaron, confronts Pharaoh to let God's people go free, but Pharaoh ignores the warning.

THE ISRAELITES OPPRESSED

‘These are the names of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt with Jacob, each with his family: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah; Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin; Dan and Naphtali; Gad and Asher. The descendants of Jacob numbered seventy in all; Joseph was already in Egypt. Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, but the Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers, and became so numerous that the land was filled with them.’ Exodus 1:1-7

The book begins by informing us about the twelve sons of Israel, and notice that God knows His people, He knows each of them by name, Exodus 1:1-4 / Exodus 6:14-26 / Genesis 35:23-26 / Genesis 46:8-26 / Matthew 10:29-31. Coffman, in his commentary, says the following regarding the number ‘seventy’, Exodus 1:5. ‘All of the alleged difficulties regarding ‘the seventy,’ and Stephen’s ‘seventy-five’, Acts 7:14, disappear altogether when it is seen as evident that different frames of calculation were used, some included the family of Joseph, who were already in Egypt, and some evidently included children of Joseph born after Ephraim and Manasseh, some included wives of sons, or wives of grandsons, or counted certain deceased ones, or excluded them etc. All Biblical references to this event are absolutely correct. The Septuagint reference to ‘seventy-five’ includes five of Joseph’s posterity not included in those who ‘went down into Egypt with Jacob.’ Also, the number ‘seventy’ is symbolic, and is designed to show the completeness of the Hebrew migration to Egypt.’ Joseph and all those who lived in his generation, including his brothers, had died, Exodus 1:6, and so we’re dealing with a new generation of Israelites. This new generation of Israelites multiplied greatly in number to such an extent that they filled the land, Exodus 1:7. This was the fulfilment of God’s promise to Abraham concerning his descendants, Genesis 12:2 / Genesis 15:5 / Genesis 17:1-8. When we get to the time of the actual exodus from Egypt, there are 600,000 men in Israel, Exodus 12:37 / Numbers 2:32, which doesn’t include the women and children. Some commentators suggest there would have been around three million Israelites who left Egypt.

The KJV tells us that they were also ‘mighty’, Exodus 1:7. This implies that they had become very strong as a people, Deuteronomy 26:5. If Israel had become strong and there were so many of them as to fill the land, we can begin to understand how they would become a threat to Pharaoh.

‘Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt. “Look,” he said to his people, “the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them, or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us, and leave the country.” So, they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labour, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so, the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with harsh labour in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labour, the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly.’ Exodus 1:8-14

Kaiser Jr, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The title ‘Pharaoh’ means ‘great house.’ It originally designated the Egyptian king’s residence and household. It became a title for the king himself for the first time in the eighteenth dynasty.’

This new king of Egypt didn’t know Joseph; he didn’t know what Joseph did for Egypt in the past, Exodus 1:8. This is probably because the Egyptians wouldn’t have written in their records that a foreigner helped them in times of trouble. If this new king knew Joseph and his brothers, he would have realised that Israel wasn’t warriors, they were simply shepherds, who were no threat to anyone.

However, because there were so many Israelites, he instantly saw a threat; he was greatly intimidated by them and moved to try to oppress them, Exodus 1:9-10. Pharaoh is so intimidated by Israel that he has two cities built, ‘Pithom and Rameses’, which were cities for storing provisions, Exodus 1:11.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This plan remained in effect for some time. It probably took years to build the cities of Pithom and Raamses (Ramses, Rameses), which the Egyptians used to store goods, 1 Kings 9:19 / 2 Chronicles 8:6 / 2 Chronicles 17:12.’ Make no mistake about it, these ‘slave masters’, Exodus 1:11, were cruel, evil men who watched over the workers, making sure everyone worked hard for the Egyptians. What’s interesting here is that the more Israel was oppressed, the stronger they became and the more they began to grow, Exodus 1:12.

Under normal circumstances when people are oppressed, they don’t get stronger, they don’t grow in numbers, but here Israel does. The Egyptians saw this, and they came to ‘dread’ the Israelites because of it, Exodus 1:12. It appears that the Israelites understood that God was working through them, but the Egyptians saw them as a threat to their national security.

The Egyptian slave masters made their lives bitter with harsh labour in brick and mortar, and with all kinds of work in the fields, they worked them ruthlessly, Exodus 1:13-14.

Meyer, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The brick was the staple of Egyptian architecture, as only the temples and palaces were constructed of stone.’

‘The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiprah and Puah, “When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live.” The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, “Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?” The midwives answered Pharaoh, “Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive.” So, God was kind to the midwives, and the people increased and became even more numerous. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own. Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: “Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.” Exodus 1:15-22

As it is with most cruel dictatorships, when they're trying to oppress a large number of people, if forced labour doesn't work, and doesn't stop them from getting stronger and growing numerically, then they go to the next level of cruelty, which is genocide of the infants.

Pharaoh speaks with the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, [Exodus 1:15](#), and decides if he lets all the female babies live but kills all the male babies, [Exodus 1:16](#), then he could ultimately bring an end to the whole nation of Israel. If they kill all the Israelite males, this would force the next generation of Israelite women to intermarry with the Egyptian men.

Cassuto, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They were to kill them, of course, secretly, in such a way that the parents and relatives would be unaware of the crime and would think that the infant had died of natural causes either before or during birth.’

Pharaoh planned to get the Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah to kill every male child, but Shiphrah and Puah being Hebrew, feared God more than they feared Pharaoh, [Exodus 1:17](#) / [Matthew 10:28](#).

Pharaoh summons Shiphrah and Puah and asks why they didn't obey him in allowing the boys to live, [Exodus 1:18](#), they inform him that Hebrew women are ‘vigorous’, they give birth to their children before they arrive, [Exodus 1:19](#). This would obviously give the parents time to hide their baby boys before their murderers arrive to kill them.

Kaiser, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Even though these women lied to Pharaoh (which the Bible, as is often the case, does not stop to specifically condemn at this point), they are praised for their outright refusal to take infant lives.’

Because Shiphrah and Puah feared God, the midwives were blessed by God with families of their own, [Exodus 1:20-21](#) / [2 Samuel 7:11](#). It's clear that Pharaoh has become desperate, and so he commands that every Hebrew male baby be thrown into the Nile so that they will drown, [Exodus 1:22](#).

Because God had caused the Israelites to continue to increase in number, these are desperate measures, taken by a desperate man because he saw Israel as a great threat to his empire, [Matthew 2:16-18](#).

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

‘Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him. Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. “This is one of the Hebrew babies,” she said. Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, “Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?” “Yes, go,” she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, “Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you.” So the woman took the baby and nursed him. When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, “I drew him out of the water.” Exodus 2:1-10

THE BIRTH OF MOSES

Miriam was born into this priestly family of Levi, [Exodus 2:4](#) / [Numbers 26:59](#). Aaron, who was Moses' brother, was born about three years before Moses, [Exodus 6:20](#) / [Numbers 26:59](#). Moses was a 'fine child', [Exodus 2:2](#), in other words, he was a beautiful child and his parents, Amram and Jochebed had great faith in God, [Hebrews 11:23-26](#). What they did here by faith actually saved the life of their baby son, Moses, [Hebrews 11:23](#). After three months, she couldn't hide the baby anymore, and so she got a papyrus basket and coated it with tar and pitch, [Exodus 2:2-3](#). Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'The same Hebrew word translated 'wicker basket' in this verse (tehvah) reads 'ark' or 'boat' in English translations of [Genesis 6:14](#). As Noah's ark was God's instrument for preserving one saviour of the human race, Moses' ark proved to be His means of preserving another saviour of the Israelites.'

There's no doubt that Moses' mother trusted that God would take care of her son. This is seen in the fact that she places Moses in a basket along the bank of the river Nile, [Exodus 2:3](#), where she knew that the daughter of Pharaoh would find him.

Hannah, in his commentary, says the following.

'Ironically, Jochebed, putting her son into the Nile, was in one sense obeying the Pharaoh's edict to 'throw' baby boys into the river! [Exodus 1:22](#).'

Notice also that she placed Miriam in a place where she would also be found, [Exodus 2:4](#). Pharaoh's daughter goes down to the Nile to bathe, while her attendants walk along the riverbank.

She sees the basket among the reeds and sends her female slave to get it, [Exodus 2:5](#). When she opens the basket, she sees there is a baby inside, and when the baby cried, she felt sorry for him and noticed that he is one of the Hebrew babies, [Exodus 2:6](#).

Miriam then asks Pharaoh's daughter if she could go and get a Hebrew woman to nurse the baby for her, [Exodus 2:7](#).

To which Pharaoh's daughter says yes, and so the girl went and got the baby's mother, Jochebed, [Exodus 2:8](#).

When Pharaoh's daughter found Moses, she felt sorry for him and took him under her care. Moses' mother, Jochebed, weaned her son until he was probably around three or four years of age, [Exodus 2:9](#), after which he became Pharaoh's son, [Exodus 2:10](#) / [Acts 7:21-22](#).

Notice that it was Jochebed who was allowed to name her own son, and so, she named him 'Moses', [Exodus 2:10](#).

The Egyptians called water 'Mo', and those who are rescued from water were called 'Uses'. Hence, the name Moses means, 'I drew him out of the water', [Exodus 2:10](#).

Youngblood, in his commentary, says the following.

'The phrase 'drew him out', [Exodus 2:10](#), is a Hebrew pun on the name, emphasising the baby's rescue from the waters of the Nile.'

It's clearly seen that God is at work in all of this. It's no accident that Moses was a fine child; it's no accident that his mother placed him in a basket in the Nile. It's no accident that Miriam stood at a distance; it's no accident that Pharaoh's daughter just happened to be bathing there. It's no accident that Moses' mother ended up weaning her son while getting paid for it.

But more importantly, it's no accident that within Pharaoh's own household, the very one who was being taught with the wisdom of the Egyptians, [Acts 7:22](#), but eventually, He was to lead God's people out of the Egyptian bondage.

MOSES FLEES TO MIDIAN

‘One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labour. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Looking this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. The next day, he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, “Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?” The man said, “Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid and thought, “What I did must have become known.” When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well.’ Exodus 2:11-15

Notice that ‘one day’, after Moses had grown up, he saw an Egyptian beating up a fellow Hebrew, Exodus 2:11. Here, Moses would be forty years old, Acts 7:23. We get the impression that on this day, something different was happening within Moses.

I’m sure this wasn’t the first time he watched his people labouring under the Egyptians, and I’m sure this wasn’t the first time he saw an Egyptian beating up on a Hebrew, but this ‘one day’ was different, Hebrews 11:24-26. Moses already knew the difference between Egyptians and Hebrews because his mother had taught him. He would know the value of human life and that all men are equal in the eyes of God.

But this ‘one day’, when he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, he was deeply moved to such an extent that he committed murder, Exodus 2:12. He obviously thought that nobody saw him, and so he buried the body in the sand, Exodus 2:12.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Here Moses rescued an Israelite from an Egyptian who was beating him, but later he rescued all the Israelites from the Egyptians who were oppressing them, Exodus 3:10.’

Something is happening within Moses; he now sees things differently from how he saw them before, and he’s troubled over things he’s witnessed before. The next day, when he witnesses two Hebrews fighting, he tries to step in, but the one who was in the wrong says, ‘Who made you ruler and judge over us?’ Exodus 2:13-14 / Acts 7:27. It’s clear that the time for Israel to be delivered from Egypt by the hands of Moses wasn’t now.

Notice also the one who was wrong also said, ‘Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?’ Exodus 2:14. Can you imagine the gulp of air that Moses must have taken! Remember, he killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand because he thought no one was around, Exodus 2:12.

When word of what Moses did got back to Pharaoh, Pharaoh sought to kill him and so Moses flees for his life to Midian, Exodus 2:15, where he would spend the next forty years of his life, Acts 7:30 / Hebrews 11:24-26.

‘Now a priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father’s flock. Some shepherds came along and drove them away, but Moses got up and came to their rescue and watered their flock. When the girls returned to Reuel, their father, he asked them, “Why have you returned so early today?” They answered, “An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds. He even drew water for us and watered the flock.” “And where is he?” Reuel asked his daughters. “Why did you leave him? Invite him to have something to eat.” Moses agreed to stay with the man, who gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage. Zipporah gave birth to a son, and Moses named him Gershom, saying, “I have become a foreigner in a foreign land.” Exodus 2:16-22

The Midianites were related to the Hebrews, Genesis 25:1-4, and they worshipped the one true God, which was good news for Moses. They lived around Mount Sinai, which is also called Horeb, Exodus 3:1.

It’s important to note that God didn’t only work among the Israelites, He also worked among all people. Here, He’s working through priests among the Gentiles throughout the world at this time, Hebrews 1:1-2.

The priest of Midian here was Reuel, Exodus 2:16 / Numbers 10:29, also known as Jethro, Exodus 3:1 / Exodus 4:18. The name Reuel means ‘friend of God’ and the name Jethro means ‘excellency’.

It's very possible that the name Jethro is actually a title and not his actual name. He had seven daughters, [Exodus 2:16](#), whom Moses defended from some shepherds in order that their herds be watered, [Exodus 2:17](#).

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Moses provided water for Jethro’s daughters and their sheep in the wilderness, [Exodus 2:16-17](#). Later, he provided water for God’s people and their flocks in the wilderness, [Exodus 17:6](#) / [Numbers 20:7-11](#). This was the third time Moses sought to deliver others from harm, [Exodus 2:17](#) / [Exodus 2:12-13](#).’

Notice that when the girls go back to their father to report what had happened, they describe Moses as an Egyptian, [Exodus 2:18-19](#). This may simply be because of the clothing he was wearing or his accent. Reuel asks his daughters where this Egyptian is, why they left him there, and then he tells them to invite him for dinner, [Exodus 2:20](#).

As a result of Moses’ kindness to Reuel’s daughters, Moses has gone from being a fugitive on the run to becoming a husband, having a wife named Zipporah and becoming a father, having a son named Gershom, whose name means Banishment, [Exodus 2:21-22](#).

‘During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning, and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.’ Exodus 2:23-

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Over a period of time, the king of Egypt died, and Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out to God for deliverance, [Exodus 2:23](#). It appears that things back in Egypt were just getting worse for the Israelites. In order to keep the Hebrews in subjection, the Egyptians subjugated them to harsh labour.

God heard their groaning, and He remembers the covenant He had with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, [Exodus 2:24](#) / [Genesis 12:1-3](#) / [Genesis 21:12](#) / [Genesis 26:3-4](#) / [Genesis 28:14-15](#).

This doesn’t mean that God had forgotten at some point; these words express in human terms God’s determination to relieve the suffering of Israel and to deliver them from their shameful and oppressive bondage.

It was because of this covenant that God was going to deliver Israel from the hands of the Egyptians. God was watching what was happening to His people, and He is concerned about them, [Exodus 2:25](#) / [Exodus 3:7-9](#).

When Israel first arrived in Egypt, they were shepherds and tent dwellers, but now they have learned how to build towns and cities. God is preparing them to become a nation that will live in the promised land.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

‘Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There, the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire, it did not burn up. So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.” When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am.” “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.’ Exodus 3:1-6

MOSES AND THE BURNING BUSH

Moses was tending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God, [Exodus 3:1](#). This is the same place where he would lead Israel to receive the ten commandments, [Exodus 20:1-26](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Jethro.

‘This is surprising in view of the fact that Reuel appeared in [Exodus 2:18](#), both as the priest of Midian, and as father-in-law of Moses. However, forty years had intervened, and Jethro, probably the son of Reuel, had inherited the office, as was the custom. This would have meant that Jethro was brother-in-law to Moses; the same word in Hebrew meant either. The word here rendered father-in-law is used of almost any relation by marriage.’

When Moses fled from Egypt he would be forty years of age, [Acts 7:23](#), and as he stood before the angel of the Lord at the burning bush, he would be eighty years of age, [Acts 7:30](#).

Remember Israel’s affliction in Egypt had been predicted, [Genesis 15:13](#), and it was at this time when the Lord appeared to Moses that their suffering in Egypt was coming to an end.

As Moses was tending his father-in-law’s flock, he took them to Horeb, [Exodus 3:1](#), which is Mount Sinai, [Exodus 20:1-26](#). It’s then that an angel of the Lord appeared to Him in flames of fire within a bush, [Exodus 3:2](#) / [Exodus 3:4](#) / [Exodus 3:6-7](#).

Who is this angel of the Lord? This is a Christophany, which suggests that this is a preincarnate appearance of Christ, [Genesis 12:7](#). Please note that it is the angel of the LORD, the Christ, who is called God and LORD throughout this chapter and the next, who speaks, [Exodus 4:1-16](#).

Haynes Jr, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A study of these passages reveals that the Angel of the Lord appeared in human form, [Genesis 18:2](#) / [Genesis 22:1-18](#) / [Hebrews 13:2](#), and performed normal human functions, [Genesis 32:24](#) / [Numbers 22:23](#) / [Numbers 22:31](#), yet he was an awe-inspiring figure, [Genesis 32:30](#) / [Judges 6:22](#) / [Judges 13:22](#), exhibiting divine attributes and prerogatives including predicting the future, [Genesis 16:10-12](#), forgiving sin, [Exodus 23:21](#), and receiving worship, [Exodus 3:5](#) / [Judges 13:9-20](#).’

The burning bush caught Moses’ attention as he saw that though the bush was on fire, it did not burn up, [Exodus 3:2](#). This was no ordinary occurrence, a ‘strange sight’, [Exodus 3:3](#).

This was a divinely created aberration, not just a case of spontaneous combustion, or light shining through the branches. It was designed to grab Moses’ attention, so God could speak, as all miracles were not an end in themselves, but pointed to the Word, [Mark 16:20](#).

Why a burning bush? Some commentators suggest that it was representative of Israel’s oppression and trial. God spoke from the bush; in other words, He was with them in their affliction.

If God could keep a bush from being consumed, He also could keep His people, even though they were going through the fire, from being consumed. Moses was learning that this was all about God, not Moses.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The fire also probably symbolised the presence of God dwelling among His people, [Genesis 15:17](#) / [Exodus 19:18](#) / [Exodus 40:38](#). God was with His people in their affliction, [Deuteronomy 31:6](#) / [Joshua 1:5](#) / [Daniel 3:25](#) / [Hebrews 13:5](#).’

Before Moses can reveal God's plan to Israel and Egypt, he must understand who God is. Our faith is rooted in our understanding of God's identity. The phenomenon of the bush wasn't the true glory being revealed; God was there. He appeared in the presence of an angel and spoke from the bush, Exodus 3:4.

Notice God said, 'Moses, Moses', Exodus 3:4, when a name is mentioned twice, it always implies that what is about to be said is vitally important, 1 Samuel 3:10 / Acts 9:4.

A HOLY GOD

The angel of the LORD's first command to Moses is for him to stay back and remove his sandals, Exodus 3:5. He declares that the ground is 'holy ground', Exodus 3:5. This is the first occurrence of the word 'holy' in the Bible. As we remember the word, 'qodesh' means sacred, dedicated, or hallowed. Throughout the Old Testament, it presents the idea of separation by God for His purposes. This includes purity as well, especially in the New Testament.

There was nothing inherently 'holy' about this piece of ground, but God was there, and God is inherently holy or transcendent. He cannot be approached except at His direction and with His provision. God's holiness demands fear, 'reverence' and obedience.

God is holy, and unclean sandals cannot be stomped in and out of His presence, Exodus 3:5. God was telling Moses, 'This is my house, so take off your dirty shoes before you come any farther.'

For the priests, they understood that they had to wash their hands and feet before they walked into the holy place, Exodus 30:18-21. In other words, they couldn't pass farther or serve in the tabernacle until they washed their feet and washed them in the golden laver.

When Jesus washed the disciples' feet, He was preparing them for a deeper walk, He was preparing them for the Upper Room experience, He was preparing them for service, John 13:1-15. We know that Joshua is also told to take off his shoes.

In this incident, the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.' And Joshua did so, Joshua 5:15. Putting off the shoe was a token of respect and submission. There is always the danger that we can be too casual in our approach to God. God's holiness demands fear, reverence, and obedience, 1 Peter 1:15-16. When we talk about the holiness of God, we're talking about His separateness. That is, God is set apart from this world; He is set apart from the evil acts of a sinful people.

As God's people, living on this side of the cross, we have been cleansed from our sin; the sacrifice of Jesus has made us clean in the sight of God. We have been made holy through Jesus.

So, because we have been made holy, we need to act like we're holy. We're to be set apart from the world, we're to stop acting like sinful, unsaved people, we're to hate sin and steer clear of sinful situations, and we're to honour God with our every breath and our every thought. That's what it means to be holy; being holy means being set apart for God.

Notice it is the angel of the LORD says, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, Exodus 3:6. These names of the patriarchs are again repeated in Exodus 3:15, implying that God is the God of the living, and also implying the Deity of Christ, Matthew 22:32.

Moses' attitude went from curiosity to fear, Exodus 3:6. Those who come to recognise God's holiness are driven to their knees with the clear perception of their own un-holiness.

When Isaiah looked into the throne room of heaven, he saw angels praising God, [Isaiah 6:3-5](#). The holiness of God is centre stage at Sinai and in the giving of the law, but it also would play a major role in the Exodus. God's uniqueness would be clearly demonstrated in the coming plagues, and Israel would be called upon to fear and obey Him.

'The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain." Exodus 3:7-12

God sees and hears everything which is happening in the world, [Exodus 3:7](#). It's now time for God to begin the process of freeing Israel from Egyptian bondage; it's time for Israel to leave and head toward the promised land, [Exodus 3:7-8](#).

This land was good, spacious, and flowing with milk and honey, [Exodus 3:8](#) / [Exodus 3:17](#) / [Genesis 15:16-21](#). In other words, the land itself would supply all of Israel's needs.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the nations mentioned in [Exodus 3:8](#).

1. The word 'Canaanite' applied to all of these related groups, and also to one of the specific divisions. They were in Canaan 1900 years B.C.
2. The Hittites came much later during the era of 1800-1450 B.C. [Genesis 23:10](#).
3. The Amorites were the most numerous of these nations, having been in the area from 2300 B.C. [Numbers 21:26](#).
4. The Perizzites are not identifiable.
5. The Hivites dwelt around Shechem, Gibeon, and the region about 5 miles northwest of Jerusalem. [Joshua 9:3-7](#) / [Joshua 11:19](#) / [Genesis 34:2](#). They were in Canaan by 2000 B.C.
6. The Jebusites occupied Jerusalem. [Judges 1:21](#) / [2 Samuel 5:6](#) / [Joshua 15:63](#).
7. The Girgashites, [Joshua 24:11](#) / [Deuteronomy 7:1](#), are obscure.

God wastes no time in telling Moses that he is the one who is to go to Pharaoh and bring His people out of Egypt, [Exodus 3:9-10](#).

Remember, Moses had fled from Egypt because he killed an Egyptian, [Exodus 2:15](#), and so Moses, understandably, isn't up for the task. The Egyptians were a very powerful nation that ruled the world at this time. Moses didn't want the task of bringing his people out of Egypt, and so he gave God excuse after excuse.

1. "Who am I, that I should go?" [Exodus 3:11](#).
2. "What shall I say when they ask, 'What is his (God's) name?'" [Exodus 3:13](#).
3. "They will not believe." [Exodus 4:1](#).
4. "I am not eloquent". [Exodus 4:10](#).
5. "Send someone else." [Exodus 4:13](#).

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'Moses had become genuinely humble during his years as a mere shepherd in Midian, [Exodus 3:11](#). Earlier, an Israelite had asked Moses, 'Who made you a prince or a judge over us?' [Exodus 2:14](#). Now Moses asked the same thing of God: 'Who am I that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?'

When we think about Moses' life so far, he was raised in Pharaoh's household and given a high position of authority, but these last few years he has become a humble shepherd, [Exodus 3:1](#).

He doesn't see himself as a leader but God does and the Moses we read about here is certainly not the same Moses who would lead God's people out of Egypt. God doesn't always just look at who were are at the moment, but He looks at what we can become when we obey His commands and trust Him to lead us.

Like most of us, Moses was simply trusting in his own abilities, rather than trusting in God's abilities. Hence, why God tells him, 'I will be with you,' [Exodus 3:12](#) / [Matthew 28:20](#). In other words, it was going to be God who would free His people, but He was going to use Moses to do just that.

Moses was to be given a sign by God, [Exodus 3:12](#) / [Exodus 4:2-9](#), and that sign would be seen in the fact that when Israel eventually gets to Mount Sinai and starts worshipping God, [Exodus 20:1-26](#), then Moses would come to understand that Israel's deliverance was all God's doing, [Exodus 3:12](#).

'Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.'

"This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation. "Go, assemble the elders of Israel, and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt. And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—a land flowing with milk and honey.' "The elders of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God.' But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him. So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go. "And I will make the Egyptians favourably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave, you will not go empty-handed. Every woman is to ask her neighbour and any woman living in her house for articles of silver and gold and for clothing, which you will put on your sons and daughters. And so you will plunder the Egyptians." Exodus 3:13-22

Interestingly, Moses asks for a name to tell his people who sent him in the first place, [Exodus 3:13](#). I guess, being raised in Egypt surrounded by hundreds of gods who all have different names, this would make sense.

Childs, in his commentary, says the following.

'The question contains both a request for information and an explanation of its significance. There are two aspects of one question. Clearly, the people want to know more about God's intention. By requesting his name, they seek to learn about his new relationship with them. Formerly, he related to them as the God of the Fathers. What will he be to Israel now?'

God tells Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM,' 'I AM has sent me to you,' [Exodus 3:14](#).

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF 'I AM'

'I AM EHYEH' first singular present of TO BE. HAYAH denotes that God is personal, eternal, self-existent, i.e., an absolute being. It means 1. Eternal. [Psalm 135:13](#). 2. Self-existent. [Psalm 88:6-7](#).

Then God, having revealed to Moses some essential aspects of His, that is God's personality, informs Moses of the name by which He, that is God, wants to be known.

God also said to Moses, 'Say this to the people of Israel, 'YHWH, the God of your fathers, has sent me to you. This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations,' [Exodus 3:15](#) / [Exodus 3:5](#) / [Genesis 4:26](#) / [Genesis 6:3](#) / [Psalm 135:13](#).

The plural in the name YHWH, us and our, Genesis 1:26, can, in my opinion, be regarded as an indication of the plurality of God's nature and character, of which the Son and the Holy Spirit are part.

Three distinct persons who can act individually, though never in disharmony and who are united in the godhead as one God. The Spirit was there at creation, Genesis 1:2.

Through Jesus all came into being is stated in John 1:1-3. It was through Jesus, i.e. God Himself incarnate, that redemption would be wrought, John 1:1-3 / John 1:18.

The name YHWH, Exodus 3:15, meaning 'the Becoming One', is the 'redemptive' name of God and refers to the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, who is in the bosom of the 'Father' God, Jesus, who is part of the Godhead.

When Jesus made Himself equal with God, He was merely speaking the truth and had indeed every right to utter the words, 'I AM' in such a special way. The Jews understood perfectly well what was alluded to by the term 'I AM' used by Jesus, John 5:18 / Leviticus 24:16.

Remember, the Bible does not use names for God in the same way as we use names today. God does not have a name as such, but He uses certain words to describe His character or nature.

For example, the word El-Shaddai describes His nature as the 'all-sufficient One', the 'all-powerful One'. The word Adonia describes His character as Lord, Master, the One with all authority. The word Yahweh describes His nature as the everlasting, self-existing One.

And so, when God speaks to Moses, He is not giving Moses a name as we understand it. But He is telling Moses to tell His people that Yahweh, 'I AM THAT I AM', the self-existing One, has sent you, Exodus 3:15. God is basically saying to Moses I do not need a name, but I will give you one to tell My people.

Durham, in his commentary, says the following.

'The answer Moses receives is not, by any stretch of the imagination, a name. It is an assertion of authority, a confession of an essential reality, and thus an entirely appropriate response to the question Moses poses.'

Now remember the Israelites have been in captivity in Egypt for 400 years and so God goes on to say, just in case my people have forgotten who 'I AM', tell them 'The LORD, (The One with all authority), the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has sent me to you, Exodus 3:15.

Now let's fast forward a couple of thousand years. We know that the Gospel according to John focuses a lot on Jesus being the Son of God, which shows the Deity of Christ.

But have you ever wondered why all the 'I AM' claims of Jesus are found in John's Gospel? The miracles were signs of Jesus, which were done to bring about faith in Him, John 20:30-31.

John never uses the word miracle in his Gospel, but he does use the word sign regularly. And there are sixteen signs recorded in John's Gospel, eight are things which Jesus did, and eight were things which Jesus said, John 6:35 / John 8:12 / John 8:58 / John 10:9 / John 10:11 / John 11:25 / John 14:6 / John 15:1.

John is basically saying that the 'I AM' claims of Jesus are signs, selected from many other signs. And he says these signs are selected with a purpose in mind, and that purpose is that you believe that Jesus Christ is who He claimed to be.

And so just as 'I AM' is God's own identification of Himself in Exodus 3:14 to Moses, remembering that strictly speaking, it is not a name, but a declaration of His Nature, Revelation 1:8.

When we come to the 'I AM' claims of Jesus, we need to remember that Jesus was not giving Himself a Name or a title but was asserting His Deity. In other words, every 'I AM' reveals some aspect of His nature and purpose, John 6:35 / John 8:12 / John 8:58 / John 10:9 / John 10:11 / John 11:25 / John 14:6 / John 15:5.

God goes on to tell Moses exactly what would happen when he returned to Pharaoh. Beginning with Pharaoh's refusal to let His people go, through all the plagues and then to their deliverance.

Moses is to assemble the elders of Israel, Exodus 3:16. which is the first mention of elders in Israel. Moses is to tell them 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, appeared to him and Moses is to tell them that God has been watching over them and sees what is happening to them in Egypt, Exodus 3:16.

Moses is to tell God's people that God has promised to bring them up out of Egypt and take them into the land, a land flowing with milk and honey, Exodus 3:17. God reassures Moses that the elders will listen to him, and they should go to Pharaoh and tell him that the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God, Exodus 3:18.

Ellison, in his commentary, says the following.

'The sequel shows that there was no element of deceit in the request for 'a three days' journey into the wilderness,' i.e., right out of contact with the Egyptian frontier guards. Pharaoh knew perfectly well that this implied no return; indeed, since Israel was a tolerated alien people, he would have no claim on their return once they had left his territory.'

The LORD knows the hearts of everyone, and Pharaoh is no exception. He knows that Pharaoh won't let His people go unless a mighty hand compels him, Exodus 3:19.

So God is going to stretch out His hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that He will perform among them, and after that, he will let His people go, Exodus 3:20.

Notice also that God says that Israel will not leave Egypt empty-handed; they will plunder Egypt, Exodus 3:21-22.

This is significant because all these articles of gold, silver and clothing will be used many years later in the building of the tabernacle, Exodus 12:35-36.

CHAPTER 4

'Moses answered, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The LORD did not appear to you?'" Then the LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" "A staff," he replied. The LORD said, "Throw it on the ground."

Moses threw it on the ground, and it became a snake, and he ran from it. Then the LORD said to him, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail." So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake, and it turned back into a staff in his hand. "This," said the LORD, "is so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has appeared to you." Then the LORD said, "Put your hand inside your cloak." So Moses put his hand into his cloak, and when he took it out, the skin was leprous—it had become as white as snow. "Now put it back into your cloak," he said. So Moses put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored, like the rest of his flesh. Then the LORD said, "If they do not believe you or pay attention to the first sign, they may believe the second. But if they do not believe these two signs or listen to you, take some water from the Nile, and pour it on the dry ground. The water you take from the river will become blood on the ground." Exodus 4:1-9

SIGNS FOR MOSES

Remember it is the angel of the Lord, the Christ, who is called God and LORD throughout the previous chapter and in this chapter, who speaks, Exodus 4:1-16.

Haynes Jr, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A study of these passages reveals that the Angel of the Lord appeared in human form, Genesis 18:2 / Genesis 22:1-18 / Hebrews 13:2, and performed normal human functions, Genesis 32:24 / Numbers 22:23 / Numbers 22:31, yet he was an awe-inspiring figure, Genesis 32:30 / Judges 6:22 / Judges 13:22, exhibiting divine attributes and prerogatives including predicting the future, Genesis 16:10-12, forgiving sin, Exodus 23:21, and receiving worship, Exodus 3:5 / Judges 13:9-20.’

Moses didn’t want the task of bringing his people out of Egypt, and so he gave God excuse after excuse.

1. “Who am I, that I should go?” Exodus 3:11.
2. “What shall I say when they ask, ‘What is his (God’s) name?’” Exodus 3:13.
3. “They will not believe.” Exodus 4:1.
4. “I am not eloquent”. Exodus 4:10.
5. “Send someone else.” Exodus 4:13.

Moses’ lack of leadership skills is really beginning to show, and understandably, he knew that his fellow Hebrews would really struggle to accept that he was now representing the one true God of Israel. The good news is that God totally understands, and so to give Moses some assurance, God is going to give him three signs.

THE STAFF

Because Moses was a shepherd, he would have a staff with him, Exodus 4:2 / Exodus 3:1, and so, the staff would represent the leadership, care, and protection of a shepherd.

In other words, under God’s protection, Moses would lead, care for, and protect God’s people. When the staff became a snake, notice ‘he ran from it’, Exodus 4:3, this indicates that it was probably a poisonous snake, although we’re not told which kind of snake it was.

There’s no doubt that when God asked him to ‘take it by the tail’, Exodus 4:4, this was a real test of faith for Moses. It’s well documented that if you want to pick up a poisonous snake, you grab it by the head to avoid being bitten. Here, God was strengthening the faith of Moses. The purpose of this miracle is told by God, that they, that is, His people, might believe, Exodus 4:5. Later in Exodus 7:8-13, we read that Aaron’s rod turned into a snake, and Pharaoh’s magicians did the same thing, but Aaron’s snake swallowed up the magicians’ snakes.

We can be misled by the word ‘snake’ in Exodus 7:8-10, because the Hebrew word used is ‘tanniyn’, which suggests some kind of marine or land monster. This is a different word which was used when Moses’ staff was turned into a snake, Exodus 4:3.

THE LEPROSY HAND

God gave Moses the second sign, which resulted in Moses’ hand becoming leprous, Exodus 4:6. Notice his hand became ‘white as snow’, Exodus 4:6; this is the worst kind of leprosy.

It appears that God is signifying that He would take care of their physical needs, Exodus 4:7. God again, with this sign, was strengthening Moses’ faith, Hebrews 11:24-29.

Notice that the angel of the LORD says, ‘if they do not believe you or pay attention to the first sign, they may believe the second’, Exodus 4:8. This tells us that miracles alone cannot actually give faith, John 6:14 / John 6:30 / John 12:37.

Fields, in his commentary, says the following.

‘People whose faith depends upon seeing signs often require a steady stream of miracles, or they forsake Christ, John 6:14 / John 6:30.’

THE BLOOD

The third and final sign for God’s people would be seen in the water of the river Nile, which would turn into blood, Exodus 4:9. The changing of the waters of the Nile into blood was the first of the ten plagues, Exodus 7:14-25. The blood represents the struggle Israel would have in being delivered; God would bring judgment upon the Egyptians. These three signs were given to Moses to prove that he was a genuine messenger of God.

‘Moses said to the LORD, “Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.” The LORD said to him, “Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.” But Moses said, “Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else.” Then the LORD’s anger burned against Moses, and he said, “What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and he will be glad to see you. You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him. But take this staff in your hand so you can perform the signs with it.” Exodus 4:10-17

After being given assurance from God, Moses was still very reluctant to take on the mission God had for him, Exodus 4:10. He asks for God’s pardon on two occasions, Exodus 4:13. Asking for pardon doesn’t occur too many times within the Scriptures, Genesis 43:20 / Genesis 44:18 / Numbers 12:11 / Joshua 7:8.

It appears that Moses is still focused on his own abilities. Here, he gives the excuse that he isn’t a very good speaker, Exodus 4:10, that is, he has a speech problem. Some commentators believe he had a speech impediment, such as a stammer, Exodus 32:11-13, but we simply don’t know.

God appears to have excused Moses for all his other excuses but here, He doesn’t accept Moses’ excuse, instead, God rebukes him by reminding him of who He is and what He has done, Exodus 4:11.

I guess we need to ask the question, does God purposely make some people to be mute, deaf, or blind, and others with all such abilities? Exodus 4:11. In some instances, this is surely true, as in John 9:1-3.

Fields, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God is not responsible for all the cases of blindness and deafness. Many human handicaps are clearly the result of sin and or the violation, whether knowingly or not, of God’s eternal laws. The great lesson here is that one should not depreciate or despise the gifts which God has given, nor refuse to use those gifts which men may deem less perfect. Even the most gifted can find no grounds for pride and egotism, because, as Paul stated, ‘what hast thou that thou hast not received?’ 1 Corinthians 4:7. The answer to that question, of course, is nothing!’

God then commands Moses to ‘go’, and He will help him speak, Exodus 4:13 / Matthew 10:19.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The very greatest importance attaches to this, because, just as the inspiration of the holy apostles stemmed from this very promise, so also must it be understood that the words of Moses are, by the same promise, the Word of God. Jesus understood this and emphasised it, speaking of the Pentateuch in one breath as the word of Moses, Exodus 3:6 / Matthew 12:26, and in the next breath as the Word of God, Exodus 3:6 / Matthew 22:31-32!’

Moses still refused to take up the mission and asked God to send someone else, **Exodus 4:13**, and it's clear that God was becoming really angry with him. Notice that it was God who mentioned Aaron, Moses' brother, but he also called him a Levite, **Exodus 4:14**.

It appears that God ordained that the priesthood should reside not in Moses but in Aaron and the Levites. As always, God was looking into the future. He knew that Aaron was a good speaker, and He knew Aaron was on his way to meet Moses, **Exodus 4:27**. God was going to equip them in speech and actions in order for them to do the mission ahead, **Exodus 4:15-16**.

God never asks us to do something He hasn't already equipped us to do, and so Moses is told to take the staff with which he will show the Israelites the signs that He is representing the one true God, the God of their fathers, **Exodus 4:17**.

MOSES RETURNS TO EGYPT

'Then Moses went back to Jethro, his father-in-law and said to him, "Let me return to my own people in Egypt to see if any of them are still alive." Jethro said, "Go, and I wish you well." Now the LORD had said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all those who wanted to kill you are dead." So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. And he took the staff of God in his hand. The LORD said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me." But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.'" **Exodus 4:18-23**

After all the doubts and excuses, Moses is now willing to obey God in faith, **Hebrews 11:24-29**. When Moses arrived back at Jethro, he asked to return to Egypt to see his people, **Exodus 4:18**.

Notice, he didn't go into any detail about what had just happened at the burning bush or God's mission for him.

However, what he did tell Jethro was enough for Jethro to bless his visit. **Exodus 4:18**.

Moses obviously was still thinking about the time he fled from Egypt after killing an Egyptian and those who were out to kill him, **Exodus 2:11-15**, but God reassures him in Midian, **Exodus 3:1**, that all those who were out to kill him were now dead, **Exodus 4:19**.

It appears that the sons of Zipporah, **Exodus 16:22 / Exodus 18:4**, and Moses accompanied Moses on their journey, **Exodus 4:20**. Notice he took the staff of God in his hand, **Exodus 4:20 / Exodus 4:9**.

When Moses reaches Egypt, he uses 'the staff of God' to perform all the wonders God has enabled him to do. God says He will harden Pharaoh's heart, **Exodus 4:21**, but the miracles that God would work before Pharaoh would leave Pharaoh without excuse. If Pharaoh refused to allow God to have His firstborn, that is, the nation of Israel, then God would take the firstborn of Egypt, **Exodus 4:22-23 / Galatians 3:26**.

THE HARDENING OF PHARAOH'S HEART

Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart? Behind this question for many is the idea that Pharaoh didn't have any free will, and therefore, he had no choice but to do what God wanted him to do.

In the Book of Exodus, we read how Moses had been commanded by God to go to Pharaoh and demand that Pharaoh let his people go, **Exodus 9:1**. Understandably, Pharaoh was reluctant to do so because the Israelites were his slaves and they worked hard to help build and maintain his kingdom.

Moses goes to Pharaoh, and by faith and the power of God, he confirms that God is with him by using signs and wonders. These signs and wonders were used to confirm Moses' message to Pharaoh, to let His people go, **Exodus 7:1-7**.

The last plague of Egypt was when the firstborn of every animal and human died, but none of the Israelites died, **Exodus 11:4**. It wasn't until Pharaoh's firstborn son died that he decided to let God's people go, **Exodus 12:31**. But even when he allowed them to go, his pride and arrogance led him to change his mind, and so he went after them. We don't know if Pharaoh himself died, but many Egyptians died in the process, **Exodus 14:28 / Exodus 15:19**.

GOD HARDENED PHARAOH'S HEART

Now remember that all this hardening of the heart business was done during the ten plagues, but there's an important point which is often overlooked. God said that He would harden Pharaoh's heart ten times throughout the Book of Exodus, **Exodus 4:21 / Exodus 7:3 / Exodus 9:12 / Exodus 10:1 / Exodus 10:20 / Exodus 10:27 / Exodus 11:10 / Exodus 14:4 / Exodus 14:8 / Exodus 14:17**.

PHARAOH HARDENED HIS OWN HEART

Now what is often overlooked is that Pharaoh himself is said to have hardened his own heart ten times throughout Exodus, **Exodus 7:13 / Exodus 7:14 / Exodus 7:22 / Exodus 8:15 / Exodus 8:19 / Exodus 8:32 / Exodus 9:7 / Exodus 9:34 / Exodus 9:35 / Exodus 13:15**.

The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is something which God told Moses He would have to do because God knew Pharaoh wouldn't let His people go straight away, **Exodus 4:21**, but it's clear after reading the above Scriptures that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was done by both God and Pharaoh himself.

What we see in all those Scriptures is that Pharaoh hardened his own heart during the first five plagues. Pharaoh hardened his own heart because he wouldn't listen to Moses and Aaron; he wouldn't let God's people go, but God didn't harden his heart until the sixth plague came, **Exodus 9:12**.

God gave him the opportunity to exercise his own free will five times. God called Pharaoh to humble himself and acknowledge that God is his authority, but Pharaoh chose to harden his own heart against the will of God, **1 Samuel 6:6**.

DID PHARAOH HAVE A CHOICE?

When we read **Romans 9:14-18**, we find Paul answering a question that someone in Rome may have been asking, 'What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all!' **Romans 9:14**.

Is there injustice on God's part when He accepts and rejects people in this way, i.e. Jacob and Esau? Paul says, 'Not at all' or 'perish the thought! Paul says don't even think that for one minute.

Remember that God has absolute sovereignty; He Himself says, ‘I will have mercy on whoever I choose.’ **Romans 9:15**. The A.V. says, ‘him that runneth,’ he’s obviously using the illustration of the foot race, but it’s not a matter of the prize going to the one who wins the race. Your version may say, ‘it depends not on a man’s will, or exertion’, i.e., on his effort, but upon God’s mercy.

It was not an unjust selection that God had made if God selected Isaac and Jacob because they were the best instruments to work out His plans. It would not be out of harmony for God to reject the Jews because of unbelief and accept the Gentiles for their belief.

Paul quotes what God said to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion,’ **Exodus 33:19**. This brings us back to the truth that it’s God who determines the basis on which His mercy and compassion are offered to men.

Notice that the pronoun ‘I’ is emphasised. God alone has the right to choose regarding the ones on whom He will have mercy and compassion; no one can keep God from showing mercy and compassion to whom He wills.

The Jews said that God’s mercy should be to the Jews only; however, God thought differently, **Luke 1:50 / Acts 10:34-35**. In **Romans 9:16**, we read about the origin of mercy; mercy wasn’t bestowed because man originally wished or desired it. God is the original fountain of it.

‘It does not depend on human desire or effort’ means it didn’t result from any strenuous or intense effort on the part of man, but from God’s own decision to bestow it.

In **Romans 9:17**, Paul quotes the case of God’s dealing with Pharaoh, and we need to listen very carefully to what Paul says here because if we are not careful, we might get the wrong idea. God said that He had raised up Pharaoh in order to display His power through the Egyptian ruler.

Notice, ‘to display His power’, **Romans 9:17**. He did not say that He raised up Pharaoh to ‘destroy’ him, or to ‘drown him in the Red Sea’, but, through His dealings with Pharaoh, to let the nations around see how powerful Israel’s God was.

Now, just how God’s intention should be accomplished depended on Pharaoh himself and on the way he responded to God’s command through Moses. It was within the sphere of Pharaoh’s choice either to submit to the will of God, whom Moses represented or to take the course which, in fact, he did take, to resist God’s will and face the consequences.

Either way, either by Pharaoh’s immediate and voluntary submission to God’s demand or by being compelled to let the people go, when the children of Israel marched out of Egypt, the world would know the power of God.

In **Exodus 9:16**, God is speaking, and so, ‘for Scriptures says’ in **Romans 9:17**, is the same God who says, ‘for this very purpose, that I may show My power in you’. Each time Pharaoh refused to let Israel go, the power of God was more clearly demonstrated in another plague.

Everyone, including foreign nations, began to hear of God and the mighty power He demonstrated in delivering Israel, **Joshua 2:10 / Joshua 9:9**. The time had come for God to show mercy on Israel, and Pharaoh could not stop Him, **Romans 9:18**.

God hardened Pharaoh’s heart by demanding something Pharaoh didn’t want to do. God didn’t harden his heart, separate from his will, but used his evil disposition to carry out His plans.

God shows favour to whom He wills, just as He favoured Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. He rejects those whom He wills just as He did Ishmael, Esau, and Pharaoh. The means by which He shows mercy or rejection must be learned in other passages.

HOW DID GOD HARDEN PHARAOH'S HEART?

We know that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, but maybe we should also ask the question, how did God harden Pharaoh's heart?

Clarke, in his commentary, has the following useful thought.

'God does not work this hardness of heart in man; but it may be said to harden him who refuses to soften, to blind him who refuses to enlighten, and to repel him who refuses to call.' It is but just and right that He should withhold those graces which were repeatedly offered, and which the sinner had despised and rejected.'

OTHER EXAMPLES OF GOD WORKING ON PEOPLE'S HEARTS

In John 16, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, who would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, John 16:8. In John 17, Jesus spoke of having given the apostles the word they would preach to the world, John 17:8 / John 17:18.

Jesus also spoke of all who would believe in Him through the apostles' words, John 17:20. In Acts 2, the apostles preached the Gospel, that message given to them by the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:4.

PETER'S AUDIENCE ON PENTECOST

We see in Acts 2:36-37 that it was the preaching of the Word of God as the means by which men were convicted in their hearts by the Holy Spirit.

STEPHEN'S JEWISH AUDIENCE

Stephen accused his Jewish audience of being stiff-necked and resisting the Holy Spirit, Acts 7:51, but the question is, were they in a literal battle against the Holy Spirit, or were they resisting the words of Stephen given by the Holy Spirit?

LYDIA

Did the Lord operate directly on Lydia's heart, or did He indirectly use some other means? Acts 16:14. Notice that it was the Spirit-given Word of God that was preached that convicted the Jews at Pentecost, and as it was the Spirit-given Word of God that was preached that Stephen's audience resisted, it was the Spirit-given Word of God that Paul preached that opened Lydia's heart and the hearts of those women with her.

It appears that the Spirit-given Word softens some people while it hardens others. It was the message and signs of God given through Moses that hardened Pharaoh's heart.

Knowing all things, God knew that Pharaoh's stubborn heart would not be persuaded. And so, He could speak of hardening Pharaoh's heart when in truth, it was the Word and signs given through Moses that caused Pharaoh to further harden his own heart.

THE EXODUS

After considering the above texts, let's see how this ties together with Pharaoh. In **Exodus 10:1**, we read that the Lord claimed to have hardened Pharaoh's heart as well as the hearts of Pharaoh's servants.

In **Exodus 10:3**, we read that Pharaoh is condemned for refusing to humble himself, which obviously implies he possessed free will. Notice in **Exodus 10:7** that Pharaoh's servants were pleading with Pharaoh to let Israel go. In other words, the prospect of more plagues softened the hearts of Pharaoh's servants while hardening the heart of their king. This tells us that both Pharaoh and his officials possessed free will but acted in opposite ways in the same situation.

Pharaoh's part in hardening his own heart was an active part; he chose not to obey the will of God. God's part was simply to empower Pharaoh to exercise that choice.

This is evident from the fact that Pharaoh was held fully responsible for his hardness and punished for it. God didn't overrule Pharaoh's power of choice; Pharaoh actively hardened his own heart, and God allowed him to do so.

That old saying, 'the same sun that melts wax also hardens clay,' is very applicable here. Through the Gospel, God hardens the hearts of some and melts the hearts of others. Those who accept the offer and obey its requirements are saved, selected, and favoured.

Those who reject it are lost, hardened, and rejected. The same idea is shown in God sending powerful delusions to those who refuse to love the truth, **2 Thessalonians 2:9-12**.

The writer of Hebrews warns believers today not to harden their hearts when they hear the voice of God in His Word, **Hebrews 3:8 / Hebrews 3:13 / Hebrews 3:15**.

'At a lodging place on the way, the LORD met Moses and was about to kill him. But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it. "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me," she said. So the LORD let him alone. (At that time she said, "bridegroom of blood," referring to circumcision.)' **Exodus 4:24-26**

The Septuagint version of this passage, in common with several others such as the Arabic versions, says that it was 'an angel of the Lord' who met Moses and sought to kill him at the resting-place on the way to Egypt.

Probably the translators found it uncomfortable to have to think that the Lord Himself might have 'sought to kill' his servant Moses. Our English versions are true to the Hebrew text, and therefore we must take it that it was, indeed, God Himself who was involved in this remarkable Old Testament event.

DID GOD TRULY 'SEEK' TO KILL MOSES?

Do we not find the language rather strange? Surely, if God had really wished to kill him, He could very easily have done so. I suggest that what occurred was of the nature of an ominous warning, and what is described was an illness, serious enough to be life-threatening, inflicted on Moses by God as a punishment for some offence or other. But a question now arises.

What was the reason for the punishment? What had the prophet done or failed to do that merited such a stern judgement? I believe we find the answer in the exclamation of Moses' wife, Zipporah, which suggests that the reason for this divine act of judgment was the failure of her husband to have their newly born, second son, Eliezer, circumcised.

She said to Moses, 'You are a husband of blood to me!' **Exodus 4:25**. Zipporah was a Midianite, not an Israelite, and, apparently, it was not a custom of her people to practice the rite of circumcision.

Consequently, she regarded the religion of her husband as cruel, and, although she personally performed the crude surgery after the child had been circumcised, she reacted very vigorously, **Exodus 4:20**.

Customarily, the rite would have been performed by the father, and only in exceptional circumstances by the mother, and the implication is that Moses was, at that time, too ill to fulfil his responsibility.

However, Zipporah's angry outburst reveals that she had no sympathy for a religion that demanded the shedding of the blood of children, by means of a ceremony which was, in her mind, both incomprehensible and cruel.

It was after the child had been circumcised that we read, 'He let him go', **Exodus 4:20**. This sounds rather puzzling, but it simply means that, after the deed was done, God allowed Moses to recover.

Notice, also, that it was after the ceremony had been performed that Zipporah explained to Moses why she had called him, 'a husband of blood'. She declared that it was 'because of the circumcision', **Exodus 4:26**.

CIRCUMCISION BEFORE SINAI

It is sometimes mistakenly thought that the rite of circumcision was first imposed on the Israelites as an essential part of their religion when God made His covenant with them at Sinai. But this is not true.

The earliest biblical reference to this ceremony is found in **Genesis 17:10**. There it is recorded that God commanded Abraham and his descendants to practice circumcision, and in **Acts 7:8**, Stephen reminds the Jews of this occasion.

From that time, long before the time of Moses, the Hebrews faithfully obeyed God's command.

Moses would or should, therefore, have circumcised his first son, Gershom, many years earlier, and the life-threatening illness with which God later afflicted him was a punishment for what appears to have been ongoing neglect on the part of the great man.

CAN ANYTHING BE SAID ON HIS BEHALF?

We cannot excuse, but we may try to explain this neglect. Remember Moses' background. Although he was a Hebrew, we must not forget that only his infant years had been spent with his Hebrew family in Egypt. Whilst still a child, he had been taken by the Egyptian princess and raised and educated as an Egyptian, groomed to take a high place in Egyptian society.

Until he finally decided to leave Egypt, his entire lifestyle and, probably, even his mindset, shaped by an Egyptian education, **Acts 7:22**, had been Egyptian rather than Hebrew, and we may say with absolute certainty, that his rank as the ‘son of the daughter of Pharaoh’ would have been given little opportunity of associating with Hebrew slaves, whom the Egyptians scarcely regarded as human!

Remember that he was forty years old before he displayed interest in his Hebrew ancestry, and, for the following 40 years, the people with whom he associated were the Midianites, a nomadic people who later declined the invitation to join the Israelites, **Numbers 14**.

So, until he received God’s call, Moses had had very little contact with the Hebrews. I think we must take these facts into account before judging him too harshly.

WHY, THEN, DID GOD JUDGE HIM SO SEVERELY?

Because later, at Sinai, Moses was to bring to the people the Covenant which he would receive from God. In the Covenant, circumcision would once again be declared obligatory for God’s chosen people.

It would be, in fact, the rite that secured entry into the Covenant, guaranteeing to the obedient Hebrew’ the promises which God had earlier made to Abraham, the federal head of the race, who was known as ‘Abram the Hebrew’, **Genesis 14:13**.

Since Moses was to fulfil this important role, he must not be seen to be in disobedience of the command of God. He must be made ready for his task, and, as preparation, he must learn that the higher the office and the honour, the greater the responsibility.

Regardless of his Egyptian upbringing, Moses was a Hebrew, and, as a Hebrew, not even he was excused from the obligation to practice circumcision. He had been in disobedience until God shocked him into an awareness of this fact in this drastic manner.

We need to remember that when God issues a general command, no one is granted an exemption. We don’t know all the details as to why Moses neglected to circumcise his son, **Exodus 4:24**, but we do know that he didn’t obey God in having his son circumcised, **Acts 16:3**.

Dummelow, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The whole design of this remarkable episode was ‘to show the importance of circumcision as the sign of the covenant between God and his people, and the sin and danger of neglecting it.’

It appears that Zipporah wasn’t happy about her son being circumcised, **Exodus 4:25**. Notice she touches Moses’ feet, then cut off foreskin, **Exodus 4:25**.

Jones, in his commentary, says the following.

‘She associated Moses with the act (making him, in a sense, a participant in it) by touching him with the blood from the circumcision wound.’

Zipporah wasn’t happy about her son being circumcised, which was also the reason why Moses didn’t have him circumcised in the first place, although some commentators suggest that Moses was seriously ill, **Exodus 4:26**.

Notice that the words ‘you are a bridegroom of blood to me’ are stated twice, **Exodus 4:25-26**. Moffatt translated the verse in the following way: ‘You are my bridegroom in blood by this circumcision’.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is quite obvious that the whole bloody business of circumcision was repugnant to Zipporah, and the conjecture seems quite reasonable that it was because of her objections to the rite that Moses had delayed or neglected it. Seeing that it would cost her the life of her bridegroom unless it was done, she did it herself, therefore calling Moses a bloody husband, or a bridegroom in blood. Moses’ respect for his wife’s objections, however, was sinful.’

It’s believed by many commentators that it was at this point that Moses sent Zipporah and the sons back to Jethro in Midian. This is plausible because Moses actually calls for his family to return to him a year after the exodus had taken place, **Exodus 18:2-3**.

‘The LORD said to Aaron, “Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.” So he met Moses at the mountain of God and kissed him. Then Moses told Aaron everything the LORD had sent him to say, and also about all the signs he had commanded him to perform. Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites, and Aaron told them everything the LORD had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people, and they believed. And when they heard that the LORD was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshipped.’ **Exodus 4:27-31**

Earlier, God had told Moses that Aaron was on his way to meet Moses, **Exodus 4:14**. It appears that it’s at this point that Aaron goes to meet him, **Exodus 4:27**. God tells Aaron to meet Moses on the very same mountain He appeared to Moses, Mount Sinai, **Exodus 4:27 / Exodus 19 1-2**.

After explaining everything to Aaron, **Exodus 4:28**, both Moses and Aaron set off for Egypt, where they gathered together the spiritual leaders, that is, the elders of Israel, **Exodus 4:29**. It’s Aaron who speaks to them and tells them everything that God said to Moses, **Exodus 4:30**.

Notice he performed ‘the signs’ before the people, and they believed, **Exodus 4:30-31**. This was exactly what God said they were intended to do, **Exodus 4:1-9**. After seeing the signs, they believed and bowed down and worshipped God, **Exodus 4:31**, which is always the contentious action of anyone who is in the presence of God.

Haley, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They gave heed to Moses at first, but since instant deliverance did not come, in their disappointment and impatience, they would not (at that time) listen to him.’

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

‘Afterward, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.’” Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and I will not let Israel go.” Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword.” But the king of Egypt said, “Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labour? Get back to your work!” Then Pharaoh said, “Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working.” **Exodus 5:1-5**

Ellison, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The freedom Moses enjoyed is probably to be attributed to his having been adopted by Pharaoh’s daughter.’

Moses and Aaron are now fully equipped for the mission God has set them to deliver His people out of Egypt, but notice there are no elders with them, as God instructed, **Exodus 5:1 / Exodus 3:18**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There is evident in this chapter a kind of schism in the ranks of Israel. Their appeal a little later to Pharaoh in their own persons, instead of with Moses and Aaron, confirms the suspicion that they might have been among the special ‘officers’ who enjoyed favours from the king, and who did not risk losing their petty positions by associating with Moses.’

When they meet with Pharaoh, they immediately tell him what God demands, ‘let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness,’ **Exodus 5:1 / Exodus 7:16 / Exodus 8:1 / Exodus 9:1**.

Remembering that the Israelites have now been in Egypt for four hundred years, it’s understandable that Pharaoh actually believed the Hebrews belonged to him. Pharaoh was well acquainted with all the gods of Egypt, but he didn’t have a clue about the God of Israel, **Exodus 5:2 / 2 Kings 18:35**. However, through a series of plagues, he is about to find exactly who the one true living God is.

After refusing to let them go, **Exodus 5:2**, Aaron tells Pharaoh that the LORD had met with them, so let His people take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to Him, or He may strike them with plagues or with the sword, **Exodus 5:3**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It would have been impossible for the Hebrews to sacrifice to Jehovah in Egypt because they sacrificed the very animals that the Egyptians worshipped! All kinds of riots and commotions would have followed any such action.’

As far as Pharaoh is concerned, a request to go and sacrifice to God in the wilderness was just an excuse for the Hebrews to give up their work because of laziness, **Exodus 5:4-5**.

BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW

‘That same day, Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and overseers in charge of the people: “You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don’t reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to our God.’ Make the work harder for the people so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies.” Exodus 5:6-9

In an attempt to break the will of God’s people, it appears that Pharaoh’s first response to God’s demands was simply to make the Israelites work harder, **Exodus 5:5-6**. Also, he implied that Moses and Aaron were liars, **Exodus 5:7**.

THE BRICKS

Back in **Genesis 11:3**, we read that they ‘baked them thoroughly’, in other words, they must have known how to bake bricks in some kind of brick kiln. Now you might say, ‘Well, of course, that is how you have to make bricks!’ But let me ask you to remember how the Israelites made bricks for the Egyptians. They made them of sun-dried mud, into which chopped straw was mixed in order to give them strength, **Exodus 5:7**.

Exodus 5:6-9 tells how to make it harder for the Israelites in Egypt, Pharaoh refused to give them straw and made them find their own, thus making it harder for them to produce their daily quota.

Then, when there was no longer any straw to be found, they had to make bricks without straw and still produce their set quota, even when the dried mud crumbled away, it had no binding substance, **Exodus 5:10-18**.

And this was centuries after the period in **Genesis 11**. Indeed, it must have been about two hundred years before the time of Israel in Egypt. Yet these descendants of Ham know about baking bricks, so that they are so much stronger.

‘Then the slave drivers and the overseers went out and said to the people, “This is what Pharaoh says: ‘I will not give you any more straw. Go and get your own straw wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced at all.’” So the people scattered all over Egypt to gather stubble to use for straw. The slave drivers kept pressing them, saying, “Complete the work required of you for each day, just as when you had straw.” And Pharaoh’s slave drivers beat the Israelite overseers they had appointed, demanding, “Why haven’t you met your quota of bricks yesterday or today, as before?” Then the Israelite overseers went and appealed to Pharaoh: “Why have you treated your servants this way? Your servants are given no straw, yet we are told, ‘Make bricks!’ Your servants are being beaten, but the fault is with your own people.” Pharaoh said, “Lazy, that’s what you are—lazy! That is why you keep saying, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.’ Now get to work. You will not be given any straw, yet you must produce your full quota of bricks.” The Israelite overseers realised they were in trouble when they were told, “You are not to reduce the number of bricks required of you for each day.” When they left Pharaoh, they found Moses and Aaron waiting to meet them, and they said, “May the LORD look on you and judge you! You have made us obnoxious to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.” Exodus 5:10-21

We can only imagine what the Israelite’s work was like, especially now, since they had to go throughout the land and find any straw for building the bricks, **Exodus 5:10-13**.

The slave drivers were Israelite foremen who were chosen by the Egyptians as taskmasters over their fellow Israelites. They didn’t have any choice in the matter because if the quota of bricks wasn’t met, they too were beaten, **Exodus 5:14**.

The Israelite foremen now go and appeal to Pharaoh and notice that three times they say, ‘your servants’, **Exodus 5:15**. If they were trying to appeal to Pharaoh on the basis of calling their fellow Israelites servants, they failed miserably, **Exodus 5:16**.

Robjohns, in his commentary, says the following concerning the Israelite overseers.

‘The treatment of the clerks brought them into sympathy with their enslaved brethren. Israel closed ranks!’

Earlier, Pharaoh said he wouldn’t let them go and sacrifice because it was just promoting their ‘laziness’, **Exodus 5:8**, but here, we see that this was only an excuse, **Exodus 5:17**. He actually hated God’s people and treated them as such, **Exodus 5:18**.

The Israelite overseers realised they were in big trouble because they weren’t permitted to reduce the number of bricks required each day, **Exodus 5:19**. The Israelite foremen found Moses and Aaron, who were waiting to meet them, **Exodus 5:20**, and notice what the Israelite foremen said to them, ‘may the Lord look on you and judge you’, **Exodus 5:21**.

Keil, in his commentary, says the following concerning these words.

‘What perversity of the natural heart! They call upon God to judge, while by their very complaining they show that they have no confidence in God and his power to save.’

Rawlinson, in his commentary, summarises the following concerning their words.

‘You have made us obnoxious to Pharaoh. Ye have made us to stink in the nostrils of Pharaoh!’

GOD PROMISES DELIVERANCE

‘Moses returned to the LORD and said, “Why, Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble on this people, and you have not rescued your people at all.” Exodus 5:22-23

Moses is obviously deeply troubled, and the good news is that the first thing Moses did in times of despair was to stop and speak to God about it, **Exodus 5:22**. It appears that Moses didn’t know all the social struggles his people would have to go through before being delivered.

We can almost feel the despair in Moses’ words to the Lord; it appears that not only were the Israelites discouraged by what was happening, **Exodus 5:22**, but so was Moses himself, **Exodus 5:23**.

It’s important to remember that what was happening was exactly what God said would happen, **Exodus 4:21**. Even though Moses was made aware of what was to happen, this didn’t stop him from feeling the pain of his people.

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION

‘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.” God also said to Moses, “I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name, the LORD, I did not make myself fully known to them. I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they resided as foreigners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant. “Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.’” Exodus 6:1-8

After pouring his heart out to God about the trouble the Israelites are going through and questioning why God hasn’t freed His people, **Exodus 5:22-23**, God replies to Moses and reassures him, that Pharaoh will let his people go **Exodus 6:1**.

He not only reassures him but tells Moses that Pharaoh will actually drive them out of the land, **Exodus 6:1**. The demonstration of God’s power through the upcoming plagues would be so great that Pharaoh will be glad to see the back of the Israelites.

Keil, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The necessity for the great judgments of God against Egypt was demonstrated, and is here distinctly expressed in the words, ‘Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh.’

God didn’t forget his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when they lived as strangers in the very land which Israel was given as a possession, **Exodus 6:2-3** / **Genesis 15:18**. He was waiting until Israel was prepared to enter the land, and for the wickedness of the inhabitants to degenerate to the point of no moral return.

Notice God says that ‘by my name the LORD I did not make myself fully known to them’, **Exodus 6:3**. Some translations have the phrase, ‘by my name Jehovah I was not known to them’.

This could be misleading because the Patriarchs certainly did know His name, Genesis 22:14 / Exodus 6:20 / Genesis 15:7 / Genesis 15:8 / Genesis 4:1 / Genesis 18:13 / Genesis 18:17 / Genesis 26:2 / Genesis 27:20 / Genesis 9:26. Most scholars agree that this is a difficult text to understand.

The Pulpit Commentary says the following concerning this verse.

‘Perhaps the true sense is, ‘I was known to them as a Being of might and power, not as mere absolute (and so eternal and immutable) existence.’ This meaning of the word, though its etymological and original meaning, may have been unknown to the patriarchs, who were not etymologists. It was first distinctly declared to Moses at Sinai, Exodus 3:14 / Exodus 3:15.’

The fact that He is the only God is evidence that He is omnipotent, Genesis 4:26 / Genesis 12:8 / Genesis 17:1 / Genesis 28:3. God is the only eternal and absolute power.

Unlike most of us, when God makes a covenant, He doesn’t break it, and because He knows that He can keep the conditions for the establishment of His covenants with man, He can bind Himself to a covenant, Exodus 6:4-5.

Notice also that what God called ‘wonders’ earlier, Exodus 3:20 / Exodus 4:22, He now calls judgments, Exodus 6:6. The plagues are clearly to be seen as judgments against Pharaoh.

Unger, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Exodus as a book of redemption presents a type of all redemption. It is wholly from God, Exodus 3:7-8. It is through a Person, Exodus 2:2. It is by blood, Exodus 12:13 / Exodus 12:23 / Exodus 12:27. It is by power, Exodus 6:6.’

Notice the statements which God says in these verses.

‘I have established, Exodus 6:4. ‘I have heard’, Exodus 6:5. ‘I have remembered, Exodus 6:5. ‘I AM the LORD, Exodus 6:6. ‘I will bring’, Exodus 6:6. ‘I will free,’ Exodus 6:6. ‘I will redeem!’ Exodus 6:6. ‘I will take’, Exodus 6:7. ‘I will be’, Exodus 6:7. ‘I will bring’, Exodus 6:8. ‘I will give’, Exodus 6:8.

“Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and harsh labour.

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go, tell Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to let the Israelites go out of his country.” But Moses said to the LORD, “If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips?” Exodus 6:9-12

By the time Moses reported what God had said to the Israelites, it was clear that things were just getting worse for them, Exodus 6:9. The burden was becoming intolerable, and so, they must have come to the conclusion that things were getting worse because of Moses.

When God asks Moses to go to Pharaoh and tell him to let His people go, Exodus 6:10-11, Moses says his people won’t listen to him because he has faltering lips, Exodus 6:12 / Exodus 6:30, which literally translated means uncircumcised lips.

This is a Hebrew idiom referring to imperfection with reference to communication, Jeremiah 6:10 / Jeremiah 9:26. Moses genuinely did have a speech impediment, Exodus 4:10, but that didn’t stop God from using him to do great things. God doesn’t reply to Moses at this point, but will do so in Exodus 7:1.

FAMILY RECORD OF MOSES AND AARON

‘Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron about the Israelites and Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he commanded them to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. These were the heads of their families: The sons of Reuben, the firstborn son of Israel, were Hanok and Pallu, Hezron and Karmi. These were the clans of Reuben. The sons of Simeon were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman. These were the clans of Simeon. These were the names of the sons of Levi according to their records: Gershon, Kohath and Merari. Levi lived 137 years. The sons of

Gershon, by clans, were Libni and Shimei. The sons of Kohath were Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel. Kohath lived 133 years. The sons of Merari were Mahli and Mushi. These were the clans of Levi according to their records.

Amram married his father's sister, Jochebed, who bore him Aaron and Moses. Amram lived 137 years. The sons of Izhar were Korah, Nepheg and Zikri. The sons of Uzziel were Mishael, Elzaphan and Sithri. Aaron married Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab and sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. The sons of Korah were Assir, Elkanah and Abiasaph. These were the Korahite clans. Eleazar, son of Aaron, married one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Phinehas. These were the heads of the Levite families, clan by clan. It was this Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said, "Bring the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions." They were the ones who spoke to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, about bringing the Israelites out of Egypt—this same Moses and Aaron.'

Exodus 6:13-27

Now we read of the family genealogy of Moses and Aaron, Exodus 6:13-27 / Numbers 3:27-28.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

'The genealogy was simply intended to show that Moses and Aaron came in a direct line from Abraham, and to ascertain the time of Israel's deliverance. The whole account from Exodus 6:14-26, inclusive, is a sort of parenthesis, and does not belong to the narration; and what follows from Exodus 6:28 is a recapitulation of what was spoken in the preceding chapters.'

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'We have in the following verses, not a complete genealogy, but a summary account of the family of the two brothers. Moses records for the satisfaction of Hebrew readers, to whom genealogical questions were always interesting, the descent and position of the designated leaders of the nation, Exodus 6:26-27.'

The sons of Levi mentioned in Exodus 6:16 are given because of the importance of their work as outlined later in the Pentateuch. The Amram of Exodus 6:18 isn't the same Amram of Exodus 6:20 because there are several generations between the two. The Amram in Exodus 6:20 is Moses' father.

Mahli and Mushi, Exodus 6:19, were among the most important of the Levitical families. Korah, Exodus 6:21, later figured prominently in a rebellion against Moses, Numbers 16:1-3 / Numbers 16:32 / Jude 1:11. Though Korah, Moses' cousin, later perished because of rebellion, his mention here is to affirm to his descendants their genealogical heritage, Numbers 26:11.

Jochebed, Exodus 6:20, was the mother of Moses and the aunt of Amram, Numbers 26:59. Aaron is mentioned first here because he was older. The order of their importance is observed in Exodus 6:27, where we have Moses and Aaron.

Nadab and Abihu, Exodus 6:23, were killed by God for their presumption in offering strange fire, Numbers 3:4.

Elisheba, Exodus 6:23, is the name of Aaron's wife, which is in Greek, Elizabeth.

Eleazar and Ithamar, Exodus 6:25, ministered in the office of the high priest and Eleazar succeeded Aaron in that office, Numbers 3:4. Eleazar was Aaron's son, whose grandson was Phinehas.

Notice that God says that He will 'bring the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions,' Exodus 6:26. Some translations use the word 'armies', Exodus 7:4, but God's people were armed for battle, this simply means that they will come out in an orderly fashion, Exodus 3:16 / Exodus 12:17 / Exodus 13:18.

God wanted it to be clear throughout Israel's history that He was working through and with Moses and Aaron to bring about Israel's deliverance, Exodus 6:27.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The names of Moses and Aaron are given twice and in a different order; used in Exodus 6:26 probably to mark Aaron as the older in the genealogy and used in Exodus 6:27 to denote the leadership of Moses.'

AARON TO SPEAK FOR MOSES

‘Now when the LORD spoke to Moses in Egypt, he said to him, “I am the LORD. Tell Pharaoh, king of Egypt, everything I tell you.” But Moses said to the LORD, “Since I speak with faltering lips, why would Pharaoh listen to me?” Exodus 6:28-30

Here we have one of the problems with chapter breaks, as these verses should really begin at the start of the next chapter, instead of the end of this chapter. Moses was told that he was to tell Pharaoh everything that the LORD had said, Exodus 6:28-29. As we saw earlier, faltering lips, Exodus 6:30, literally translated, means uncircumcised lips. This is a Hebrew idiom referring to imperfection with reference to communication, Jeremiah 6:10 / Jeremiah 9:26. Moses genuinely did have a speech impediment, Exodus 4:10, and so God was going to use Aaron to do the speaking.

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION

In Exodus 7-12, Moses, through the power of God, releases ten plagues of different sorts on the land of Egypt, which included turning all the water to blood, plagues of insects, boils, and hail.

Finally, the death of every firstborn son included the death of Pharaoh’s eldest, who would someday inherit the kingdom of Egypt. We will see that they were delivered not just to let Pharaoh know who God was but also to let the Israelites know who God was.

Because they had been enslaved for four hundred and thirty years, they didn’t know God; they had become used to being enslaved and used to being around the idol gods of Egypt. And so not only did God have to convince Pharaoh who He was, but He also had to convince the Israelites who He was.

AARON TO SPEAK FOR MOSES

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. You are to say everything I command you, and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his country. But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in Egypt, he will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my divisions, my people, the Israelites. And the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it.” Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD commanded them. Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh.’ Exodus 7:1-7

God tells Moses that he will be like God to Pharaoh, Exodus 7:1. This is because Pharaoh saw himself as a god and would think Moses was a god too because of the miraculous power he would unleash on Egypt.

Aaron will be Moses’ prophet, Exodus 7:1, that is, Moses’ spokesman, and God’s spokesman, Exodus 7:2, as other prophets were spokesmen of God. By the end of the confrontation between God and Pharaoh, both the Egyptian people and Pharaoh would understand that there is only one God.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Exodus 7:2.

‘Throughout the whole series of the Ten Wonders about to be related, Aaron spoke and acted for Moses, his actions and words being actually those of Moses, facts clearly indicated by this verse.’

God says, He will harden Pharaoh’s heart, [Exodus 7:3](#), which we already dealt with back in [Exodus 4](#). This doesn’t mean that God worked directly on Pharaoh’s heart to such an extent that He had no choice. Pharaoh’s heart was full of pride and arrogance and was already hard, [Romans 9:14-24](#).

God knows Pharaoh will not let His people go, [Exodus 7:4](#), despite Him asking on several occasions, [Exodus 3:12](#) / [Exodus 4:23](#) / [Exodus 7:16](#) / [Exodus 8:1](#) / [Exodus 8:20](#) / [Exodus 9:1](#) / [Exodus 9:13](#) / [Exodus 10:7](#), but by the time He’s finished unleashing all the plagues, the Egyptians will know that He is the Lord, [Exodus 7:4-5](#). Moses and Aaron obeyed the LORD, [Exodus 7:6](#).

From the beginning of this chapter onwards, we see Moses, who is now eighty years old, and Aaron, who is eighty-three years old, [Exodus 7:7](#) / [Deuteronomy 31:2](#) / [Deuteronomy 34:7](#) / [Acts 7:23](#) / [Acts 7:30](#), working together as a team.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The mention of the ages of Moses and Aaron here has puzzled some, but it appears to have been inserted for the purpose of demonstrating that the deliverance was far more of God than of men. Both Moses and Aaron were past the age when such exploits could have been undertaken by men, with any reason, without supernatural endowment. We cannot allow any questioning of the ages given here. They are confirmed by Stephen, [Acts 7:23](#) / [Acts 7:30](#), and by Moses himself in [Deuteronomy 31:2](#) and [Deuteronomy 34:7](#).’

AARON’S STAFF BECOMES A SNAKE

‘The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “When Pharaoh says to you, ‘Perform a miracle,’ then say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh,’ and it will become a snake.” So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: Each one threw down his staff, and it became a snake. But Aaron’s staff swallowed up their staffs. Yet Pharaoh’s heart became hard, and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said.’ [Exodus 7:8-13](#)

Notice that God knows exactly what Pharaoh was going to say, [Exodus 7:8-9](#). In the mind of Pharaoh, he thinks he will see and witness a ‘miracle’ like his magicians regularly did in front of him.

We read that Aaron’s rod turned into a snake, [Exodus 7:10](#), and Pharaoh’s magicians did the same thing, [Exodus 7:11](#). The Old Testament doesn’t tell us the names of these magicians, but we know that two of them were named Jannes and Jambres, [2 Timothy 3:8](#).

The Bible doesn’t tell us how the magicians performed this trick, but it does say they used their ‘secret arts’, [Exodus 7:11](#) / [2 Thessalonians 2:8-10](#). Remember, they are magicians and magic was their art. They were secret because these magicians, like some today, don’t reveal how they do it.

The important thing in all of this is not how the Egyptians’ rods were changed into serpents but what happened to them. Aaron’s rod swallowed all of theirs, [Exodus 7:12](#), which demonstrated that God is greater than their god. But Pharaoh wasn’t convinced by this miracle and so refused to listen to Moses and Aaron, [Exodus 7:13](#).

We can be misled by the word ‘snake’ because the Hebrew word used is ‘tanniyn’, which suggests some kind of marine or land monster. This is a different word which was used when Moses’ staff was turned into a snake, [Exodus 4:3](#).

A few commentators believe it actually became a ‘crocodile’, which would be in keeping with the plagues which are about to come. The crocodile god was known as ‘Sobek’, and it was the ancient god of crocodiles. To his worshipers, he was a god who created the Nile, a god of fertility and rebirth, and the symbolic strength of the ruler of Egypt.

The purpose of this miracle and all the miracles to come was to prove that Moses and Aaron were messengers from God. If the magicians really did perform miracles, then there would be no proof in the confirming miracles that Moses and Aaron were God’s true messengers.

THE MIRACLES

Some people question whether the miracles recorded were actually miracles. Note the following thoughts.

1. In each case, they were accurately foretold, as to the time and place of occurrence.
2. The intensity of such things as the frogs and lice was beyond all possibility of what could have been expected naturally.
3. Both their occurrence and their ending were demonstrated to be under the control and subject to the Word of God through Moses.
4. There was discrimination, some of the plagues afflicting the Egyptians and yet at the same time sparing the Israelites.
5. There was orderliness in their appearance, each event more severe than the one that preceded it, concluding with the most devastating of all, the death of the firstborn.
6. Also, there was a progression in relation to the reaction of Pharaoh’s servants. At first, they could do anything that Moses did, but at last, they admitted their failure and affirmed that ‘This is the finger of God!’ Exodus 8:9.
7. Over and beyond all this, there was a moral purpose in the plagues; they were not mere freaks of nature.

Remember that the ten plagues were actually ten disasters sent upon Egypt by God to convince Pharaoh to free the Israelite slaves from the bondage and oppression they had endured in Egypt for four hundred and thirty years.

When God sent Moses to deliver the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt, He promised to show His wonders as confirmation of Moses’ authority, Exodus 3:20. This confirmation was to serve at least two purposes: firstly, to show the Israelites that the God of their fathers was alive and worthy of their worship and secondly, to show the Egyptians that their gods were nothing.

The Egyptians worshipped a wide variety of nature gods and attributed to their powers the natural phenomena they saw in the world around them. There was a god of the sun, of the river, of childbirth, of crops, etc. Events like the annual flooding of the Nile, which fertilised their croplands, were evidence of their god’s powers and goodwill.

When Moses approached Pharaoh, demanding that he let the people go, Pharaoh responded by saying, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and I will not let Israel go,” Exodus 5:2. And so from that point onwards, the challenge was on to show whose God was more powerful.

THE PLAGUE OF BLOOD

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is unyielding; he refuses to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he goes out to the river. Confront him on the bank of the Nile and take in your hand the staff that was changed into a snake. Then say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to say to you: Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the wilderness. But until now, you have not listened. This is what the LORD says: By this you will know that I am the LORD: With the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood. The fish in the Nile will die, and the river will stink; the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water.’” The LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt—over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs—and they will turn to blood.’ Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in vessels of wood and stone.” Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. Blood was everywhere in Egypt. But the Egyptian magicians did the same things by their secret arts, and Pharaoh’s heart became hard; he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said. Instead, he turned and went into his palace, and did not take even this to heart. And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile to get drinking water, because they could not drink the water of the river.’ Seven days passed after the LORD struck the Nile.’ Exodus 7:14-25

The LORD now speaks to Moses and tells him that Pharaoh’s heart is unyielding, and he refuses to let the people go, Exodus 7:14. It appears that Pharaoh must have enjoyed going for a stroll every morning to the river Nile, Exodus 7:15. This could also be a place where he went to worship in the morning.

The River Nile is extremely important to the Egyptians, not only for food, but when it flooded at various times of the year, the floodwater would cover crops and fields, which would help them grow.

The plague of blood is the first plague that was issued against Pharaoh and all of Egypt because Pharaoh refused to let God’s people go, Exodus 7:14. Moses is to confront Pharaoh on the bank of the Nile and take the staff that was changed into a snake, Exodus 7:15 / Exodus 7:10-12.

God wanted Pharaoh not to misunderstand exactly who was behind this miracle of turning the water into blood, it was the ‘Lord God of the Hebrews’, Exodus 7:16, and Pharaoh was to be told ‘by this you will know that I am the LORD,’ Exodus 7:17. The Nile will be changed into blood, Exodus 7:17, and the fish will die, the river will stink and the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water, Exodus 7:18.

Moses is to tell Aaron, to take his staff and stretch out his hand over the waters of Egypt, streams and canals, ponds and all the reservoirs, and they will turn to blood, Exodus 7:19.

Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in vessels of wood and stone, Exodus 7:19. When Aaron did as God commanded, the blood was everywhere, streams, canals, ponds and reservoirs and the River Nile stank of dead fish, Exodus 7:20-21.

Josephus, in his writings, says the following.

‘The water was not only the colour of blood, but it brought upon those who ventured to drink it, great pains, and bitter torment. Such was the water to the Egyptians, but it was sweet and fit for drinking to the Hebrews, and no way different from what it naturally used to be.’

As I mentioned earlier, the Bible doesn’t tell us how the magicians performed this trick, but again, it does say they used their ‘secret arts’, Exodus 7:22 / 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10. Remember, they are magicians and magic was their art. They were secret because these magicians, like some today, don’t reveal how they do it.

And so the river, which formed the basis of daily life and the national economy, was devastated, as millions of fish died in the river and the water was unusable. Despite the miracle, Pharaoh’s heart remained hard; he stubbornly refused to let God’s people go just as God said, Exodus 7:22.

Pharaoh heads back inside his palace and doesn’t even take this to heart, Exodus 7:23. I guess he may have used the words of Shania Twain, ‘that don’t impress me much!’ The Egyptians go ahead and dig along the Nile to get drinking water, because they could not drink the water of the river, Exodus 7:24.

This was a judgment against ‘Apis’, the god of the Nile, ‘Isis’, the goddess of the Nile, and ‘Khnum’, the guardian of the Nile. The Nile was also believed to be the bloodstream of the god ‘Osiris’, who was reborn each year when the river flooded. God already knew that was going to happen, and so He prepared Moses and Aaron to unleash the next plague, seven days after this one, Exodus 7:25.

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. If you refuse to let them go, I will send a plague of frogs on your whole country. The Nile will teem with frogs. They will come up into your palace and your bedroom and onto your bed, into the houses of your officials and on your people, and into your ovens and kneading troughs. The frogs will come up on you and your people and all your officials.’” Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Stretch out your hand with your staff over the streams and canals and ponds, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt.’” So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land. But the magicians did the same things by their secret arts; they also made frogs come up on the land of Egypt. Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Pray to the LORD to take the frogs away from me and my people, and I will let your people go to offer sacrifices to the LORD.” Moses said to Pharaoh, “I leave to you the honour of setting the time for me to pray for you and your officials and your people that you and your houses may be rid of the frogs, except for those that remain in the Nile.”

“Tomorrow,” Pharaoh said. Moses replied, “It will be as you say, so that you may know there is no one like the LORD our God. The frogs will leave you and your houses, your officials, and your people; they will remain only in the Nile.” After Moses and Aaron left Pharaoh, Moses cried out to the LORD about the frogs he had brought on Pharaoh. And the LORD did what Moses asked. The frogs died in the houses, in the courtyards and in the fields. They were piled into heaps, and the land reeked of them. But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said.’ Exodus 8:1-15

THE PLAGUE OF FROGS

Once again, God commands Pharaoh to let His people go and worship Him, Exodus 8:1, and He gives Pharaoh a week to think about it, Exodus 7:16. If he refused, then another miraculous outpouring of God’s judgment would come upon the land of Egypt, Exodus 8:2.

The second plague brought frogs from the Nile, Exodus 8:2. This was a judgment against ‘Heqet’, the frog-headed goddess of birth. Frogs were thought to be sacred and not to be killed.

Davis, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Egyptians were just about the most polytheistic people known from the ancient world. Even to this day, we are not completely sure of the total number of gods which they worshipped. Most lists include somewhere in the neighbourhood of eighty gods.’

God says the Nile will teem with frogs, they will come up into Pharaoh’s palace, bedroom, bed, the houses of Pharaoh’s officials, his people, and into their ovens and kneading troughs, Exodus 8:3-4.

The LORD tells Moses to tell Aaron, Stretch out your hand with your staff over the streams and canals and ponds, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt, Exodus 8:5.

We can't help but note the number of frogs there must have been, they were all over the land including in the bedrooms of many houses, [Exodus 8:6](#) / [Psalm 78:45](#).

This would have had a huge impact on the living conditions of all those in Egypt and their spiritual conditions, as frogs were worshipped by the Egyptians, they wouldn't be able to go about their daily lives without crushing them.

Youngblood, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Since the frog or toad was deified as the Egyptian goddess Heqet, who was believed to assist women in childbirth, there may be a touch of irony in the statement that large numbers of frogs would invade the Pharaoh's bedroom and even jump on his bed, [Exodus 8:3](#).’

Again, the Bible doesn't tell us how the magicians performed this trick, [Exodus 8:7](#), but it does say they used their ‘secret arts’, [2 Thessalonians 2:8-10](#). Remember, they are magicians and magic was their art.

They were secret because these magicians, like some today, don't reveal how they do it. It's interesting to note that if the magicians were real miracle workers, why didn't they miraculously remove the frogs instead of producing more?

At last, and for the first time, it appears that Pharaoh's stubborn heart is beginning to soften, as he asks Moses to pray to the Lord and remove the frogs so that God's people can go and worship Him, [Exodus 8:8](#). However, it appears that his request wasn't genuine, he just wanted some relief from the frogs, and he has no intentions of letting God's people go anywhere.

Notice also when Moses asked exactly when Pharaoh would like the frogs removed, [Exodus 8:9](#), he replied, ‘tomorrow’, [Exodus 8:10](#). If we were in Pharaoh's shoes, I'm sure we would say, ‘now, get rid of these frogs right now’, but for some reason, he said ‘tomorrow’.

Moses tells Pharaoh, in order that he will know there is no one like the LORD, God, the frogs will be removed tomorrow from everywhere except the Nile, [Exodus 8:10-11](#). Moses then cries to the LORD about the frogs, [Exodus 8:12](#), and the very fact that the frogs died the following day, is another miracle within itself, [Exodus 8:13](#).

God had the frogs invade every part of the homes of the Egyptians, and when they died, their stinking bodies were heaped up in offensive piles all through the land, [Exodus 8:14](#).

We can only imagine the stench and piles and piles of dead frogs were scattered throughout Egypt, [Exodus 8:14](#). It appears that when God put pressure on Pharaoh, his heart softened, but now that the frogs were dead, he went back to being hard-hearted again and refused to let God's people go, [Exodus 8:15](#) / [Exodus 4:21](#).

THE PLAGUE OF GNATS

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the ground,’ and throughout the land of Egypt the dust will become gnats.” They did this, and when Aaron stretched out his hand with the staff and struck the dust of the ground, gnats came on people and animals. All the dust throughout the land of Egypt became gnats. But when the magicians tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, they could not. Since the gnats were on people and animals everywhere, the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh's heart was hard, and he would not listen, just as the LORD had said.’ Exodus 8:16-19

It's interesting to note that Pharaoh was given no warning and no thinking time about this plague from God, as he had been with the others. Here we find the third plague, gnats, [Exodus 8:16](#).

This was a judgment against ‘Set’, the god of the desert. The Hebrew word used here for gnat is the word ‘ken’, and it means any of the tiny, minute stinging flies, which are classified as stinging gnats.

Different translations of the Scriptures use different words here; some use ‘gnats’, some use the word ‘lice’, some use the word ‘maggots’, some use the word ‘mosquitoes’, and others use the word ‘fleas’.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The word used in this text means the tick, 1. They are said to be in man and beast. The tick buries its head in the victim, and 2. The meaning of the root word here, which is to make firm, fix or establish, which ticks most assuredly do.’

Aaron, with his hand outstretched with the staff, strikes the dust of the ground, and gnats came on people and animals, in fact, all the dust throughout the land of Egypt became gnats, [Exodus 8:17](#).

Just as man was created from the dust of the ground, [Genesis 3:19](#) / [1 Corinthians 15:47](#), so too were these gnats. But unlike the previous plagues, the magicians were unable to duplicate this one, [Exodus 8:18](#) / [2 Thessalonians 2:8-10](#). This is possibly because this plague came unannounced, and so they would have had no time to prepare. Notice they declared to Pharaoh that, ‘this is the finger of God’, [Exodus 8:19](#).

Durham, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The new element introduced in the account of the third of the mighty acts is the realisation by Pharaoh’s learned men that God or a god is in the midst of what is happening in Egypt.’

When the magicians said this, they weren’t acknowledging the God of Israel; they were simply acknowledging that the plague was supernatural and beyond their power of imitation. This, of course, was an excuse for not being able to replicate the miracle.

Asimov, a Jewish commentator, says the following.

‘Jannes and Jambres were so impressed by Moses that they eventually joined the Israelites but died in the course of the Exodus.’

There were so many gnats that they covered the land of Egypt, which would have made life pretty miserable for the Egyptians. Because they were all over the animals, the gods of Egypt wouldn’t receive the sacrifice of gnat-infested animals, so this stopped their sacrificial system.

Pharaoh’s heart once again became hard, and he wouldn’t listen to God just as God said, [Exodus 8:19](#) / [Exodus 4:21](#). It’s interesting to note that if Pharaoh himself was regarded as a god by the Egyptians, why didn’t he himself intervene and do something about all these judgments?

THE PLAGUE OF FLIES

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “Get up early in the morning and confront Pharaoh as he goes to the river and say to him, ‘This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. If you do not let my people go, I will send swarms of flies on you and your officials, on your people and into your houses. The houses of the Egyptians will be full of flies; even the ground will be covered with them. “But on that day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live; no swarms of flies will be there, so that you will know that I, the LORD, am in this land. I will make a distinction between my people and your people. This sign will occur tomorrow.” And the LORD did this. Dense swarms of flies poured into Pharaoh’s palace and into the houses of his officials; throughout Egypt, the land was ruined by the flies. Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Go, sacrifice to your God here in the land.” But Moses said, “That would not be right. The sacrifices we offer the LORD our God would be detestable to the Egyptians. And if we offer sacrifices that are detestable in their eyes, will they not stone us? We must take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God, as he commands us.”

Pharaoh said, “I will let you go to offer sacrifices to the LORD your God in the wilderness, but you must not go very far. Now pray for me.” Moses answered, “As soon as I leave you, I will pray to the LORD, and tomorrow the flies will leave Pharaoh and his officials and his people. Only let Pharaoh be sure that he does not act deceitfully again by not letting the people go to offer sacrifices to the LORD.” Then Moses left Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD, and the LORD did what Moses asked. The flies left Pharaoh and his officials, and his people; not a fly remained. But this time also Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go.’ Exodus 8:20-32

Unlike the plague of gnats, God now gives Pharaoh another warning with this plague and gives his notice about what He is about to do, Exodus 8:20-21. Notice also that this will also affect Pharaoh at the river again, where he would go for his daily walk to worship, Exodus 8:20 / Exodus 7:14.

Once again, it’s difficult to know what kind of flies these were, Exodus 8:21. Some translations have the word ‘gnats’, others have the word ‘beetles’, and others have the word ‘gadflies’. Whatever they were, they were some kind of flying insect, Psalms 78:45, which totally destroyed the land.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following concerning these insects.

‘When enraged, they fasten themselves upon the human body, especially upon the edges of the eyelids. They not only tortured, ‘devoured’, Psalms 78:45, the men, and disfigured them by the swellings produced by their sting, but also killed the plants in which they deposited their eggs.’

This fourth plague was a judgment on either ‘Re’ or ‘Uatchit’, who were both Egyptian gods depicted as flies. In this plague, God clearly distinguished between the Israelites and the Egyptians.

Goshen, where the Israelites lived, would have no flies, but where the Egyptians lived, they would have swarms of them, Exodus 8:22. By doing this, God was making a distinction between His people and Pharaoh’s people and the sign would occur tomorrow, Exodus 8:23.

Pause for a moment and think about this, and imagine what the Israelites were thinking about during this miracle. You’ve got all these flies swarming around in Egypt, but yet, in Goshen, where God’s people were, there were none. I would imagine the Israelites were thinking to themselves, ‘Who is this God, who not only created billions of flies but controls them?’

I don’t know about you, but when we get one single fly in our home, it’s almost impossible to catch it, never mind control it. But God, who is the creator of all things, can demand obedience even from the animal world.

God is not only the all-powerful one, but He is also the one who protects. There’s no way the Egyptians could misunderstand the point God was making. The point was that Israel is God’s people, and He wanted Pharaoh to let them go.

Notice the LORD did this and when the dense swarms of flies poured into Pharaoh’s palace, the houses of his officials and throughout Egypt, notice the flies totally ruined the land, Exodus 8:24.

Pharaoh appears to soften his heart and comes up with a compromise, they can go and worship in the land, but not where God wants them to go but in Egypt, Exodus 8:25.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Here is the first of four compromises suggested by Pharaoh as a means of hindering the will of God. The second is in Exodus 8:28, ‘Ye shall not go very far away’. The third is in Exodus 10:11, ‘only the men must go’. The fourth is in Exodus 10:24, ‘the flocks and the herds must be left behind’. Moses’ ultimate answer to these was the stern declaration, ‘there shall not a hoof be left behind!’ Exodus 10:26.’

The Israelites couldn’t sacrifice and worship in Egypt because the sacrifice involved the killing of sheep, and as we know, shepherds were an abomination to the Egyptians, Exodus 8:26 / Genesis 46:34. The Egyptians would have turned on the Israelites and killed them if they sacrificed sheep.

Cassuto, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Egyptians regarded the animals the Israelites would have sacrificed as holy and as manifestations of their gods. Consequently, the sacrifices would have been an abomination.’

Moses tells Pharaoh that they need to take the three-day journey and worship God where He wants them to worship Him, [Exodus 8:27](#). Pharaoh, once again, under the pressure of the plagues, agrees to let God’s people go and worship Him in the wilderness, [Exodus 8:28](#). However, he adds the restriction of them not going far away, [Exodus 8:28](#). Notice that Pharaoh asks Moses to intercede for him, [Exodus 8:28](#). Moses agrees to intervene on behalf of Pharaoh and tells him tomorrow the flies will leave, however, he also gives him a warning not to be deceitful by going against his word, [Exodus 8:29](#).

After speaking to God, God agrees and removes the flies, not one fly remained, [Exodus 8:30](#). The One who sent the plagues and he knows that God is the only one who can stop the plague, [Exodus 8:30-31](#) / [Exodus 9:27-33](#) / [Exodus 10:15-19](#) / [Exodus 8:30-31](#) / [Exodus 9:5-6](#) / [Exodus 10:13](#) / [Exodus 10:33](#).

Once again, Pharaoh lied through his teeth to Moses when the pressure was taken off, or he may have simply changed his mind. This is seen in the fact that his heart became hard again, [Exodus 8:32](#).

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: “Let my people go, so that they may worship me.” If you refuse to let them go and continue to hold them back, the hand of the LORD will bring a terrible plague on your livestock in the field—on your horses, donkeys, and camels and on your cattle, sheep, and goats. But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and that of Egypt, so that no animal belonging to the Israelites will die.”’ The LORD set a time and said, “Tomorrow the LORD will do this in the land.” And the next day the LORD did it: All the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one animal belonging to the Israelites died. Pharaoh investigated and found that not even one of the animals of the Israelites had died. Yet his heart was unyielding, and he would not let the people go.’ Exodus 9:1-7

THE PLAGUE ON LIVESTOCK

As Pharaoh continues to harden his heart and refuses to let God’s people go, [Exodus 5:1](#) / [Exodus 7:2](#) / [Exodus 7:7](#) / [Exodus 7:16](#) / [Exodus 8:1](#) / [Exodus 8:20](#), God continues to bring judgment against Egypt. Moses is to go to Pharaoh and tell him, the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says, let His people go, so that they may worship Him, [Exodus 9:1](#).

If Pharaoh refuses to let God’s people go and continues to hold them back, then God’s hand is going to bring a terrible plague on Pharaoh’s livestock in the field, on his horses, donkeys, camels, cattle, sheep and goats, [Exodus 9:2-3](#).

Here we find the fifth plague, the death of livestock, [Exodus 9:2](#). This was a judgment on the goddess ‘Hathor’ and the god ‘Apis’, who were both depicted as cattle.

Unger, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Like all the plagues, this one also struck squarely at the pagan deities of Egypt. This one was Ptah (Apis), the god of Memphis, represented as a bull, as well as other gods represented by the goat, the ram, the cow, and other animals.’

God was steadily destroying the economy of Egypt while showing His ability to love, protect and provide for those who obeyed Him. As we go through these plagues, we see that God was slowly demonstrating not only to Pharaoh but to His people that He controls everything.

God was going to make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and that of Egypt, so that no animal belonging to the Israelites would die, Exodus 9:4. God also set the time for this to happen; He would do it tomorrow, Exodus 9:5. As with the previous plague, God protected His people from the plague, while the cattle of the Egyptians all died, Exodus 9:6 / Psalms 78:48. There is no way the Israelites could avoid witnessing the power of God as their livestock lived in Goshen but in Egypt, they all died, Exodus 9:6.

If you were an Israelite living during this time, wouldn't you be thinking to yourself, what on earth is going on here? Remember, they have never witnessed anything like this before.

We don't know which disease the livestock suffered; the point is, it was only the Egyptian's livestock, not the Israelites. This should have been a clear declaration to Pharaoh that God was protecting the Israelites.

Notice that Pharaoh did some investigating into the matter, but his heart remained hard, and he wouldn't allow God's people to go, Exodus 9:7. In the seventh plague, Exodus 9:20-21, we read that the livestock was further afflicted. Rawlinson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The plague affected him less than the others had done, rather than more. He was so rich that an affliction which touched nothing but property seemed a trivial matter. What did he care for the sufferings of the poor beasts, or the ruin of those who depended upon the breeding and feeding of cattle?’

THE PLAGUE OF BOILS

‘Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Take handfuls of soot from a furnace and have Moses toss it into the air in the presence of Pharaoh. It will become fine dust over the whole land of Egypt, and festering boils will break out on people and animals throughout the land.” So they took soot from a furnace and stood before Pharaoh. Moses tossed it into the air, and festering boils broke out on people and animals. The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils that were on them and on all the Egyptians. But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said to Moses.’ Exodus 9:8-12

It appears that Moses and Aaron could go to Pharaoh at any time they wanted to, Exodus 9:8. Moses and Aaron were to now take handfuls of soot from a furnace and have Moses toss it into the air in the presence of Pharaoh, Exodus 9:8. Notice a furnace is mentioned.

Fields, in his commentary, says the following.

‘If these ashes did come from a brick kiln, there is a sardonic twist of vengeance revealed. The Israelites had been enslaved at brick-making, and now the ashes that made the lives of the oppressed bitter smite the oppressor with boils.’

Here we find the sixth plague, which was boils, Exodus 9:9. This was a judgment against several gods over health and disease: ‘Sekhmet’, ‘Sunu’, and ‘Isis’. Notice again, God gave Pharaoh no warning or time to think before sending this plague, just like He did earlier with the plague of gnats, Exodus 8:16. As the dust of the ashes spread through Egypt, it caused boils, Exodus 9:10 / Exodus 28:27.

Keil, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These boils were the first of the plagues to endanger (perhaps even destroy) the lives of men, and in this respect it was the first foreboding of the death which Pharaoh would bring upon himself by his continued resistance.’

The magicians are mentioned, and they couldn’t stand before Moses because of the boils that were on them and on all the Egyptians, [Exodus 9:11](#). This tells us that these religious leaders were powerless against the God of Israel.

We also find the first mention of God hardening Pharaoh’s heart, [Exodus 9:12](#), which we dealt with back in [Exodus 4:21](#). As a result of Pharaoh’s hard heart, he refused to listen to Moses and Aaron and allow God’s people to go, [Exodus 9:12](#).

Honeycutt Jr, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Any direct action which the Lord may have taken (in this hardening) was consonant with the character of Pharaoh and operated within the framework of Pharaoh’s freedom.’

THE PLAGUE OF HAIL

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “Get up early in the morning, confront Pharaoh and say to him, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me, or this time I will send the full force of my plagues against you and against your officials and your people, so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth. You still set yourself against my people and will not let them go. Therefore, at this time tomorrow, I will send the worst hailstorm that has ever fallen on Egypt, from the day it was founded till now. Give an order now to bring your livestock and everything you have in the field to a place of shelter, because the hail will fall on every person and animal that has not been brought in and is still out in the field, and they will die.’” Those officials of Pharaoh who feared the word of the LORD hurried to bring their slaves and their livestock inside. But those who ignored the word of the LORD left their slaves and livestock in the field. Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that hail will fall all over Egypt—on people and animals and on everything growing in the fields of Egypt.” When Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, the LORD sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed down to the ground. So the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt; hail fell, and lightning flashed back and forth. It was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation. Throughout Egypt, hail struck everything in the fields—both people and animals; it beat down everything growing in the fields and stripped every tree. The only place it did not hail was the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were. Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. “This time I have sinned,” he said to them. “The LORD is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. Pray to the LORD, for we have had enough thunder and hail. I will let you go; you don’t have to stay any longer.” Moses replied, “When I have gone out of the city, I will spread out my hands in prayer to the LORD. The thunder will stop, and there will be no more hail, so you may know that the earth is the LORD’s. But I know that you and your officials still do not fear the LORD God.” (The flax and barley were destroyed since the barley had headed and the flax was in bloom. The wheat and spelt, however, were not destroyed, because they ripen later.) Then Moses left Pharaoh and went out of the city. He spread out his hands toward the LORD; the thunder and hail stopped, and the rain no longer poured down on the land. When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he sinned again: He and his officials hardened their hearts. So Pharaoh’s heart was hard, and he would not let the Israelites go, just as the LORD had said through Moses.’ Exodus 9:13-35

Before God sent the last four plagues, Pharaoh was given a special message from God. These plagues would be more severe than the others, and they were designed to convince Pharaoh and all the people, ‘that there is none like me in all the earth’, [Exodus 9:13-14](#).

You will notice that it was this plague that increased the hardships of those who were afflicted. The affliction would come within the household of Pharaoh so that he would understand that there was no god that man could conceive as the God of heaven.

God could have done away with Egypt in the blink of an eye, He could have wiped them off the face of the Earth and just taken Israel out of Egypt to the Promised Land. He didn't do that because He wanted to demonstrate that He was in control of absolutely everything, [Exodus 9:15](#).

Notice also that it was God who raised Pharaoh up into the position he had at this time, [Exodus 9:16](#). God foreknew that Pharaoh would resist His plan to deliver Israel from captivity.

He knew that all ten plagues would have to be unleashed on Egypt in order that He be glorified as the all-powerful God of heaven. God raised Pharaoh up precisely for the purpose of glorifying God's Name, [Exodus 9:16](#). God's will is going to be done, but it was entirely up to Pharaoh as to just how that would happen.

Pharaoh set himself against God's people and won't let them go, and as a result, God once again sets up a time, tomorrow, when He will send the next plague, [Exodus 9:17-18](#).

It will be the worst hailstorm that has ever fallen on Egypt, [Exodus 9:18](#). Here we read of the seventh plague, hail, [Exodus 9:18](#) / [Psalm 78:48](#). This was an attack against 'Nut', the sky goddess, 'Osiris', the crop fertility god, and 'Set', the storm god.

And as an example of His grace, God warned Pharaoh to gather whatever cattle and crops remained from the previous plagues and shelter them from the coming storm, [Exodus 9:19](#).

Notice that some officials feared the LORD and brought their slaves and livestock inside, [Exodus 9:20](#), while others ignored the LORD and left their slaves and livestock in the field, [Exodus 9:21](#).

At the command of God, Moses stretches out his hand toward the sky so that hail will fall all over Egypt, on people, animals and on everything growing in the fields of Egypt, [Exodus 9:22](#).

When Moses did this the LORD sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed down to the ground and so the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt, [Exodus 9:23](#). Hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth, it was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation, [Exodus 9:24](#).

What we see here is that this was the first plague that took human life, [Exodus 9:25](#). It was more destructive to human property and was made known with the terrifying manifestation of hail mingled with fire.

This hail was unlike any that had been seen before; it was accompanied by a fire which ran along the ground, and everything left out in the open was devastated by the hail and fire, [Exodus 9:25](#).

But once again, God's people were miraculously protected, and no hail-damaged anything in their lands, [Exodus 9:26](#). Can you imagine being there? I would be so tempted to step out of Goshen, pop into the part where the hail and fire were happening and pop back into Goshen again.

Imagine if you lived right on the borderline where you've got this line on the ground where no hail and fire are, and just watching this event. If you're an Israelite, there would be no mistaking the awesomeness of God.

Pharaoh summons Moses and Aaron and confesses that this time he has have sinned, he says The LORD is in the right, and I and his people are in the wrong, [Exodus 9:27](#).

He asks Moses and Aaron to pray on his behalf because they have had enough thunder and hail and he promises to let God's people go, they don't have to stay in Egypt any longer, [Exodus 9:28](#).

Fields, in his commentary, says the following.

'The desperate Egyptians were in sorrow and fright. Their sky-goddess Nut could not protect them from hail from the sky. Nut was often pictured as a lanky nude female arching from horizon to horizon across the sky, touching the ground with fingertips and toes. Isis and Seth were also thought to have care over agricultural production, but the pagan gods were silent and helpless.'

Moses tells him that he will pray when he goes out of the city and reassures him that the thunder and the hail will stop so that Pharaoh will know that the earth is the LORD's, Exodus 9:29. However, notice that Moses tells Pharaoh that he knows that Pharaoh and your officials still don't fear the LORD God, Exodus 9:30.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘What could Pharaoh have meant by this? He would have been more accurate if he had said, ‘I have sinned these seven times!’ In thus limiting his sin, Pharaoh, in fact, confessed nothing, and also laid a portion of the guilt upon ‘the people,’ as did Aaron regarding the golden calf, saying, ‘I and my people are wicked.’

Langley, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It was not Pharaoh in control of the earth, nor Pharaoh's gods, but Yahweh, the God of Israel. He is the Lord of all, Psalms 24:1.’

At this point, we are told that the flax and barley were destroyed, since the barley had headed and the flax was in bloom, Exodus 9:31. We are also told that the wheat and spelt, however, were not destroyed, because they ripen later, Exodus 9:32.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Both of these were important, vital crops to the Egyptians. Linen made from flax provided the garments for the priesthood and all wealthy classes, and the barley was used both for men and for animals as food. By these crops being ‘in the ear’ and ‘in bloom’ respectively, the time of this plague can be fixed in late January or in early February.’

Once Moses left Pharaoh and went out of the city, he spread out his hands toward the LORD; the thunder and hail stopped, Exodus 9:33. Notice once again, when Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he sinned again; he and his officials hardened their hearts, Exodus 9:34.

It appears that as soon as Pharaoh gets any relief from the plagues, his stubbornness kicks in and changes his mind about letting God's people go, just as God said he would, Exodus 9:35.

CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION

“Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these signs of mine among them that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that I am the LORD.” So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, “This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, so that they may worship me. If you refuse to let them go, I will bring locusts into your country tomorrow. They will cover the face of the ground so that it cannot be seen. They will devour what little you have left after the hail, including every tree that is growing in your fields. They will fill your houses and those of all your officials and all the Egyptians—something neither your parents nor your ancestors have ever seen from the day they settled in this land till now.’” Then Moses turned and left Pharaoh. Pharaoh's officials said to him, “How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the people go, so that they may worship the LORD their God. Do you not yet realise that Egypt is ruined?” Then Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh. “Go, worship the LORD your God,” he said. “But tell me who will be going.” Moses answered, “We will go with our young and our old, with our sons and our daughters, and with our flocks and herds, because we are to celebrate a festival to the LORD.” Pharaoh said, “The LORD be with you—if I let you go, along with your women

and children! Clearly, you are bent on evil. No! Have only the men go and worship the LORD, since that's what you have been asking for." Then Moses and Aaron were driven out of Pharaoh's presence. And the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over Egypt so that locusts swarm over the land and devour everything growing in the fields, everything left by the hail." So Moses stretched out his staff over Egypt, and the LORD made an east wind blow across the land all that day and all that night. By morning, the wind had brought the locusts; they invaded all Egypt and settled down in every area of the country in great numbers. Never before had there been such a plague of locusts, nor will there ever be again. They covered all the ground until it was black. They devoured all that was left after the hail—everything growing in the fields and the fruit on the trees. Nothing green remained on tree or plant in all the land of Egypt. Pharaoh quickly summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you. Now, forgive my sin once more and pray to the LORD your God to take this deadly plague away from me." Moses then left Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD. And the LORD changed the wind to a very strong west wind, which caught up the locusts and carried them into the Red Sea. Not a locust was left anywhere in Egypt. But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go.' Exodus 10:1-20

THE PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS

Here, read about the eighth plague, locusts. Again, this was a judgment against the Egyptian gods, 'Nut', 'Osiris', and 'Set'. God here tells us two reasons why He hardened Pharaoh's heart.

1. He chose Pharaoh so that He might show the signs of the plagues to him, [Exodus 10:1](#).
2. God wanted Israel and all mankind to have a record of this great work of God, [Exodus 10:2](#) / [Psalm 78](#) / [Psalm 105](#).

Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh and tell him what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says and ask how long he will refuse to humble himself before Him and let His people go so they can worship Him, [Exodus 10:3](#). Dummelow, in his commentary, says the following.

'This question shows that Pharaoh was responsible for hardening his heart.'

God also adds another warning, if he doesn't let His people go, then He will bring locusts into his country tomorrow, [Exodus 10:4](#). There will be so many locusts that they won't be able to see the ground, they will also eat what little they have left after the hail, [Exodus 9:13-35](#), including every tree that is growing in his fields, [Exodus 10:5](#).

They will fill Pharaoh's houses, his officials houses and all the houses in Egypt, [Exodus 10:6](#). This will be something which has never been seen before in their history, [Exodus 10:6](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'Just as this mighty locust plague was the harbinger of the ultimate judgment and destruction of Pharaoh, 'it is also a type of the plagues which will precede the last judgment.' The prophet Joel, [Joel 1-2](#), thus interpreted a severe locust plague that struck Judah.'

Keil, in his commentary, says the following.

'The locust plague forms the groundwork for the description in [Revelation 9:3-10](#), just as Joel discerned it as the day of the Lord, i.e., of the Great Day of Judgment, which is advancing step by step in all the great judgments of history, or rather of the conflict between the kingdom of God and the powers of this world and will be finally accomplished in the last general judgment.'

After Moses left Pharaoh, [Exodus 10:6](#), Pharaoh's officials ask him how long will Moses be a snare to us? They then encourage Pharaoh to let the people go, so they can worship the LORD their God, [Exodus 10:7](#).

It's interesting to note that it was Pharaoh's servants who informed him about what was happening, [Exodus 10:7](#). This suggests that Pharaoh didn't go out much except for his early morning walks to worship, [Exodus 7:14](#). Because they knew exactly what was going on in Egypt and the devastation the plagues had caused, they were the ones pleading with Pharaoh.

Pharaoh now summons Moses and Aaron back and tells them to go and worship the LORD their God, and asks who will be going? [Exodus 10:8](#). Moses more or less tells him that everyone will be going to celebrate a festival to the LORD, including their flocks and herds, [Exodus 10:9](#).

Notice Pharaoh says, 'The LORD be with you, if he lets them go, along with the women and children! Clearly, they are bent on evil, [Exodus 10:10](#). The footnote says, 'or Be careful, trouble is in store for you!' Pharaoh is having none of it. He wants only the men to go, since that's what Moses and Aaron have been asking for, [Exodus 10:11](#).

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'Pharaoh's permission for the male Israelites to leave Egypt to worship God, brought on by the urging of his counsellors, was arbitrary. Egyptian females worshipped with their husbands, and Pharaoh could have permitted both men and women to worship Yahweh.'

Pharaoh puts terms and conditions before them; he wants Moses to leave families and flocks in Egypt, whilst they go to worship. This was obviously some kind of insurance policy to ensure the Israelites would return.

Moses and Aaron were not willing to compromise with Pharaoh, and so they were driven out of Pharaoh's presence, [Exodus 10:11](#). The LORD tells Moses to stretch out his hand over Egypt so that locusts swarm over the land and devour everything growing in the fields, everything left by the hail, [Exodus 10:12](#) / [Exodus 9:31-32](#).

Moses did what God asked him to do, and notice the LORD made an east wind blow, [Jonah 1:4](#) / [Jonah 4:8](#) across the land all that day and all that night, and by the morning the wind had brought the locusts, [Exodus 10:13](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'Locusts do not normally appear in Egypt, the climatic conditions being unfavourable for them, and thus it was necessary for God to bring them into Egypt from a great distance. If the east wind was at 25 m.p.h., a distance of some 600 miles would have been traversed in the 24-hour period.'

They invaded all of Egypt and settled down in every area of the country in great numbers. Never before had there been such a plague of locusts, nor will there ever be again, [Exodus 10:14](#).

Don't miss the fact that the locusts didn't go into Goshen either, but they covered the whole of Egypt, [Exodus 10:14](#). The impact on Egypt would have been devastating as the locusts would have eaten all the food in Egypt which forced the Egyptians to buy food from God's people.

There's nothing new about locusts entering a place and destroying everything in their path, but here the real miracle is seen in what happened at the very time God said to Moses it would happen.

The later crops, wheat and rye, which had survived the hail, [Exodus 9:31-32](#), were now devoured by the swarms of locusts, [Exodus 10:15](#), which would ultimately result in there being no harvest in Egypt that year.

Pharaoh panics once again and summons Moses and Aaron, and once again he confesses that he has sinned against the LORD their God and against them, [Exodus 10:16](#). He asks for forgiveness of his sin and asks Moses and Aaron to pray to the LORD their God to take this deadly plague away from him, [Exodus 10:17](#).

Moses prays to the LORD, and the LORD changed the wind to a very strong west wind, which caught up the locusts and carried them into the Red Sea, and as a result, not a single locust was left anywhere in Egypt, [Exodus 10:18-19](#).

Something which is often overlooked is that God made the ‘east wind’ blow to bring the locusts into Egypt, [Exodus 10:13](#), and He also made the wind blow to remove the locusts, [Exodus 10:19](#). Once again, the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he wouldn’t let the Israelites go, [Exodus 10:20](#).

THE PLAGUE OF DARKNESS

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness spreads over Egypt—darkness that can be felt.” So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. No one could see anyone else or move about for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived. Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and said, “Go, worship the LORD. Even your women and children may go with you; only leave your flocks and herds behind.” But Moses said, “You must allow us to have sacrifices and burnt offerings to present to the LORD our God. Our livestock, too, must go with us; not a hoof is to be left behind. We have to use some of them in worshipping the LORD our God, and until we get there, we will not know what we are to use to worship the LORD.” But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he was not willing to let them go. Pharaoh said to Moses, “Get out of my sight! Make sure you do not appear before me again! The day you see my face, you will die.” “Just as you say,” Moses replied. “I will never appear before you again.” Exodus 10:21-29

The LORD now tells Moses, to stretch out his hand toward the sky so that darkness spreads over Egypt, [Exodus 10:21](#). Here we read about the ninth plague, darkness. This was aimed at the sun god, ‘Re’, who was symbolised by Pharaoh himself. Notice the darkness will be felt, [Exodus 10:21](#).

Ellicott, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Authorised Version seems to give the true meaning, which is found also in the LXX. and the Vulg. The idea is an exaggeration of that instinctive feeling which makes us speak of ‘thick darkness.’

For three days, [Exodus 10:22](#), the land of Egypt was smothered with unearthly darkness, but the homes of the Israelites had light, [Exodus 10:23](#). Notice that it was so dark no one could see anyone else, [Exodus 10:23](#). It’s no wonder no one moved around for three days.

The Israelites must be utterly shell-shocked by what’s happening. They must have been in awe as they enjoyed the light, but the rest of Egypt is in total darkness. They must have been thinking to themselves, ‘Is there anything that this God cannot control or do?’

I can imagine them saying to themselves, ‘No wonder our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob worshipped this God.’ It was God who created light in the beginning, [Genesis 1:3](#), and it’s God who removes the light, [Luke 23:44](#). This would have included the sun, moon, and stars, which He also created, [Genesis 1:14-19](#).

Pharaoh once again softens his heart and tells Moses that they can go and worship God, only if they leave their flocks and herds behind, [Exodus 10:24](#). Moses once again isn’t willing to compromise with Pharaoh and insists that he must allow them to have sacrifices and burnt offerings to present to the LORD their God, [Exodus 10:25](#).

He says all the animals need to go because they need to use them in their worship, but until they get there, they won’t know what to use, [Exodus 10:26](#). Moses isn’t willing to compromise with Pharaoh because he knows everything belongs to God, [Psalm 5](#) / [Psalm 10](#).

The LORD once again hardens Pharaoh’s heart, and he wasn’t willing to let God’s people go, [Exodus 10:27](#). Notice that Pharaoh basically says, if Moses turns up in front of him again, he’s as good as dead, [Exodus 10:28](#).

Also notice that Moses replied that he wouldn’t appear in front of Pharaoh again, [Exodus 10:29](#). On the surface, this reads as though the two would never meet face to face again, but they will, as we shall see in [Exodus 11:4-10](#).

Fields, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Moses accepted Pharaoh’s words without fear, calmly waited until the final plague was announced, and told Pharaoh Plainly. ‘After just one more plague, Pharaoh’s servants would come to him, bow down, and plead with the Israelites to leave.’ As it turned out, even Pharaoh himself did this, Exodus 12:30-31.’

CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION

‘Now the LORD had said to Moses, “I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here, and when he does, he will drive you out completely. Tell the people that men and women alike are to ask their neighbours for articles of silver and gold.” (The LORD made the Egyptians favourably disposed toward the people, and Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh’s officials and by the people.)’ Exodus 11:1-

3

We must note that the first three verses in this chapter are a continuation of the time when Pharaoh threatened Moses with his life, Exodus 10:29. God promises one more plague and after which Pharaoh will let His people go, Exodus 11:1.

Keil, in his commentary, concerning the words, translates the meaning of the words, ‘he will drive you away completely, as follows.

‘When he lets you go altogether, he will even drive you away.’

Earlier, back in Exodus 3:22, it was only the women who were mentioned as requesting treasures of the Egyptians, but here the men are also included, Exodus 11:2.

Notice they won’t leave empty-handed, Exodus 11:2 / Exodus 3:21-22, all the articles of gold and silver would be later used in the construction of the tabernacle, Exodus 12:35-36.

Durham, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Egyptians thus are ‘picked clean’, Exodus 3:22 / Exodus 12:36, by Israel as a result of yet another action by Yahweh on behalf of his people, demonstrating the power of his Presence.’

These instructions are given to the Hebrews concerning the things they need to do in preparation for their departure from Egypt, Exodus 11:3 / Exodus 3:21-22.

Fields, in his commentary, asks the following.

‘Did Moses really write this? “Why not? It was the truth. Compare the way Paul wrote of himself, 2 Corinthians 10:8-14, and the way Nehemiah wrote of himself (Nehemiah 5:18-19).’

Remember, God had promised Abraham that his posterity would come out of the land of those who enslaved them, and they would leave with many treasures, Genesis 15:14. Here, we see this being fulfilled.

THE PLAGUE ON THE FIRSTBORN

‘So Moses said, “This is what the LORD says: ‘About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, 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, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt—worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. But among the Israelites, not a dog will bark at any person or animal.’

Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. All these officials of yours will come to me, bowing down before me and saying, ‘Go, you and all the people who follow you!’ After that, I will leave.” Then Moses, hot with anger, left Pharaoh. The LORD had said to Moses, “Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you—so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt.” 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.’ Exodus 11:4-10

Moses now addresses his people and tells them that about midnight the LORD himself will go throughout Egypt **Exodus 11:4**. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die.

Including the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the female slave, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well, **Exodus 11:5**. This plague was going to hit Egypt in a very personal way, the firstborn is a reference to the male children, **Exodus 11:5**.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It was the male children of the Israelites that Pharaoh had killed previously, **Exodus 1:15-22**.’

Here we find the tenth and last plague, the death of the firstborn males. This was a judgment on ‘Isis’, the protector of children. In this plague, God was teaching the Israelites a deep spiritual lesson which pointed to Christ.

In Egyptian culture, the firstborn son was the hereditary centre of reference to the financial and social prestige of the family. All other children of the family looked to the firstborn as the future leader of the family. By killing the firstborn, God was effectively bringing Egypt to its knees.

There is going to be loud wailing throughout Egypt, worse than there has ever been or ever will be again, **Exodus 11:6**. However, among the Israelites, not a dog will bark at any person or animal. God was doing this to demonstrate the distinction between Egypt and Israel, **Exodus 11:7**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The writer here sees the Exodus as an illustration of the eschatological victory of Yahweh, that is, as a type of the eternal judgment. Once the Israelites had cried under the whips of the slave-masters, but now the oppressors cry from the judgment inflicted by God.’

All of Pharaoh’s officials will come to Him, bow down before Him and say, go, you and all the people who follow you!’ After that, I will leave.” Then Moses, hot with anger, left Pharaoh, **Exodus 11:8**.

Notice again that God told Moses that Pharaoh wouldn’t listen, **Exodus 11:9**. This shows how power-hungry Pharaoh is; he’s proud and arrogant and will go to any length to keep his position of power.

Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, but notice once again the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he wouldn’t let the Israelites go out of his country, **Exodus 11:10**.

Pharaoh had continued to refuse the right of God’s firstborn, Israel, to worship Him, **Exodus 4:22-23**, and He will now experience the appropriate judgment, the death of his and Egypt’s first-born, including even cattle.

Earlier, Pharaoh told them never to come to him again, or he would die, **Exodus 10:29**, but Moses basically says, then let your servants appear in my presence. This, of course, happened, with even Pharaoh himself joining in the begging, **Exodus 12:30-33**.

Sailhamer, in his commentary, says the following.

‘By means of the last plague, then, the writer is able to bring the Exodus narratives into the larger framework of the whole Pentateuch and particularly that of the early chapters of Genesis. In the midst of the judgment of death, God provided a way of salvation for the promised seed, **Genesis 3:15**. Like Enoch, **Exodus 5:22-23**, Noah, **Exodus 6:9**, and Lot, **Exodus 19:16-19**, those who walk in God’s way will be saved from death and destruction.’

CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION

Unlike the other plagues, which the Israelites survived by their identity as God's people, this plague required an act of faith by them. God commanded each family to take an unblemished male lamb and kill it.

The blood of the lamb was to be smeared on the top and sides of their doorways, and the lamb was to be roasted and eaten that night. Any family that did not follow God's instructions would suffer in the last plague.

God described how He would go through the land of Egypt and slay the firstborn male in every household, whether human or animal. The only protection was the blood of the lamb on the door. When the Lord saw the blood, He would pass over that house and leave it untouched according to [Exodus 12:23](#).

This is where the term 'Passover' comes from; it is a memorial of that night in ancient Egypt when God delivered His people from bondage. [1 Corinthians 5:7](#) teaches us that Jesus became our Passover when He died to deliver us from the bondage of sin.

While the Israelites found God's protection in their homes, every other home in the land of Egypt experienced God's wrath as their loved ones died. This extremely devastating and grievous event caused Pharaoh to finally release the Israelites.

THE PASSOVER AND THE FESTIVAL OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

'The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, 'This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month, each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbour, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight.' Exodus 12:1-6

The coming deliverance from Egypt is such a significant act that God tells the children of Israel to remake their calendar; the new year will now start with the month of their redemption from Egypt, [Exodus 12:1](#).

On the tenth of this first month, the month of Abib, [Exodus 13:4](#), each family, or household, is to take a lamb, [Exodus 12:2-3](#). If a household was too small for a whole lamb, then they shared it with their nearest neighbour, taking into account the number of people staying in the house, [Exodus 12:4](#).

They are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat, [Exodus 12:4](#). The lamb was to be year-old males and without blemish, [Exodus 12:5](#). This sacrifice unto the Lord had to be as perfect as a lamb could be, [John 1:29](#) / [1 Corinthians 5:7](#) / [1 Peter 1:19](#) / [Revelation 12:13](#).

Keil and Delitzsch, in their commentary, say the following.

'Freedom from blemish and injury not only befitted the sacredness of the purpose to which they were devoted but was a symbol of the moral integrity of the person represented by the sacrifice. It was to be a male, as taking the place

of the male first-born of Israel; and a year old, because it was not till then that it reached the full, fresh vigour of its life.’

A lamb from the sheep or the goats, [Exodus 12:5](#), may sound confusing, but the Hebrew word for lamb can refer to either a young sheep or a young goat.

Cole, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Hebrew ‘she’ is quite a neutral word and should be translated as ‘head of (small) stock’, applying equally to sheep and goats of any age. The Hebrews, like the Chinese, seem to have regarded any distinction between sheep and goats as a minor subdivision. Probably because of this, to ‘separate the sheep from the goats’ is proverbial of God’s discernment in New Testament times, [Matthew 25:32](#).’

The lamb is to live with the family for the four days until twilight, which would be Passover, [Exodus 12:6](#) / [2 Samuel 12:1-3](#). In this way, the lamb was to be part of the family; when it was sacrificed on the fourteenth, it would be cherished and mourned.

God wanted the sacrifice of something precious. The rabbis later determined that there should be at least ten people for each Passover lamb, and not more than twenty.

Remember, the Israelites couldn’t sacrifice and worship in Egypt because the sacrifice involved the killing of sheep, [Exodus 8:26](#) / [Genesis 46:34](#), and because the Egyptians also worshipped lambs, we can only imagine what the Egyptians were thinking when they saw the Israelites taking a lamb into their homes for four days, with the intention of slaughtering and eating it.

Cassuto, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Egyptians regarded the animals the Israelites would have sacrificed as holy and as manifestations of their gods. Consequently, the sacrifices would have been an abomination.’

INSTRUCTIONS FOR EATING THE PASSOVER

‘Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. That same night, they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire—with the head, legs, and internal organs. Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD’s Passover.’ [Exodus 12:7-11](#)

Before the Passover lamb could be eaten, its blood had to be applied to the doorway of the home, and the top, and upon each side, the blood was applied, [Exodus 12:7](#) / [Hebrews 10:22](#).

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The sprinkling of the blood on the sides and top of the doorway into the house was a sign, [Exodus 12:7](#) / [Exodus 12:13](#). It had significance to the Jews. The door represented the house, [Exodus 20:10](#) / [Deuteronomy 5:14](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:17](#). The smearing of the blood on the door with hyssop was an act of expiation, cleansing / [Leviticus 14:49-53](#) / [Numbers 19:18-19](#).’

Esses, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As they were obedient to put the blood on the side-posts and the lintel above the door, they were making the sign of the cross. And when the Lord saw the sign of the cross in blood, he would pass over them and spare the first-born of their houses.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Just as the blood of that Passover was sprinkled upon the side-posts and lintels of the doors, all who draw near to God in Christ today must do so with their ‘hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience’, Hebrews 10:22, the blood of Christ our Passover being the cleansing agent in view there.’

The only part of this sacrifice given to God was the blood; the rest was eaten by each family or discarded. Then, the lamb could be eaten but only if it had been roasted, with the lamb itself coming into contact with the fire, and with bitter herbs accompanying the meal, Exodus 12:8.

As our Passover sacrifice, Jesus had to come into direct contact with the ‘fire’ of the Father’s judgment on our behalf, and the bitterness of the cross is reflected in the bitter herbs.

They were to eat bread made without yeast, Exodus 12:8. They weren’t permitted to eat the meat raw or boiled in water but roast it over a fire, with the head, legs, and internal organs, Exodus 12:9.

The Passover lamb had to be eaten completely; a family had to totally consume the sacrifice and if anything was left it must be burned first thing in the morning, Exodus 12:10. Notice they are to eat it with their cloak tucked into their belt, sandals on their feet and staff in their hand Exodus 12:11.

Durham, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Those consuming the meat were not to be in the relaxed dress of home, but in travelling attire; not at ease around a table, but with walking-stick in hand; not in calm security, but in haste, with anxiety.’

The Passover lamb had to be eaten in faith, trusting that the deliverance promised to Israel was present and that they would walk in that deliverance immediately, Exodus 12:11. Faith was essential to the keeping of the Passover, Hebrews 11:28.

THE PROTECTION OF THE BLOOD

‘On that same night, I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.’

Exodus 12:12-13

The LORD says that He Himself will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and He will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt, Exodus 12:12.

The blood will be a sign for them on the houses where they live, and when He sees the blood, He will pass over them, hence no destructive plague will touch them when He strikes Egypt, Exodus 12:13.

For Israel to be spared the judgment on the firstborn, they had to apply to blood just as God said they should, Exodus 12:7, the blood of the lamb was essential to what God required.

If an Israelite home didn’t believe in the power of the blood of the lamb, they could sacrifice the lamb and eat it, but they would still be visited by judgment. If an Egyptian home believed in the power of the blood of the lamb, and they made a proper Passover sacrifice, they would be spared the judgment.

Additionally, an intellectual agreement with what God had said about the blood was not enough; they actually had to do what God said should be done with the blood.

The judgment on the firstborn was a powerful act of God because the firstborn was always thought to be favoured and privileged before God. If God judges the firstborn, then what of the rest of us?

THE INSTITUTION OF PASSOVER AND UNLEAVENED BREAD AS FEASTS

‘This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD—a lasting ordinance. For seven days, you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day, remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel. On the first day, hold a sacred assembly, and another one on the seventh day. Do no work at all on these days, except to prepare food for everyone to eat; that is all you may do. ‘Celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. In the first month, you are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day. For seven days, no yeast is to be found in your houses. And anyone, whether foreigner or native-born, who eats anything with yeast in it must be cut off from the community of Israel. Eat nothing made with yeast. Wherever you live, you must eat unleavened bread.’ Exodus 12:14-20

Passover began on the tenth, and on the fourteenth, they ate the Passover, [Exodus 12:14](#), which is the first day of unleavened bread. Then, for the next seven days, they would eat only unleavened bread, [Exodus 12:15](#) / [Leviticus 23:4-8](#) / [Numbers 28:16-25](#) / [Deuteronomy 16:1-8](#).

On the first day they were to remove the yeast from their houses, and if anyone ate anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh needs to be cut off from Israel, [Exodus 12:15](#).

On the first day they are to hold a sacred assembly, and another one seven days later, however, no one was permitted to work during these days, except if they were preparing food to eat, [Exodus 12:16](#).

The Festival of Unleavened Bread was to be celebrated because it would be the day that God brought them out of Egypt, [Exodus 12:17](#). This was to be lasting ordinance for the generations to come, [Exodus 12:17](#). In the first month they are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day, [Exodus 12:18](#).

There is to be no yeast in their homes for seven days, and anyone, whether foreigner or native-born, who eats anything with yeast in it needs to be cut off from the community of Israel, [Exodus 12:19](#).

They are to eat nothing made with yeast, and wherever they live, they must eat unleavened bread, [Exodus 12:20](#). For the first Passover, the unleavened bread was a practical necessity; they left Egypt in such a hurry that there was no time to allow for the dough to rise.

Leaven was also a picture of sin and corruption because of the way a little leaven would influence a whole lump of dough, and also because of the way leaven would ‘puff up’ the lump, even as pride and sin make us ‘puffed up.’ Significantly, God called them to walk ‘unleavened’ after their initial deliverance from Egypt; symbolically, they were being called to a pure walk with the Lord.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the leaven.

‘Paul gave the spiritual application of it in [1 Corinthians 5:7](#), and Jesus mentioned it in [Matthew 16:6-12](#). The only instance in which leaven might not have been intended to convey this meaning is that in the parable of the leaven hidden in three measures of meal, [Matthew 13:33](#), and even there, if the true meaning is the final and total corruption of God’s church by the forces of evil, it would still retain the unfavourable denotation. In our interpretation of that, we found no way to accept the premise of the final corruption of the whole church, [Matthew 16:18](#), and therefore construed a favourable meaning of leaven there.’

Some suggest there was also a health aspect in getting rid of all the leaven, that since they used a piece of dough from the previous batch to make the bread for that day, and did so repeatedly, harmful bacteria could take hold in the dough, so it was good to remove all leaven and start all over at least once a year.

‘Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. None of you shall go out of the door of your house until morning. When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.’ Exodus 12:21-23

The elders were expected to lead the way, and so, Moses instructs them to observe the Passover, knowing the rest of the nation will follow, [Exodus 12:21](#). They are instructed to use a bunch of hyssop to apply the blood to the doorposts and lintel, [Exodus 12:22](#).

Hyssop was often used to apply blood for the cleansing of sin. The ceremony for the cleansing of a leper used hyssop, [Leviticus 14:4](#) / [Leviticus 14:6](#). It was used to make the ashes of a red heifer for the water of purification, [Numbers 19:2-6](#), and it was used in the purification rite for a plague, [Leviticus 14:49-52](#). Youngblood, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The hairy surface of its leaves and branches holds liquids well and makes it suitable as a sprinkling device for purification rituals.’

Hyssop was even connected with Jesus’ great sacrifice for sin. John points out that when Jesus was offered sour wine to drink on the cross, the sponge soaked with it was put on a bunch of hyssop, [John 19:29](#).

This is why David, in his great Psalm of repentance, says cleanse me with hyssop, and I shall be clean, hyssop was always connected with purification through sacrifice, [Psalm 51:7](#).

Again, the Lord was looking for blood: ‘when He sees the blood, the Lord will pass over’, [Exodus 12:23](#). This was the basis for sparing people from judgment. Salvation wasn’t accomplished with a prayer or a fast or a good work; it was accomplished by a life given on behalf of others.

THE DESTROYER

Who is the destroyer? Notice, He, the LORD, will not permit THE DESTROYER to enter your houses and strike you down, [Exodus 12:23](#). This certainly reads as though there are two distinct persons involved, the LORD and the destroyer.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This plague (death of the firstborn) is distinctly attributed here to the personal intervention of the Lord; but it is to be observed that although the Lord Himself passed through to smite the Egyptians, He employed the agency of the ‘destroyer.’

Davies, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The destroyer is the personified power of Yahweh Himself manifesting itself as destruction.’

The Hebrew word for destroyer is ‘shachath’, which means to decay, i.e. ruin. The Hebrew writer also makes reference to ‘the destroyer’ in [Hebrews 11:28](#). He uses the Greek word ‘olothreuo’, which means to spoil, i.e. slay. The apostle Paul makes reference to ‘the destroying angel’ in [1 Corinthians 10:10](#). He uses the Greek word ‘olothreutes’, which means a ruiner.

The Jews believe that the destroyer is a divine agent or angel, and certain Rabbis believe that the destroyer could be both an angelic figure and an embodiment of divine judgment.

Some Christian commentators believe the destroyer is the preincarnate Christ, while others suggest that the destroyer is the angel of death, and others believe the destroyer is the archangel Michael or Satan or one of his followers.

Encyclopaedia of the Bible says the following.

‘A superhuman being, used as an instrument of God’s wrath in the execution of His judgment. It is difficult to say whether this is a good angel used by God as an agent of destruction, or Satan or one of his minions. If a good angel, God could use it to bring both blessing and destruction. The term is used only twice, [Exodus 12:23](#) / [Hebrews 11:28](#), and [1 Corinthians 10:10](#). In the Exodus passage, it is used in connection with the tenth plague of Egypt, the destruction of the Egyptian firstborn. In the 1 Corinthians passage Paul warned against grumbling, as some Israelites did in the wilderness and were destroyed by the Destroyer. It is thought by some that the Destroyer referred to by Paul was the fiery serpents God sent to bring death to the complaining Israelites.’

Some translations use the phrase ‘the angel of death’ instead of ‘the destroyer’, which isn’t at all what the Hebrew actually says. The main example given for proof of an ‘angel of death’ is found in Exodus when the final plague came upon Egypt, where the firstborn sons of the Egyptians would die, [Exodus 11:4-5](#).

The phrase ‘angel of death’ is nowhere to be found within the Scriptures. And when we go over to the next chapter, we see this promise coming to fruition, [Exodus 12:29](#). Notice in both of these passages, there is no mention of any angel, never mind any mention of an ‘angel of death’.

If you read [Exodus 11:4-5](#) and [Exodus 12:29](#) carefully, you can’t miss the fact that it’s God Himself who carries out this judgement. The text says, ‘I (God) will go out’, [Exodus 11:4](#).

[Exodus 12:23](#) says that ‘the LORD will pass through’ and ‘the LORD will pass over.’ [Exodus 12:29](#) says, ‘The LORD struck down.’ As it is written, God was the One who promised to judge, and He is the One who executed it.

CONCLUSION

Though we read that God used the destroyer to bring about His judgment, [Exodus 12:23](#) / [Hebrews 11:28](#), the destroyer clearly emanates from the LORD. The Scriptures don’t reveal to us who this is, and the destroyer is not named as the ‘angel of death’ or even mentioned as an angel.

‘Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants. When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. And when your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ then tell them, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians. Then the people bowed down and worshipped. The Israelites did just what the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron.’ Exodus 12:24-28

The deliverance of Passover Israel would shortly experience was not only for them, but for their children, and all generations to follow, [Exodus 12:24](#). When they entered the land that the LORD would give them as He promised, they were to observe this ceremony, [Exodus 12:25](#).

When their children ask them what this ceremony means to them, [Exodus 12:26](#), we see in the Passover, there was a two-fold work. He struck the Egyptians, an enemy was defeated, [Exodus 12:27](#), and God delivered our households, [Exodus 12:27](#). God’s people were set free and given a new identity, with new promises, a new walk, a new life altogether.

Passover was the greatest work of redemption performed on the Old Testament side of the cross. In the same way, Jesus, in giving the ‘new’ Passover, said that His work on the cross was not only for that generation, but should be remembered and applied to all generations, [Luke 22:14-20](#).

As great as God's deliverance was, it would be denied to the people unless they obeyed. How many Israelites were judged as the firstborn because they did not believe and obey? How many Egyptians were spared judgment because they believed and obeyed?

Their obedience was connected with worship. So, the people bowed their heads and worshipped, Exodus 12:27. Then the children of Israel went away and did so, Exodus 12:28.

Worship can help with our obedience because it gets things in the right place between God and us. He is the Creator, and we are creatures, and we humbly worship Him.

THE EXODUS

‘At midnight, the LORD struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well. Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead.’ Exodus 12:29-30

Moses had been told that Pharaoh would not let them go until he was forced to by God's mighty works, and that this work would somehow touch the firstborn of Egypt. Now, the situation is ending just as God said it would, Exodus 3:19-20 / Exodus 4:21-23.

It was at midnight that the LORD struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, including Pharaoh's firstborn, the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock, Exodus 12:29.

This plague was directed against two significant gods. Osiris, the Egyptian god thought to be the giver of life, and against the supposed deity of Pharaoh himself, because his own household was touched, ‘the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne’, Exodus 12:29.

When Pharaoh, his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, they heard loud wailing coming from all parts of Egypt because every house had someone dead within it, Exodus 12:30.

An inscription was found in a shrine connected with the great Sphinx, which recorded a solemn promise from the Egyptian gods that Thutmose IV would succeed his father, who was Amenhotep II, the pharaoh of the Exodus.

Why would there need to be a special promise from the gods that something so natural would happen? The eldest son takes his father's place as Pharaoh? Undoubtedly, because Thutmose IV was not his father's firstborn son, that one had been struck dead at the first Passover. Therefore, they believed that the second-born son needed special protection from the gods, and the inscription seeks to provide that.

In dealing with Pharaoh, God first had to inform his mind, then He had to break his will. Pharaoh's problem wasn't that there was insufficient intellectual evidence; his heart had to be broken and made soft towards God.

Now Pharaoh knows who the Lord God is, after asking the question when he and Moses first met, he knows that the Lord God is greater than all the Egyptian gods and greater than Pharaoh himself, who was thought to be a god, Exodus 5:2. Egypt and Pharaoh would not give God His firstborn, Israel, so God will take the firstborn of Egypt, Exodus 4:22-23.

What was the point of all those plagues? Well, basically, to teach the Egyptians, especially Pharaoh, that there is only one real God and teach His people that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the only God and was still their God.

And so by the time the Israelites left Egypt, they had a clear picture of God's power, God's protection, and God's plan for them. For those who were willing to believe, they had convincing evidence that they served the true and living God.

Sadly, many still failed to believe, which led to other trials and lessons by God. The result for the Egyptians and the other ancient people of the region was a dread of the God of Israel. Pharaoh once again hardened his heart and sent his chariots after the Israelites.

‘During the night, Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, ‘Up! Leave my people, you, and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me.’

The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country. ‘For otherwise,’ they said, ‘we will all die!’ So, the people took their dough before the yeast was added and carried it on their shoulders in kneading troughs wrapped in clothing. The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing. The LORD had made the Egyptians favourably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so, they plundered the Egyptians.’ Exodus 12:31-36

Pharaoh isn’t ‘letting’ Israel leave; he commands them to leave! Exodus 12:31-32. This is just what the Lord told Moses would happen, Exodus 11:1. The words, ‘bless me’, Exodus 12:32, also show that Pharaoh now knows who the Lord is, although he has only come to this knowledge through being broken.

The Egyptian people also agreed, in fear of dying, Exodus 12:33. The children of Israel left in a hurry, so quickly there was no time to let the bread rise, so they had to eat unleavened bread, as the Lord had commanded, Exodus 12:34. The Egyptians essentially paid the Israelites to leave, Exodus 12:35-36.

We can imagine that some of the Israelites did not follow God’s instruction to get all the leaven out; instead, they had to do what God had told them to do because God arranged the circumstances so that they couldn’t use leaven.

In the same way, sometimes God arranges circumstances so that obedience is simply made necessary, even if we didn’t choose it. For example, God may want a man to give up friends who bring a bad influence, but the friends leave him first!

‘The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Sukkoth. There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. Many other people went up with them, and also large droves of livestock, both flocks and herds.

With the dough, the Israelites had brought from Egypt, they baked loaves of unleavened bread. The dough was without yeast because they had been driven out of Egypt and did not have time to prepare food for themselves.’ Exodus 12:37-39

Assembling at Sukkoth, about 600,000 men, besides children of women, Exodus 12:37, makes for a total population of perhaps two million that left Egypt for the Promised Land.

Many other people went up with them, Exodus 12:38, not all of the 600,000 were Israelites, and many Egyptians and perhaps other foreigners went with them because the God of Israel has shown Himself more powerful than the gods of the Egyptians. Again, God made obedience a necessity in the case of the unleavened bread, Exodus 12:39.

‘Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the LORD’s divisions left Egypt. Because the LORD kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt, on this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil to honour the LORD for the generations to come.’ Exodus 12:40-42

The Israelite people lived in Egypt for four hundred and thirty years, and at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, to the very day, all the LORD’s divisions left Egypt, Exodus 12:40-41 / Genesis 46:2-4 / Galatians 3:17. The phrase ‘out of Egypt’, Exodus 12:42, is repeated fifty-six times in the Bible after this point.

God always wanted them to remember His deliverance of Israel from Egypt. God intended this event to be a memorial of His redemptive work for Israel, Exodus 12:42. In this sense, this is the ‘Calvary’ of the Old Testament. Hoehner, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Genesis 15:13 / Genesis 15:16 and Acts 7:6 give the time of the Israelites’ enslavement in Egypt as 400 years (1846-1446 B.C.). The ‘about 450 years’ spoken of in Acts 13:19 includes the 400-year sojourn in Egypt, the 40 years of wilderness wanderings, and the seven-year conquest of the land (1875-1395 B.C.).’

REGULATIONS FOR PASSOVER

‘The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “These are the regulations for the Passover meal: ‘No foreigner may eat it. Any slave you have bought may eat it after you have circumcised him, but a temporary resident or a hired worker may not eat it. ‘It must be eaten inside the house; take none of the meat outside the house. Do not break any of the bones. The whole community of Israel must celebrate it. ‘A foreigner residing among you who wants to celebrate the LORD’s Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised; then he may take part like one born in the land. No uncircumcised male may eat it. The same law applies both to the native-born and to the foreigner residing among you.’ Exodus 12:43-49

God now gives Moses and Aaron the regulations concerning the Passover meal, Exodus 12:43. First of all, no foreigner may eat it, Exodus 12:43. However, a slave may eat it if he has been circumcised, but a temporary resident or a hired worker can’t, Exodus 12:44-45.

Passover was to be commemorated on a family level, Luke 22:17-20 / 1 Corinthians 11:23-29. It was to be celebrated by each household inside their home, but no meat was to be taken outside of the house, Exodus 12:46.

Notice that none of the bones of the Passover lamb was to be broken, Exodus 12:46 / Exodus 12:3-9. Even as none of Jesus’ bones was broken, Psalms 34:20 / John 19:31-36. All who were part of Israel had to commemorate the Passover redemption, Exodus 12:47.

If a foreigner who is living among them wants to celebrate the Passover, they have all the males in their household circumcised, then he may take part like one born in the land Genesis 12:28.

No uncircumcised male may eat it is emphasised once again, Genesis 12:28. The same law applies both to the native-born and to the foreigner residing among them, Exodus 12:49.

To share in the Passover, one had to make themselves part of the people of Israel, receiving the covenant of circumcision and taking part in the Passover were all part of the same package. Passover means much to us as Christians, 1 Corinthians 5:7-8.

‘All the Israelites did just what the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron. And on that very day, the LORD brought the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions.’ Exodus 12:50-51

All of the Israelites obeyed God’s commands, and God brought them out of Egypt on that very day. When Israel left Egypt, it was a nation born in a day. It was as if the four hundred and thirty years were the time in pregnancy when the baby grew large, and the plagues were the labour pains; now a nation was being born.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the Passover and Christ.

‘There was no salvation for Israel except through the blood of the Passover. There is no salvation for any person apart from the blood of Christ. The great ordinances commemorating the two deliverances, namely, the Lord’s Supper and the Jewish Passover, were both instituted and set up before the great events they were designed to commemorate. There were, of course, marked differences between the Passover and the Lord’s Supper, but these resemblances are impressive. As we continue Exodus, we shall observe many other things that are typical of Jesus Christ and the Deliverance which he has brought to all people.’

NO WINE!

Have you ever considered why wine was used in the Passover during Jesus' time? God never commanded the use of wine for the Passover; there's no mention of it in Exodus 12. There are a few reasons for drinking four cups of wine, according to the Jews.

When promising to deliver the Jews from Egyptian slavery, God used four terms to describe the redemption, Exodus 6:6-8.

1. 'I shall take you out.'
2. 'I shall rescue you.'
3. 'I shall redeem you.'
4. 'I shall bring you.'

They were freed from Pharaoh's four evil decrees.

1. Slavery.
2. The ordered murder of all male progeny by the Hebrew midwives.
3. The drowning of all Hebrew boys in the Nile by Egyptian thugs.
4. The decree ordered the Israelites to collect their own straw for use in their brick production.

The Jews believe that the four cups symbolise their freedom from our four exiles.

1. The Egyptian.
2. Babylonian.
3. Greek exiles.
4. And their current exile, which they hope to be rid of very soon with the coming of the Messiah.

The reason this is important is that in Luke's account, we read that there were two cups used, one on either side of the bread, Luke 22:17 / Luke 22:20. In Jewish history, the cup of the Passover was likely four cups of wine, which is the number found in the Mishnah, interspersed throughout the meal.

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION

'The LORD said to Moses, "Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether human or animal." Exodus 13:1-2

CONSECRATION OF THE FIRSTBORN

Just like the Passover, the feast of unleavened bread, the consecration of the Firstborn was to be a memorial which was passed down from generation to generation.

Remember that Israel was God's firstborn, Exodus 4:22. It was God who sent the plague of the firstborn against Egypt, and now God claims the firstborn for Himself, Exodus 13:1.

Because God had spared the firstborns of His people, He now wants His people to take on the responsibility of dedicating their firstborn male children or animals to Him, Exodus 13:2. The firstborn now belonged to God; He owned them, Exodus 13:12-13.

'Then Moses said to the people, "Commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the LORD brought you out of it with a mighty hand. Eat nothing containing yeast. Today, in the month of Aviv, you are leaving. When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites and Jebusites—the land he swore to your ancestors to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey—you are to observe this ceremony in this month: For seven days eat bread made without yeast and on the seventh day hold a festival to the LORD. Eat unleavened bread during those seven days; nothing with yeast in it is to be seen among you, nor shall any yeast be seen anywhere within your borders. On that day, tell your son, 'I do this because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that this law of the LORD is to be on your lips. For the LORD brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand. You must keep this ordinance at the appointed time, year after year.' Exodus 13:3-10

The day Israel came out of Egypt was a day of freedom and was to be celebrated, including the command not to eat anything which contained yeast, Exodus 13:3 / Exodus 12:14-20. This was the month of Aviv, Exodus 13:4; the commands we read here are the same as we find back in Exodus 12:26-27.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the Canaanites, Exodus 13:4.

'In the land of the Canaanites, there actually were six races of those peoples supplanted by Israel, but in Exodus 13:5, only five were listed, the Perizzites, a minor group, being omitted. Here, they were all referred to as Canaanites, there being, in fact, some thirty-two nations or petty-states included in the general designation.'

For seven days they are to eat bread made without yeast and on the seventh day they are to hold a festival to the LORD, Exodus 13:6. They are to eat unleavened bread during those seven days and nothing with yeast in it is to be seen among them, nor shall any yeast be seen anywhere within their borders, Exodus 13:7.

They are to tell their sons, that the reason for doing this is because of what the LORD did for them when they came out of Egypt, Exodus 13:8. Notice that this day and celebration were to be a 'sign', Exodus 13:9; it was a sign to remind them of how God miraculously freed them from Egypt.

This was all about what God had done, not what they had done, because without God and His power, they would still be slaves in Egypt. In other words, God wanted the deliverance from Egypt to be constantly at hand and before their eyes and on their lips, Exodus 13:9.

The Jews used this passage to institute the practice of the wearing of phylacteries, small boxes holding parchment with Scriptures on them, held to the forehead or hand with leather straps, Deuteronomy 6:4-9 / Deuteronomy 11:13-21.

Jesus condemned the abuse of the wearing of phylacteries among the Pharisees; they would make their phylactery boxes large and ostentatious as a display of greater spirituality, Matthew 23:5.

In the end times, there will be a Satanic imitation of this practice, when the number of the Antichrist will be applied to either the hand or forehead of all who will take it, Revelation 13:16. They must keep this ordinance at the appointed time year after year, Exodus 13:10.

'After the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and gives it to you, as he promised on oath to you and your ancestors, you are to give over to the LORD the first offspring of every womb. All the firstborn males of your livestock belong to the LORD. Redeem with a lamb every firstborn donkey, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. Redeem every firstborn among your sons. "In days to come, when your son asks you, 'What does this mean?'

say to him, ‘With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed the firstborn of both people and animals in Egypt. This is why I sacrifice to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons.’ And it will be like a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead that the LORD brought us out of Egypt with his mighty hand.” Exodus 13:11-16

The giving of the firstborn was to happen when they reached the promised land, Exodus 13:11.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The dedication of every firstborn Israelite male baby was to take place after the nation had entered the Promised Land, Exodus 13:5 / Exodus 13:11-12. This was to be a memorial of God’s redemption from Egyptian slavery, as were the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread, Exodus 12:14. However, God took the Levites for His special possession in place of the firstborn. This happened at Mt. Sinai, Numbers 3:12-13. Consequently, this dedication never took place, but the Israelites did circumcise their sons and observe the Passover when they first entered the Promised Land, Joshua 5:4-7.’

Not only were all the firstborn males of Israel to be given to the Lord, but so were all the firstborn animals, Exodus 13:12. The firstborn animals were to be given to the Lord as a sacrifice.

The words, ‘give over’, Exodus 13:12, literally mean to pass over to the Lord. It’s the same word used to describe Canaanite practices of sacrificing children to their gods, 1 Kings 16:3 / Ezekiel 20:31. It’s possible that the Lord deliberately used this word to mark the distinction between this dedication and that of the Canaanites.

They are to redeem with a lamb every firstborn donkey, but if they don’t redeem it, they must break its neck, Exodus 13:13. If the firstborn was unacceptable to sacrifice, that is an unclean animal or a human, then a substitute was offered to redeem the firstborn from God. If the firstborn was an animal, the substitute was a clean animal, and if the firstborn was a human, the substitute money was to be paid in silver.

Silver is the metal associated with redemption and payment for sin; of course, Jesus was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, Exodus 21:32 / Leviticus 5:15 / Leviticus 27:3 / Leviticus 27:6 / Numbers 18:16 / Deuteronomy 22:19 / Matthew 26:15.

If their sons ask them what does this mean?, They are to tell them with a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, Exodus 13:14. They are to tell them how Pharaoh refused to let them go, and how the LORD killed the firstborn of both people and animals in Egypt, Exodus 13:15.

By doing so they will explain why they sacrifice to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of their firstborn sons, Exodus 13:15. Notice the words again, it will be like a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead, Exodus 12:16.

These Scriptures were to be remembered concerning Israel’s deliverance. Other Scriptures were also written and placed in the phylacteries, Deuteronomy 6:4-9 / Deuteronomy 11:13-21.

CROSSING THE SEA

‘When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, “If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.” So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of Egypt, ready for battle. Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the Israelites swear an oath. He had said, “God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place.” After leaving Sukkoth, they camped at Etham on the edge of the desert. By day, the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.’ Exodus 13:17-22

Notice that if God had taken them directly through the Philistine country, the journey would have taken two weeks, but God decided to take them the longer route, [Exodus 13:17-18](#).

The reason is simple: if they had gone through the Philistines' land, they would have encountered Philistine warriors, and because the Israelites were not trained for warfare, they would have suffered at the hands of the Philistines and wanted to return to Egypt.

This is the reason why God took them to the south, Mount Sinai, [Exodus 13:18](#). God never allows us to face more than we are able to bear; He knows exactly what we can and what we can't handle, [1 Corinthians 10:13](#).

No one knows why the Red Sea is called such, [Exodus 13:18](#). Some believe the waters turned red from microscopic life, others believe it was because of the shells on the shore, or the rocks may have been red.

Others believe it is because of the reflection of the setting sun turned the waters red in appearance. The word 'ready', [Exodus 13:18](#), or 'armed' as the KJV translates it, literally means harnessed; the idea is that they were all organised, around three million of them, were organised in coming out of Egypt.

Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the Israelites swear an oath when he said, God will surely come to his aid, and then he must carry my bones up with him from this place, [Exodus 13:19](#).

In [Genesis 50](#), it says specifically that Joseph was never buried. His coffin lay above ground for four hundred or so years until it was taken back to Canaan, [Genesis 50:25-26](#).

Joseph had been mummified after his death, [Genesis 50:25-26](#), and his body has been in Egypt for four hundred years up to this point, and so the Israelites took his body to bury him in Canaan, [Joshua 24:32](#).

We should remember that not only were the remains of Joseph taken from Egypt to be buried in Canaan but so were the remains of the patriarchs taken and buried in Canaan, [Acts 7:10](#).

Sukkoth, [Exodus 13:20](#), was the first camping place of the children of Israel when they left Egypt, and the word itself means 'booths' or 'huts'. This is where the children of Israel set up their temporary dwellings, which they lived in until they came to the Promised Land.

Apparently, the cloud appeared and began leading them to the camp called 'Etham', [Exodus 13:20-22](#). This must have been a phenomenal sight to behold as this cloud suddenly appeared at the front of the camp. Granted, clouds are normal occurrences; they are everywhere, but a cloud that is vertical in shape and a cloud that moves in front of you. A cloud that then transforms into a fiery light at night, [Exodus 13:21-22](#), would have been amazing to witness. And it must have been large enough so that everyone travelling could see which direction to go.

The pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night was also there to act as a sun and a shield, [Psalms 105:39](#) / [Psalm 84:11](#). And when it came to night-time, the fire was so bright, it enabled the travellers to continue travelling even after the sun had set. This pillar led the children of Israel toward the Red Sea in that first week when they were eating 'unleavened bread.'

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'Like the burning bush, [Exodus 3:2](#), the pillar was the visible symbol of God's presence among His people. The Lord Himself was in the pillar, [Exodus 13:21](#) / [Exodus 14:24](#), and often spoke to the people from it, [Exodus 19:20](#) / [Numbers 12:5-6](#) / [Deuteronomy 31:15-16](#) / [Psalms 99:6-7](#).'

But, as we shall see in the next chapter, Pharaoh will have a change of heart about letting Israel leave and dispatch his chariots to turn them back. They caught up with them at the Red Sea, but then the pillar did something truly unexpected.

The pillar moved to defend them, positioning itself between the Egyptians and Israel, [Exodus 14:19-20](#). The cloud and fire were constant reminders that God was with them.

CHAPTER 14

INTRODUCTION

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. They are to encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal Zephon. Pharaoh will think, ‘The Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert.’ And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD.” So the Israelites did this.’ Exodus 14:1-4

God, knowing the heart of Pharaoh tells the Israelites to change direction, Exodus 14:1. He asks them to turn back to the north and go towards the Red Sea, Exodus 14:2.

The reason for this change of direction is because God knows that Pharaoh will pursue His people and He wants to lead Pharaoh and his army towards the Red Sea where he can destroy them.

Pharaoh would pursue Israel, thinking they were trapped, which would fill him with confidence, Exodus 14:3, but God, knowing Pharaoh better than Pharaoh knows himself, was going to take advantage of this ruler’s stubborn and arrogant heart, Exodus 14:3.

God is setting an ambush for Pharaoh, even with the horror of the death of the firstborn, the change in Pharaoh’s heart is only temporary, and he will strike at Israel if he thinks he has a chance.

God says He will gain glory for Himself through Pharaoh, his army, and the Egyptians; they will know that He is LORD, Exodus 14:4. The Israelites did as God asked them to do, Exodus 14:4.

‘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!” So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. He took six hundred of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them. The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites, who were marching out boldly. The Egyptians—all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots, horsemen, and troops—pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi Hahiroth, opposite Baal Zephon.’ Exodus 14:5-9

Here we read that Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about letting Israel go free, Exodus 14:5. They ask, what have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services! Exodus 14:5.

It isn’t hard to think of at least ten good reasons, namely, ten powerful plagues, why Pharaoh let Israel go. Maybe Pharaoh thought that the Lord had shot all His arrows; after all, no more died after the plague of the firstborn, but God isn’t short on resources!

We are so quick to forget what God has done and what He has shown us. How often is it said that we can go from walking in the Spirit to walking in the flesh in an instant? He wanted to punish them because, in his mind, they were his slaves.

Jamieson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Those whom the Lord has doomed to destruction are first infatuated by sin.’

Pharaoh now gets his chariot made ready and takes his army with him, Exodus 14:6. He takes six hundred of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them, Exodus 14:7.

Remember, Egypt was a world power, and they were thoroughly equipped for war. Chariots were the most sophisticated military technology available at that time, and so in their mind, Israel had no chance against them.

The LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart once again, so that he pursued the Israelites. The Israelites, however, were marching with boldness, **Exodus 14:8**. The idea behind the Hebrew words with boldness 'ruwn yad' includes the idea of rebellion against authority, **1 Kings 11:26-27**.

The rebellious nature of Israel was good when it was against Pharaoh and all it stood for; it was bad when it was against the Lord, Moses, and all they stood for. The trouble with rebels is that they rebel against the wrong things!

Psalm 106 describes this rebelliousness on the part of Israel at the Red Sea, **Psalm 106:7-12**, and is also mentioned in **Exodus 14:10-12**. The whole of Pharaoh's army pursues the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi Hahiroth, opposite Baal Zephon, **Exodus 14:9**.

'As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD. They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!" Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm, and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still." **Exodus 14:10-14**

When the children of Israel see Pharaoh's army coming, it's not surprising that God's people were terrified and cried out to Him, **Exodus 14:10 / Psalm 46:1**. Because the Israelites were terrified, they couldn't see what God could see, they couldn't see that God was ready for action, and they couldn't see that God was about to deliver them from the hand of the Egyptians forever.

We may have thought that Satan would let us go easily, or that once we had left his kingdom, we would forget about us. It doesn't work like that! Satan will pursue you to try to keep you at least on the fringes of his domain, and to destroy you if he can.

They start complaining to Moses, **Exodus 14:10-12**. And let's be fair, wouldn't you be complaining if you saw an army of Egyptian chariots coming towards you? Did they really think Moses was motivated by a desire to see all of Israel die in the wilderness?

We are often wrong and always on dangerous ground when we claim we can read the intentions of others' hearts. Moses had said nothing or done nothing that would support such a conspiracy theory, but the children of Israel can still say, 'This is the real reason he brought us out here, **Exodus 4:11 / Numbers 14:22-23**.

They were not a week out of Egypt yet, and they were already distorting the past, thinking that it was better for them in Egypt than it really was, **Exodus 14:12**. They end up getting stuck before the Red Sea, and they have nowhere else to go.

If they try to move forward, they will drown in the Red Sea; if they try to move backwards, they will be caught by the Egyptian army that is moving in on them. The only thing that can save them now is a powerful miracle from God Himself.

And so now, more than any other time, is the time for faith. This was not the time to be looking back; this wasn't the time to be wishing they had never left in the first place, **Psalm 106:7-8**.

Moses steps forward in this hopeless situation and tells the Israelites to trust in God. The idea behind 'you shall see them no more forever', **Exodus 14:13**, implies much more than at first glance; Moses may be speaking in terms of eternity as well as the here and now.

In his response, he basically tells them five things:

1. Do not be afraid, Exodus 14:13.
2. Stand firm, Exodus 14:13.
3. See God's deliverance, Exodus 14:13.
4. The Lord will fight for you, Exodus 14:14.
5. Be still, Exodus 14:14.

At this point, Moses can have no idea how God will come through in the situation; all he knows is that God will certainly come through. In a sense, Moses knows he is in such a bad situation that God has to come through.

When we see that our only help is God, we are more likely to trust Him. Sometimes it is the little things, the things we think we can do in our own strength, that get us down, not the big things, that we know only God can do.

Though Moses doesn't know what God will do, he knows what the result will be. God will utterly defeat the Egyptian enemies of Israel because the Lord will fight for you, Exodus 14:14.

Wow, is this the same Moses we saw earlier at the burning bush? The same Moses who ran away from Egypt and came up with excuse after excuse as to why he isn't the one who should deliver Israel, Exodus 3:11 / Exodus 3:13 / Exodus 4:1 / Exodus 4:10 / Exodus 4:13.

CROSSING THE RED SEA

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.” Exodus 14:15-18

Before the people, Moses was full of faith, but before God, he was crying out in desperate prayer. Exodus 14:15. This was good; Moses' confidence before the nation was necessary for their faith.

There is a time to pray, and a time to act, and it can actually be against God's will to stop everything and pray in a particular situation. We can pray out of the wrong motives, praying to inform others who listen, praying to control a situation, praying to avoid action or buy time.

God reminds Moses that now is not for complaining; now is not the time to go back. They must move on, Exodus 14:15. God tells Moses to raise his staff and stretch out his hand over the sea to divide the water, Genesis 1:2, so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground, Exodus 14:16.

God is going to harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them, Exodus 14:17-18. God was going to be glorified through this whole event, Exodus 14:17, and Pharaoh would get an answer to his question, ‘Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?’ Exodus 5:2. God used the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea to speak to Egypt as much as He used it to speak to Israel.

‘Then the angel of God, who had been travelling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night, the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long.’ Exodus 14:19-20

Notice the angel of God had been travelling in front of Israel's army, withdrew, and went behind them, Exodus 14:19. Who is this angel of God? This is a Christophany, which suggests that this is a preincarnate appearance of Christ, Genesis 12:7. Sometimes in the Scriptures, He is called the angel of the LORD.

Haynes Jr, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A study of these passages reveals that the Angel of the Lord appeared in human form, Genesis 18:2 / Genesis 22:1-18 / Hebrews 13:2, and performed normal human functions, Genesis 32:24 / Numbers 22:23 / Numbers 22:31, yet he was an awe-inspiring figure, Genesis 32:30 / Judges 6:22 / Judges 13:22, exhibiting divine attributes and prerogatives including predicting the future, Genesis 16:10-12, forgiving sin, Exodus 23:21, and receiving worship, Exodus 3:5 / Judges 13:9-20.’

Back in Exodus 13:21-22, we saw the LORD Himself was guiding them by going before them; here we see the angel of the Lord is now giving them protection by standing behind them, Exodus 14:19.

Is there anything which God can't use to display His power and protect His people? The cloud by day and fire by night not only illuminated the way for Israel to cross the Red Sea but it also blocked Pharaoh's chariots, Exodus 14:20. The pillar previously mentioned in Exodus 13:21-22, was now positioned as a barrier between the attacking Egyptians and the children of Israel, Exodus 14:20.

We have little idea how much God does to protect us from attack. We believe ourselves to be overwhelmed in battle right now, but we just don't know what it would be like if the Lord pulled back His protection.

The cloud brought darkness to the Egyptians, but light to the Hebrews, Exodus 14:20. We mustn't miss the importance of the cloud in the Old Testament. God's presence, and even the Gospel, can work the same way, Matthew 5:14 / John 8:12 / 2 Corinthians 4:6 / 1 John 1:5.

Earlier, back in Exodus 13:20-22, we saw a cloud that then transforms into a fiery light at night, which would have been amazing to witness. And it must have been large enough so that everyone travelling could see what direction to go, Psalm 84:11 / Psalms 105:39.

Later, when God miraculously feeds the Israelites, the cloud would have been in sight of everyone, Exodus 16:10. The glory of God appeared in the cloud, but whether this was the cloud which accompanied the Israelites, we are not told.

It may have been a special cloud which veiled the glory of God on this special occasion. But the point is this, the appearance of God in this cloud was still a part of the proof that Moses hadn't led them out of Egypt on his own authority.

It was to convince the people that their God was directing Moses and that any criticism of Moses and his work would be a sin against God. And so when God is speaking to Moses from the cloud, the people could see His glory and hear His voice.

It was a clear sign that the Israelites were indeed being preserved by God Himself. It was a clear sign that God wanted Israel to know that the quail and manna were from Him and not just some coincidence.

This cloud was way more than a novel way to lead Israel in the wilderness; it's the revelation of God Himself to His chosen people. This same cloud is the very cloud which is going to lead them to the base of Mount Sinai.

We know that at Sinai, God came to the people in 'a thick cloud', Exodus 19:9. Later in Exodus 33:9-10, we read that the cloud came down and rested at the entrance of the tabernacle, and the Israelites would worship God.

One of the last events at Mount Sinai was the construction of the tabernacle, in which the cloud played a significant role. Exodus 40:34-35 tells us that the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And so once the tabernacle was constructed, the cloud remained over the tabernacle.

It's important to note that Israel didn't aimlessly just walk around the wilderness for forty years; God was leading them from place to place. When the cloud moved, the tabernacle was disassembled and moved until the cloud came to rest, Exodus 40:36-38.

‘Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. During the last watch of the night, the LORD looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. He jammed the wheels of their chariots so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, “Let’s get away from the Israelites! The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt.” Exodus 14:21-25

What a sight this must have been as the water slowly rose to the left and the right. The Red Sea is literally parted, and there is now dry ground, Exodus 14:21, which God has miraculously provided for His people in order for them to escape from the Egyptians.

The Hebrew phrase for the Red Sea is ‘yam suph’, which clearly means ‘Reed Sea.’ The term aptly describes the lake region north of the Gulf of Suez, comprising the Bitter Lakes and Lake Timsah.

It is possible that the Israelites went along the narrow neck of land on which Baal-Zephon stood and that the Biblical Sea of Reeds was modern Lake Sabonis. We are certain that the crossing was in this area because the Israelites found themselves in the Wilderness of Shur after crossing the sea, Exodus 15:22.

We don’t know exactly where the place was, and what the exact geography was, an area like this will change geography every flood or drought season, but we do know there was enough water present to trap the Israelites, and then later to drown the Egyptians, perhaps ten feet of water or so, and we know there had to be enough room for the Israelites to cross over in one night, perhaps a mile-wide stretch.

Cole, in his commentary, says the following concerning the words, ‘wall of water’, Exodus 14:22.

‘The metaphor (water like a wall) is no more to be taken literally than when Ezra 9:9 says that God has given him a ‘wall’ (the same word) in Israel. It is a poetic metaphor to explain why the Egyptian chariots could not sweep in to right and left and cut Israel off; they had to cross by the same ford, directly behind the Israelites.’

We can only imagine what this would have been like to be actually walking on this dry ground with a literal wall of water on both sides of us, Exodus 14:22 / Joshua 4:22. I would imagine that this was one of the scariest walks in Israel’s history.

But do you know what they are learning as they walk through? Faith. They’ve already seen many wonders by God, and now they are practising what real Bible faith is. Real Bible faith has legs attached to it; real faith walks with trust in God, Hebrews 11:1 / Hebrews 11:6 / James 2:24.

At this time, the Egyptian army had just entered the dry land, Exodus 14:23. The confusion was caused by God pulling off chariot wheels, and so the Egyptians couldn’t really drive their chariots, Exodus 14:24-25. The advance of the Egyptians against Israel was probably fragmented and highly disorganised.

It must have been like watching a multi-car pile-up on the M6 with cars smashing into each other in all directions. Psalm 77:16-20 gives more detail in the description of the course of events during the Red Sea crossing. Paul says that the walls of water stood on either side of the Israelites, and the cloud was over them, 1 Corinthians 10:1-2. And so they went ‘through’ the sea, as they passed ‘under’ the cloud, they were immersed in the cloud-sea combination.

The people were saved from the Egyptians on the day of their baptism, at which point they also entered into a new relationship with Moses. Like Christians today, we are made free from sin when we submit to the waters of baptism, which replicate Christ’s burial and resurrection, Romans 6:3-7.

Tertullian, in his writings, says the following.

‘The nations are set free from the world by means of the water (their baptism), and the devil they leave quite behind, overwhelmed in the water. How mighty is the grace of water. Christ himself was baptized in water, demonstrated his power in water when invited to the nuptials, invited the sinful to drink of the living water, cited a cup of water as

glorious among the works of charity, recruited his strength at a well, and walked over the water; and even as he approached the cross, the water witnessed his innocence when Pilate washed his hands!’

Could this really have happened? Isn’t this just another interesting legend? It is completely plausible.

According to a Los Angeles Times article by Thomas H. Maugh titled ‘Research Supports Bible’s Account of Red Sea Parting’, he says the following.

‘Sophisticated computer calculations indicate that the biblical parting of the Red Sea, said to have allowed Moses and the Israelites to escape from bondage in Egypt, could have occurred precisely as the bible describes it. Because of the peculiar geography of the northern end of the Red Sea, researchers report Sunday in the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society, a moderate wind blowing constantly for about 10 hours could have caused the sea to recede about a mile and the water level to drop 10 feet, leaving dry land in the area where many biblical scholars believe the crossing occurred.’

At this point, there is no doubt in the minds of the Egyptians who are fighting for whom; they now know that they are fighting against the Lord, Exodus 14:25.

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen.” Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the LORD swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived. But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. That day, the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.’ Exodus 14:26-31

Moses was told to stretch out his hand, Exodus 14:26-27, as he did on a previous occasion, Exodus 13:18 / Exodus 15:14. Why? Was it really the motion of Moses’ hand, holding the rod, that parted the sea and made it come back? Of course not, God could have performed this miracle just as easily without Moses’ cooperation.

In addition to this, this was God’s vindication of Moses; Israel had previously accused him of the lowest of motivations and the most evil state of heart, through His blessing on Moses. God showed the whole nation that Moses was their chosen leader, Exodus 14:10-12.

We read Pharaoh’s chariots found themselves stalled in the crossing path of the Red Sea, and the waters’ sudden return brought about their death, Exodus 14:28 / Psalm 77:16-20 / Psalms 106:7-12 / Psalms 136:13-15.

The waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all of the army of Pharaoh, and not one of them was left standing, Exodus 14:28. God had literally wiped Israel’s enemy right off the face of the map with this one incredible act of deliverance.

Could this have really happened? Isn’t this just another legend?

Thomas H Maugh continues in his Los Angeles Times article, as he says the following.

‘An abrupt change in the wind would have allowed the waters to come crashing back into the area in a few moments, a phenomenon that the Bible says inundated the Israelites’ pursuers.’

DID PHARAOH DROWN IN THE SEA?

Rabbi Posner says the following.

‘There are differing opinions in the Midrash concerning his fate. Some say that he drowned in the Red Sea together with his army, while others opine that he survived the miraculous event. He survived in order to retell a first-hand account of the miracles and wonders that God performed. According to one Midrash, he made his way to Nineveh, Assyria, where he became king, the same king who, when hearing the prophet Jonah’s message from God foretelling Nineveh’s destruction, encouraged all his subjects to repent in order to avert the divine decree. Apparently, he had learned his lesson.’

The Red Sea was a turning point in Israel’s history. In this era, though they had many troubles ahead, Pharaoh and the Egyptians never troubled them again. If you are on the other side of the Red Sea, if your course with the Lord is set, and you know there is never any turning back for you, can you comfort a saint who is still on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea?

Moses now gives us a summary of the event. The Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left, **Exodus 14:29**. The LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore, **Exodus 14:30**.

Cole, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Somehow the sight of those dead bodies was the concrete sign that salvation and a new life for Israel were now assured.’

God came through for Israel! God’s motive for delivering us is not only His love for us, but also a desire to guard His own glory and honour. After witnessing what God had done, the people feared the LORD, and for the moment, they put their trust in Him and in Moses, **Exodus 14:31**.

Josephus, in his writings, adds the following comment concerning **Exodus 14:31**.

‘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; 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 to offer sacrifice to God, and to render oblations for the salvation of the multitude, as he was charged to do beforehand.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘How could God have destroyed mercilessly such a great host of people? Is this consistent with the revelation of God which has come to us through the Lord Jesus Christ? The answer is certainly YES. The current notion, held by many, that Almighty God will eternally overlook and tolerate human wickedness, cruelty, oppression, and violence, is NOT a true understanding of God. God is angry with the wicked every day, and there is sure to come a time when God, in righteous wrath, shall rise and cast evil out of His universe. As for those “poor Egyptians,” think of the mission upon which they were engaged. Every one of them was armed with military weapons. They were intent on killing whatever thousands or hundreds of thousands of Israel that they might have found necessary to their purpose of returning all of them to work perpetually in the brick yards of Egypt as slaves!’

And so the children of Israel are on the other side of the Red Sea, safe and sound, and they are about to take a journey to Mount Sinai. God is not through displaying His presence with the cloud. The very same water which saved Israel brought an end to their enemies forever.

After seeing all the dead bodies which had been washed up on the shore, which would have included Pharaoh, **Psalms 136:15**, God’s people feared the Lord and started to trust Moses. They had just witnessed God pouring out His judgment upon Egypt and experienced the same God bring about their salvation.

The deliverance of Passover and the miracle of the Red Sea go together; if not for the victory won at the Red Sea, the redemption at Passover would have meant nothing.

But they would have never made it to the Red Sea without the miracle of God's redemption at Passover. In the same way, the redemption of the cross would have meant nothing without the miracle of the resurrection; the two must go hand in hand.

God doesn't perform miracles for the fun of it; He performs them for a reason, and it's usually to encourage faith in Him, [Mark 16:20](#) / [John 20:30-31](#) / [Hebrews 2:4](#). What a journey this has been, not only for the Israelites but especially for Moses.

CHAPTER 15

INTRODUCTION

'Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD: 'I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea. 'The LORD is my strength and my defence; 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 warrior; the LORD is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea. The best of Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea. The deep waters have covered them; they sank to the depths like a stone.' Exodus 15:1-5

THE SONG OF MOSES AND MIRIAM

In the first stanza, we read that the Lord is a man of war. This remarkable song is assumed to have come spontaneously, as Moses led the nation into the wilderness on the other side of the Red Sea.

Keil, in his commentary, says the following.

'The proper meaning of this is that Moses not only led the congregation of Israel in singing this praise unto Jehovah, but that he also composed the song.'

God prizes these spontaneous expressions of praise and worship; this is a new song sung unto the Lord, [Psalm 40:3](#) / [Revelation 15:3-4](#). One of the greatest principles of worship is that it is unto the Lord, not unto man, when we worship God in song, [Exodus 15:1](#).

Our audience is the Lord Himself, not the people around us, [Deuteronomy 32:1-43](#) / [Judges 5:1-31](#) / [2 Samuel 22:1-51](#). God is praised because He did what Israel could not do; it was God who threw the horse and its rider into the sea! [Exodus 15:1](#).

When we let God be our strength, He will also be our song; we will have a 'singing joy' in our lives because His strength will not let us down. He has become my salvation, [Exodus 15:2](#), is a glorious phrase; we cannot save ourselves, but God must become our salvation. He is their God, and they will praise Him, their father's God, [Exodus 3:6](#), and they will exalt Him, [Exodus 15:2](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Every man may call the Divine Being his GOD; but only those who are his children by adoption through grace can call him their FATHER. This is a privilege which God has given to none but his children, Galatians 4:6.’

The LORD is a warrior and the LORD is his name, Exodus 15:3 / Exodus 6:3 / Psalms 24:8. God is a warrior and became Israel’s Saviour when He hurled Pharaoh, and his army into the sea, including his best officers and they drowned in the sea, Exodus 15:4 / Exodus 14:7 / Exodus 14:27. They were more or less buried in the sea and sank to the depths like a stone, Exodus 15:5.

‘Your right hand, LORD, was majestic in power. Your right hand, LORD, shattered the enemy. ‘In the greatness of your majesty, you threw down those who opposed you. You unleashed your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble. By the blast of your nostrils, the waters piled up. The surging waters stood up like a wall; the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy boasted, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake them. I will divide the spoils; I will gorge myself on them. I will draw my sword and my hand will destroy them.’ But you blew with your breath, and the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters.’ Exodus 15:6-10

In the second stanza, we read that what God did to the Egyptians, and they glory in the defeat of God’s enemies. If we really love the Lord, we should glory in the defeat of God’s enemies, especially when those ‘enemies’ are areas of sin in our lives. Too often, we have a sense of regret when we see them being defeated!

The right hand, Exodus 15:6, was thought to be the hand of skill and power. When God does a work with His right hand, it is a work of skill and power. Obviously, this is the use of anthropomorphism, understanding something about God by using a human figure of speech, even though it does not literally apply, John 4:24. This idea of the right hand is used in the Scriptures more than fifty times, Psalms 45:4 / Psalms 48:10 / Psalms 77:10 / Psalms 110:1 / Habakkuk 2:16 / Ephesians 1:20.

In the greatness of God’s majesty, He threw down those who opposed Him, unleashed His burning anger and it consumed them like stubble, Exodus 15:7. By the blast of God’s nostrils the waters piled up, is an obvious reference to the strong east wind, Exodus 14:21, and the wind caused the surging waters stand up like a wall and the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea, Exodus 15:8.

Pharaoh boasted that he would pursue Israel and overtake them, and after doing so, he would divide the spoils, gorge himself on them, draw his sword and kill all of the Israelites, Exodus 15:9. However, God blew with His breath, the sea covered them, and the Egyptians sank like lead in the mighty waters, Exodus 15:10.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In Exodus 14:28, we read only, ‘the waters returned. Here, we are told that it was because the wind blew. A sudden change in the direction of the wind would bring back at once the masses of water heaped up on the north.’

‘Who among the gods is like you, LORD? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? ‘You stretch out your right hand, and the earth swallows your enemies. In your unfailing love, you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength, you will guide them to your holy dwelling.’ Exodus 15:11-13

In the third stanza, we read, Who is like You. O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? Exodus 15:11 / Psalms 86:8 / Deuteronomy 32:16-17. Note that some translations use the word ‘celestials’, meaning angels.

Fields, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Whether the word ‘gods’ refers to mighty men, as in Ezekiel 32:21, or to mighty angels, as in Psalms 29:1, or to idols, as in Isaiah 43:10, or to other supposedly-existing mighty gods, NO ONE is like THE LORD.’

It was God who stretched out His right hand, and causes the earth to swallow His enemies, Exodus 15:12 / Jonah 2:6.

The earth swallowing His enemies is a reference to an earthquake took place at this time, Psalms 77:18. In His

unfailing love He will lead the people He has redeemed and in His strength He will guide them to His holy dwelling, Exodus 15:13.

Keil, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The holy habitation of God was the land of Canaan, Psalms 78:54, and it had been consecrated by God as a sacred abode for Jehovah among His people in the land promised to the patriarchs.’

If the people of Egypt still did not know who the Lord was, the people of Israel did; they knew the Lord was not like any of the false gods of Egypt or Canaan. In our worship, we should proclaim the superiority of the Lord God over anything else that would claim to be god, but we must not be like Israel, who soon forgot this.

‘The nations will hear and tremble; anguish will grip the people of Philistia. The chiefs of Edom will be terrified, the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling, the people of Canaan will melt away; terror and dread will fall on them. By the power of your arm, they will be as still as a stone—until your people pass by, LORD, until the people you bought pass by. You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance—the place, LORD, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, Lord, your hands established. ‘The LORD reigns for ever and ever.’

Exodus 15:14-18

In the fourth and fifth stanzas, we read that the people will hear and be afraid. Moses and the children of Israel know that the victory will also say something to the enemies of Israel; they will become afraid when they hear of the great things God has done for them.

Some forty years later, Rahab the Jericho prostitute could tell the Israeli spies. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt. Joshua 2:10. God wants to build victory upon victory in our lives, to use one victory as a platform for the next.

Some foes will be paralysed by fear when they hear of the great things God has done for us, Exodus 15:14-16 / Genesis 36:15 / Jeremiah 48:29 / Jeremiah 48:41, others will fight all the more out of fear. By the power of God’s arm His enemies will be as still as a stone until His people pass by, until the people He bought pass by, Exodus 15:16.

He will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of His inheritance, the place, He made for His dwelling, the sanctuary, His hands established, Exodus 15:17. The Lord shall reign forever and ever, Exodus 15:18, which is a gloriously true statement, but how long will Israel recognize the reign of God among them?

‘When Pharaoh’s horses, chariots and horsemen went into the sea, the LORD brought the waters of the sea back over them, but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground. Then Miriam, the prophet, Aaron’s sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her, with timbrels and dancing. Miriam sang to them: ‘Sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea.’ Exodus 15:19-21

When Pharaoh’s horses, chariots and horsemen went into the sea, it was the LORD’s doing; He brought the waters of the sea back over them, and He made it possible for the Israelites to walk through the sea on dry ground, Exodus 15:19.

Here we read that Miriam, Moses’ sister, Exodus 4:14, leads the women in worship. This is the first mention of Miriam by name, Exodus 15:20. Numbers 26:59 seems to indicate that Moses had only one sister.

We do know that it was his sister who supervised the launching of the basket onto the Nile River to preserve his life, Exodus 2:14, and arranged the hiring of Moses’ mother as his nurse.

Notice she is called ‘the prophet’ or ‘the prophetess’, Exodus 15:20. Miriam obviously had some kind of prophetic gift, although this could simply be referring to the fourth speech, rather than telling of future events.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Other women in the Bible called prophetesses are Deborah, [Judges 4:4](#); Huldah, [2 Kings 22:14](#); Noadiah, a false prophetess, [Nehemiah 6:14](#); Isaiah’s wife, [Isaiah 8:3](#); and Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess, [Revelation 2:20](#).’ It appears that all the women followed her with timbrels and with dances, [Exodus 15:20](#) / [Genesis 31:27](#). In their joy for their deliverance, these women broke forth with tambourines and dances for their deliverance from the Egyptians and their new freedom from the taskmasters of their former existence.

Miriam sings to the LORD, declaring that God is highly exalted. Both horse and driver, He has hurled into the sea, [Exodus 15:21](#). Later, Miriam used her position in an unwise and ungodly way to challenge the authority of Moses, [Numbers 12:1-15](#).

‘Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea, and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days, they travelled in the desert without finding water.’ [Exodus 15:22](#)

Three days is time enough to forget the victory; now Israel is faced with a long trip through a difficult, dry desert.

Buckingham, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Three days is the maximum time the human body can go without water in the desert.’

It would have been easy for them to question God’s leading, after all, why didn’t He take them the easy way, along the major trade route by sea? But God knew what was best!

THE WATERS OF MARAH AND ELIM

‘When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.) So, the people grumbled against Moses, saying, ‘What are we to drink?’ Then Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became fit to drink.’ [Exodus 15:23-25](#)

It must have seemed like a cruel joke, after three waterless days, to finally come upon water, and then to find that water undrinkable! [Exodus 15:23](#). The word ‘Marah’ means ‘bitter’, [Exodus 15:23](#).

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Moses had asked Pharaoh’s permission for the Israelites to go on a three-day journey into the wilderness, [Exodus 3:18](#) / [Exodus 5:3](#) / [Exodus 8:27](#), but now, having gone three days, the people found no water suitable for drinking.’ Once again, they grumbled against Moses, [Exodus 15:24](#) / [Exodus 13:17](#) / [Philippians 2:14](#) / [Jude 16](#). By God’s direction, Moses made the waters drinkable and provided for the nation, [Exodus 15:25](#). How did this miracle happen? Buckingham, in his commentary, suggests the following.

‘The chemicals in the sap of the broken limb drew the mineral content down to the bottom of the pools and left only good water on top.’

Even though the waters were now drinkable, there was undoubtedly still a significant magnesium and calcium content in the water. The laxative effect of this would have effectively cleaned out the systems of the children of Israel of common Egyptian ailments such as amoebic dysentery and bilharzia, a weakening disease common among Egyptian peasants.

In addition, calcium and magnesium together form the basis of a drug called dolomite, used by some athletes as a performance enhancer in hot weather conditions.

At Marah, God was providing the right medicine to both clean out their systems and prepare them for a long, hot march to Sinai. God was not only interested in getting the children of Israel out of Egypt, but He also wanted to get Egypt out of the children of Israel, both physically and spiritually.

‘There the LORD issued a ruling and instruction for them and put them to the test. He said, ‘If you listen carefully to the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you.’ Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water.’

Exodus 15:25-27

How did God test Israel? Exodus 15:25. By giving them a command to obey, Exodus 15:26. He wanted the Israelites to discover their own lack of faith. When God tells us what to do, He is really giving us a test, and our obedience determines if we will pass the test or not.

Were the children of Israel worshipping people who occasionally murmured or mumbling people who occasionally worshipped? Our true nature is revealed in times of testing.

If Israel would obey God, He would put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. In many ways, their physical health was directly connected to their obedience.

Dr S. I. McMillen, in his book ‘None of These Diseases’, says the following.

‘Many of God’s laws had a direct impact on hygiene and health, practices such as circumcision, quarantine, washing in running water, and eating kosher made a real medical difference in keeping the children of Israel free from disease.’

Beyond the direct medical implications, obedience also means we are at peace with God and free from a tremendous amount of stress and anxiety in life. As they came to the waters of Elim, the Israelites surely remembered their complaints at Marah.

If they had only endured past Marah, they would have made it to Elim. When they came to Elim, after the time of testing, God had a time of refreshing for the people of Israel, Exodus 15:27. He knew exactly what they needed!

CHAPTER 16

INTRODUCTION

‘The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. In the desert, the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, ‘If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.’ Exodus 16:1-3

The next destination for Israel was Mount Sinai, Exodus 16:1. The fifteenth day, Exodus 16:1, would be one month after leaving Egypt since they left on the fifteenth of the previous month, Exodus 12:18. God had an important meeting in mind for them there, and they had to go through the Desert of Sin to get to Sinai, Exodus 16:1. Fields, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The name Sin has no connection with the English word sin. The names Sin and Sinai are very similar, but the meaning of these names is uncertain.’

The whole congregation began to murmur against Moses and Aaron, **Exodus 16:2**, because they did not have enough food in the desolate wilderness, **Exodus 16:3**.

Numbers 11:5 tells us what they were eating whilst in Egypt. Oh, the taste of the fish, mouth-watering cucumber, and melons, oh, the aroma from the leeks, onions, and garlic. Their mummering was not completely without merit; they did need to eat, and there was little available for food.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was Israel’s third occasion of grumbling, **Exodus 16:2** / **Exodus 14:11-12** / **Exodus 15:24**. The reason this time was not fear of the Egyptian army or lack of water but lack of food, **Exodus 16:3**.’

It was a good thing that Israel was not ruled by a democracy at this point; things would have gone rather badly for Moses and the children of Israel had they listened to ‘majority rule’.

As is typical for murmurers, the congregation of Israel has a rather selective memory of the past; they don’t have the big picture that Moses and Aaron did. How easy it is for murmurers to assign evil motives to those they question! As if Moses and Aaron had nothing better to do than wipe out a whole nation!

The problem was that they did not see the big picture, and Moses and Aaron did. They could see where God had brought them from, and where God would take them; all the congregation of Israel could see was the present difficulty.

Now, remember the manner in which the firstborn died in Egypt; it was a painless death. And it seems by this point in time, they preferred to die painlessly in Egypt rather than die of starvation in the wilderness.

We can relate to them being hungry to a degree, but once again, they forgot very quickly what had just happened over a month ago. They forgot about the plagues, they forgot about the cloud and fire, and they forgot about the Red Sea escape. And so they have forgotten what God did for them, but isn’t it amazing how they didn’t forget how well fed they were in Egypt?

MANNA AND QUAIL

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way, I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day, they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.’ **Exodus 16:4-5**

God announces the coming of bread from heaven to Moses, **Exodus 16:4**. The blessing of bread from heaven came with the responsibility of obedience, and that responsibility would test Israel and measure their obedience, **Exodus 16:4**.

‘Manna’ was the name given by murmuring Israel; God almost always called it bread from heaven, **Nehemiah 9:15** / **Psalms 78:24** / **Psalms 105:40** / **Psalms 78:25**. Or angels’ food. Human beings ate the bread of angels, and He sent them all the food they could eat.

Jesus made it clear where the true bread from heaven comes from, the Father sent Jesus as the bread of God who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world, **John 6:32-33**. The test would come on the sixth day, when they were to gather twice as much, so the seventh day could be received as a day of rest, **Exodus 16:5**.

‘So, Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, ‘In the evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt, and in the morning, you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?’ Moses also said, ‘You will know that it was the LORD when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD.’ Exodus 16:6-8

Moses tells the people about God’s coming provision. In the evening, the Israelites will know that it was the LORD who brought them out of Egypt, and in the morning they will see His glory, **Exodus 16:6-7**. Notice God heard their complaints against Him, **Exodus 16:7**.

Moses says that the Lord will give them meat to eat in the evening, and all the bread you want in the morning, **Exodus 16:8**, but the promise God made to Moses of this is not recorded.

Their complaints are not against Moses and Aaron but against the Lord, **Exodus 16:8**. The people thought they were murmuring against Moses and Aaron, but really, they were murmuring against the Lord, **Exodus 16:2 / 1 Corinthians 10:10**.

‘Then Moses told Aaron, ‘Say to the entire Israelite community, ‘Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.’ While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud. The LORD said to Moses, ‘I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning, you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.’ That evening, quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning, there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor.’ Exodus 16:9-14

In the beginning of the nation of Israel, God was patient with their complaints while providing for them. But the time would come when their complaints, **Exodus 16:9**, would be rewarded with punishment, **Numbers 14:11-12**.

The glory and mercy of God are displayed large, **Exodus 16:9 / Exodus 19:18**, instead of answering their complaints with judgement or discipline. God gives them what they need instead, despite Him hearing their grumbling, **Exodus 16:11-12**.

One might think God would be afraid of rewarding their complaining hearts, yet He knows He has plenty of ways to teach them. Now, they need food! **John 6:32-40**.

God provides quail for meat and bread from heaven, **Exodus 15:13**. Quails are interesting birds, which were about the size of a pigeon. They mostly fly at night, and after migration, they usually fly with the wind, but are so exhausted that they fly so low that they can be easily caught by using a small net.

Cole, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The quails mentioned here ‘migrate regularly between southern Europe and Arabia across the Sinai Peninsula. They are small, bullet-headed birds with a strong but low flight, usually roosting on the ground or in the low bushes at nightfall. When exhausted, they would be unable to take off again. The birds are good eating and were a favourite delicacy of the Egyptians.’

The bread from heaven came with the dew each morning, as a ‘residue’ from the dew, **Exodus 16:13**. And just like the manna, the amount of quail in and around the Hebrew camp would have been astounding, **Psalms 78:27**.

It was small, round, and fine as frost on the ground, **Exodus 16:14**. Thus, it was not easy to gather as it would have to be ‘swept’ up from the ground. How could they sweep it up off the desert floor and not have dirt in it?

Jewish legends say the following.

‘When God sent manna, He would first send a north wind to sweep the floor of the desert, then rain to wash it clean. Then the manna would descend.’

Exodus 16:31 further describes the bread from heaven as like coriander seed, about the size of a sesame seed, and sweet like honey. **Numbers 11:7** says it was the colour of bdellium, a pear-like colour. It was either baked or boiled, **Exodus 16:23**.

What did manna taste like? Jewish legends have their own spin.

Ginzberg, in his commentary, says the following.

‘One only had to desire a certain dish, and no sooner had he thought of it, then manna had the flavour of the dish desired. The same food had a different taste to everyone who partook of it, according to his age, to the little children, it tasted like milk, to the strong youths like bread, to the old men like honey, to the sick like barley steeped in oil and honey.’ But they also say that manna was bitter in the mouth of Gentiles.’

What was this bread from heaven?

Buckingham, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Many have sought to identify with what the Arabs today call ‘manna’, which is formed when a tiny insect punctures the bark of the tamarisk tree, drinks the sap, and exudes a clear liquid that solidifies as a sugary globule when it hits the ground. When the sun comes up, it melts quickly and disappears.’

Though the bread from heaven may have been similar to the modern-day manna in the Sinai Peninsula, it wasn’t the same thing. The modern-day manna never appears in great quantities, it doesn’t last year-round, and it is confined to a small geographic region.

The purpose of giving the bread from heaven was not only to provide for the material needs of Israel but to teach them eternal lessons of dependence on God, **Deuteronomy 8:3**.

When God puts us in a place of need, He wants us to do more than meet the need; He wants to teach an eternal lesson. Feeding Israel through the bread from heaven was an example of God’s way of cooperating with man. Israel could not bring the manna, and God would not gather it for them. Each had to do their part.

Spurgeon, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Animals are often taught through their food. When they could not be reached in any other way, they have been instructed by their hunger, and by their thirst, and by their feeding.’

The miracle isn’t just about how the manna appeared; the miracle is also about the quantity. To feed 2.5 million people, they would have needed about nine million pounds of manna per day, which equals about forty-five hundred tons per day, or about a million tons annually for forty years.

‘When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, ‘What is it?’ For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, ‘It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat.’ **Exodus 16:15**

The people call the bread from heaven manna, **Exodus 16:15**. The name manna, given later in **Exodus 16:31**, means ‘what’s that?’ and comes from the question asked in this verse. When God’s provision comes, we often do not recognise it as God has promised to meet our needs, not our expectations.

‘This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Everyone is to gather as much as they need. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.’ The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. And when they measured it by the omer, the one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little. Everyone had gathered just as much as they needed. Then Moses said to them, ‘No one is to keep any of it until morning.’ **Exodus 16:16-19**

Instructions on the gathering of bread from heaven. The bread from heaven was to be gathered on an individual or a family basis, **Exodus 16:16**. Every household had to provide for itself, and a rich family could not hire a poor family to do their work for them. An omer, **Exodus 16:16**, could be as much as a gallon, but early, it may have meant only a ‘cupful’, an imprecise measure.

The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little, **Exodus 16:17**, and everyone had gathered just as much as they needed, not too much and not too little, **Exodus 16:18**. Moses then warns them by telling them that no one is to keep any of it until morning, **Exodus 16:19**.

‘However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So, Moses was angry with them. Each morning, everyone gathered as much as they needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away.’ **Exodus 16:20-21**

Notice that some of them paid no attention to Moses’ warning; they kept part of it until morning, **Exodus 16:20**.

Moses became angry with them, **Exodus 16:20**, but why?

Well, quite simply, because the Israelites hadn’t learned a thing from the events of Egypt, the Red Sea event, and the water supplied by God. They were simply living by sight and not by faith.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is amazing that the people had so little trust in God that they violated His laws with impunity, and such an attitude on the part of many in Israel was enough to have kindled the anger of any righteous man. Nevertheless, Moses loved them, and later, he actually offered his life as a sacrifice to save them, an offer which God declined to accept.’

Some of the people fail God’s test. Notwithstanding, they did not heed Moses. We can clearly hear and clearly know God’s command, and yet still somehow think ourselves exempt! It bred maggots and stank, **Exodus 16:20**. This is the product of our disobedience!

Apparently, bread from heaven had to be gathered and prepared early in the morning, because when the sun became hot, it melted, **Exodus 16:21**. This was God’s gracious way of forcing a work ethic upon the children of Israel.

‘On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much—two omers for each person—and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. He said to them, ‘This is what the LORD commanded: ‘Tomorrow is to be a day of sabbath rest, a holy sabbath to the LORD. So, bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.’ So, they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. ‘Eat it today,’ Moses said, ‘because today is a sabbath to the LORD. You will not find any of it on the ground today. Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any.’ Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? Bear in mind that the LORD has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where they are on the seventh day; no one is to go out.’ So, the people rested on the seventh day.’ **Exodus 16:22-30**

God provides double on the day before the Sabbath, **Exodus 16:22**. This is the first time God speaks to Israel about the Sabbath, and God essentially ‘forces’ them to keep it by not providing any bread from heaven on the Sabbath day, **Exodus 16:23 / Exodus 20:8-11**.

The Israelites saved it until morning and notice it didn’t stink or get maggots in it, **Exodus 16:24**. Moses tells them to eat it today because today is a sabbath to the LORD, and if they go out to find some on this day, they won’t, **Exodus 16:25-26**.

Doesn’t this blow you away in terms of just how powerful God is over every little detail? If you keep that bread overnight, it will go off and stink, but if you keep it overnight on the sixth day, it will be fine.

I just can't even begin to imagine what our God is capable of, and it's such a shame that some of the Israelites couldn't grasp that either. Despite what God said, some go looking for bread from heaven when He said there would be none, **Exodus 16:27**.

Even though they were there, some of them had the greed or the complete audacity to go out on the Sabbath day to look for more. Today, people still look for life and fulfilment in places God has said there would be none.

It's no wonder that the LORD asks Moses, how long will they refuse to keep His commands and His instructions?, **Exodus 16:28**. They had to bear in mind that the LORD had given them the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day God gives them bread for two days, **Exodus 16:29**. Everyone has to stay where they are on the seventh day, no one is to go out, **Exodus 16:29**. So the people rested on the seventh day, **Exodus 16:30**.

'The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey. Moses said, 'This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Take an omer of manna and keep it for the generations to come, so they can see the bread I gave you to eat in the wilderness when I brought you out of Egypt.' So, Moses said to Aaron, 'Take a jar and put an omer of manna in it. Then place it before the LORD to be kept for the generations to come.' As the LORD commanded Moses, Aaron put the manna with the tablets of the covenant law, so that it might be preserved. The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a land that was settled; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan. (An omer is one-tenth of an ephah.)' **Exodus 16:31-36**

The Israelites call the bread manna and we are told it was white in colour and tasted like wafers made with honey, **Exodus 16:31**. God commands some bread from heaven be set aside as a testimony to His provision, **Exodus 16:32 / Deuteronomy 8:3**.

Moses is commanded to take an omer of manna and keep it for the generations to come, so they can see the bread God gave them to eat in the wilderness when He brought you out of Egypt, **Exodus 16:32**. Moses then tells Aaron to take a jar and put an omer of manna in it and place it before the LORD to be kept for the generations to come, **Exodus 16:33**.

Aaron now puts the manna with the tablets of the covenant law, so that it might be preserved, **Exodus 16:34 / Numbers 17:10-11**. This pot full of bread from heaven was later put into the ark of the covenant, referred to here as the Testimony, KJV, **Hebrews 9:4**.

How could these things be placed in the ark if the ark hadn't been built yet?

Notice that the text only tells us that Aaron did lay it up, **Exodus 16:34**, but it doesn't tell us when. And so it's obvious, just like the next verse tells us about them eating manna for forty years, that was done afterwards when the ark was built.

In other words, Moses inserted this when he wrote the Book of Exodus to show that the Israelites fulfilled the commands God gave when the manna was given to them.

Even Jewish rabbis teach that these verses should logically follow the account of the erection of the Tabernacle, but they are placed here to stress the miracle of the manna. And when they finally got into Canaan, they no longer needed manna when they celebrated their first Passover, and so God stopped supplying it.

Dobson, in his commentary, says the following.

'The writer of Exodus is not saying that the manna was put in the Ark of the Covenant in the wilderness of Sin. He is describing here something that was done later on, because it has to do with the manna, which is the subject of the story. Students of the Gospels will know that the Gospel writers also sometimes arranged what they wanted to write according to subject, and not always according to the time when it happened.'

Newton, in his commentary, says the following.

‘We should remember, as one of the wisest men of a whole millennium stated it, that Joshua wrote some things in the Law of God (the Pentateuch), **Joshua 24:26**. These were public books and therefore not written without the authority of Moses.’

The Israelites ate manna for forty years, until they came to a land that was settled; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan, **Exodus 16:35**, and we are told that an omer is one-tenth of an ephah, **Exodus 16:36**.

We must also note that their clothes and shoes didn’t wear out for forty years, also, **Deuteronomy 29:5-6**. God had a much greater purpose for giving manna to the children of Israel than merely to feed them, **Deuteronomy 8:3**. The most important reason that manna was given was to teach His people to depend on Him and His Word.

When Satan tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread during His forty days of fasting, Jesus answered him by speaking about the Word of God is bread, **Matthew 4:4**.

John 6:25-59 and **John 6:47-51**, tells us that it is Jesus, who is the Word of God, He is the true bread from the Father in heaven, He is the bread of life who offers everlasting life.

So what exactly is the Lord trying to teach them and even us today through this event? He’s teaching them and us that we need to rely on the Lord daily for our daily provisions, **Matthew 6:11** / **Lamentations 3:22-23**.

It’s so important to take our faith one day at a time and enjoy the blessings of today. Why? Because we will receive brand new blessings tomorrow. Every day of our lives, we need to get out of our beds and look for the living bread; we need to read it, digest it, and live by it.

As important as it was for God to provide the manna, it was important for God to stop providing it; it was essential that Israel be put again in the position to receive God’s ‘normal’ provision, through hard work. God providing through giving us the means to work and all that goes with it is really no less miraculous than the giving of bread from heaven.

CHAPTER 17

INTRODUCTION

‘The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, travelling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. So, they quarrelled with Moses and said, ‘Give us water to drink.’ Moses replied, ‘Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?’ But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, ‘Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?’ Then Moses cried out to the LORD, ‘What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.’ **Exodus 17:1-4**

Israel now set out from the Desert of Sin, travelling from place to place as the LORD commanded, **Exodus 17:1** / **Numbers 33:12-13**. It was the Lord who commanded them to go to Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink, **Exodus 17:1**. No water for the people to drink is not an imaginary problem; the people are right to be concerned.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is the second of three episodes in which the water problem was dominant. The first was at Marah, **Exodus 15:22-25**, and the third was at Meribah near Kedesh, **Numbers 20:10-13**.’

Though the people focused their complaints against Moses, Moses understood that their problem was against the Lord. Why do you tempt the Lord? **Exodus 17:2**.

But the people then contended with Moses, showing they responded to the problem in the flesh. And at this point, turning back to Egypt was not an option; they needed water to live, **Exodus 17:3**, and Moses was desperate to answer their complaint.

It seems that their complaining here becomes more intense since they were desperate for water, even to the point of Moses asking God what to do with these people. They wanted to stone him, **Exodus 17:4**.

The lack of water isn't Moses' fault, yet as the leader of Israel, he must lead them to the answer. Moses cried out to the Lord, **Exodus 17:4**. Moses knew the people were being unfair, but he still had to lead while under the pressure of unfair attack, and he did the right thing by turning to God.

Although they desperately needed water, they had forgotten all the provisions of the Lord in the past. And so it was at this point in their journey that God's patience with them turned from enduring their complaints to punishment for their lack of faith.

At this point, Israel was completely in the will of God, yet there was no water to drink! Just because we are having problems, it doesn't mean we are out of the will of God.

When we have a problem, instead of thinking I'm in a desert, it's not surprising there isn't much water here. We need to look to God to meet this need, instead of doing what Israel did, and that is looking for someone to blame. That solved nothing!

And remember that it was at this event when Moses received water after striking the rock that it was going to become a foreshadowing of where we get the real living water, that is, from Christ, according to **John 7:37 / 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 / Galatians 3:1**.

WATER FROM THE ROCK

‘The LORD answered Moses, ‘Go out in front of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.’ So, Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel.’
Exodus 17:5-6

God tells Moses how water will be provided. He is to go out in front of the people, taking with him some of the elders of Israel and take in his hand the staff with which you struck the Nile and go, **Exodus 17:5**.

Most importantly, God would be with Moses through this difficult challenge of his leadership, **Exodus 17:6**. God had Moses use what had been successful before, the staff.

This no doubt gave confidence to Moses to use what had been proven useful, **Exodus 17:6**. God says when Moses strikes the rock, water will come out of it, **Exodus 17:6 / John 7:37-39**.

Unger, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The smitten Rock beautifully illustrates the death of Christ, resulting in the outpoured Spirit because of an accomplished redemption.’

The plan made no sense, but Moses had to operate in obedience to God. The wisdom of the plan could only be seen in its ultimate success.

Jamieson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The greatest of the miracles of Moses, because it was done without ostentation and in the presence of a few chosen witnesses.’

Certainly, Moses couldn't pick up that rod without remembering the power of God; the confidence he received by picking up the rod was a confidence in God, not himself.

Moses still had to lead, even in a difficult situation. A leader under attack may find it easy to shrink back from leadership, but God still wants leaders to lead! At the same time, Moses needed to lead in concert with the men of wisdom the Lord had given Israel.

God required faith in Moses, the leader, to do such a thing in front of the nation and the elders, **Exodus 17:6**, which meant Moses had to have a lot of trust in God, think how foolish he would look if it failed!

Now Moses could lead boldly! Naturally speaking, this rock may have held an artesian spring which God caused to burst forth when Moses struck the rock. To give drink to that many people would have required the Niagara Falls.

‘And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarrelled and because they tested the LORD, saying, ‘Is the LORD among us or not?’ **Exodus 17:7**

After God provides water, Moses names the place as a rebuke to the children of Israel. Naturally speaking, this rock may have held an artesian spring which God caused to burst forth when Moses struck the rock.

To give drink to that many people would have required the Niagara Falls. God remembered the way Israel tested Him at Massah and Meribah, recalling it in **Deuteronomy 6:16 / Deuteronomy 9:22 / Deuteronomy 33:8**.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This second instance of complaining about lack of water was more serious than the first because God had provided good water for them earlier in the desert, **Exodus 15:25**.’

What made this incident so important to God? Because they tempted the Lord by saying, ‘Is the Lord among us or not?’ In a time of difficulty, the children of Israel, directly or indirectly, doubted the loving presence and care of God among them.

Later, when Israel remembered God's provision in the wilderness at the Feast of Tabernacles, they had a specific ceremony where they recalled this miracle of water from a rock, **John 7:37-38**.

The living water Jesus spoke of was the Holy Spirit, **John 7:39**. It is no less miraculous for God to bring the love and power of the Holy Spirit out of our hearts than it is to bring water out of a rock, our hearts can be just as hard! Jesus was struck with Moses' rod, the curse of the law, and from Him flows water to satisfy our spiritual thirst.

THE AMALEKITES DEFEATED

‘The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. Moses said to Joshua, ‘Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands.’ So, Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning.’
Exodus 17:8-11

Here we read that God brings victory to Israel over the Amalekites. Amalek battles Israel, the power of Moses' prayer. The method of attack used by Amalek was despicable, **Deuteronomy 25:17-18**.

With his armies, Amalek attacked the feeble and weak who were in the rear of the Israelite company, **Exodus 17:8**. Though the Amalekites were descendants of Esau, **Genesis 36:12 / Genesis 36:16**, they had forsaken their fear of the God of Israel and so had felt no guilt about attacking the people of God.

This was an unprovoked attack by Amalek against Israel. Moses calls Joshua to lead the armies of Israel into battle, **Exodus 17:9**. This is the first mention of Joshua, **Exodus 33:11**. We find him doing what he does until the time Moses passes from the scene, Joshua is serving Moses. Joshua did as Moses said to him.

Moses supports the work behind the scenes in prayer, but the fate of Israel in battle depends on Moses' intercession. Tomorrow, Moses will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in his hands, **Exodus 17:9**.

Joshua went with Moses, Aaron and Hur to a hill that overlooked the valley where the battle between Israel and the Amalekites took place, **Exodus 17:10**. Joshua was first known as Oshea, **Numbers 13:16**, and his name means, 'Jehovah is salvation'.

Hur is the grandfather of Bezaleel, who was later inspired to build the tabernacle, **Exodus 31:1-5 / 1 Chronicles 2:18-20**. With the presence of Aaron and Hur, Moses was able to accomplish His part in the victory, illustrating that Moses also needed the help of others to stand by him. Good leaders know that they must always work in the company of others on whom they can lean.

The words 'held up his hand' describe the Israelite posture of prayer, **Exodus 17:11**, as we might bow our heads and fold our hands. It's likely that he held up the rod of God in his hand as a sign to the people. But with both hands being raised, this would be a position of prayer, **Psalms 28:2 / Psalms 63:4** and **1 Timothy 2:8**.

In other words, Moses recognised that God was the source of help and protection and the Israelites needed to depend upon God and God alone, especially if they wanted to defeat their enemies. And so in this incident, God was reaffirming the position of Moses, as well as His preservation of Israel through Moses.

Esses, in his commentary, says the following.

'As long as our hands are lifted up in praise, in worship, in thanksgiving, no matter what the circumstances, the Lord and His people will prevail. But the minute we put our hands down and stop praising God, the enemy overcomes us. In all things we have to praise God and give thanks to Jesus Christ.'

Dummelow, in his commentary, says the following.

'Moses praying on the hill while the people are fighting in the valley is an emblem (or type) of Christ interceding in the heavenly places for his people struggling upon earth, **Hebrews 4:14-16**.'

When Moses prayed, Israel won; when he stopped praying, Amalek prevailed, **Exodus 17:11**. How could this be? How could life or death for Israel depend on the prayers of one man?

God wants us to pray with this kind of passion, believing that life and death, perhaps eternally, may depend on our prayer. In his early days, Moses thought the only way to win a battle was to fight. Now he will let Joshua fight, while he does the more important work, pray for the victory.

In order to prevent anarchy in the years to come, God wanted Moses to be considered the authority through whom He worked to bring Israel to the Promised Land.

The events were to be recorded for future generations to remember, and the memory of the event would certainly play a part in reminding the people of what Amalek had done to the weak and feeble of Israel at a time when they were most vulnerable. In the future, the Amalekites would be completely annihilated from history for this attack against Israel.

'When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So, Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.' **Exodus 17:12-13**

When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, **Exodus 17:12**. Moses' hands are strengthened in prayer. Aaron and Hur come alongside Moses and literally hold his hands up in prayer, **Exodus**

17:13; they help him and partner with him in intercession. Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword, Exodus 17:13.

Though this was Moses' work to do, it was more than he could do; the battle of prayer could not be won by him alone. He needed others to come alongside and strengthen him in prayer.

Prayer is sometimes easy, other times it is hard work. This is why Paul describes the ministry of Epaphras as always labouring fervently for you in prayers, Colossians 4:12, and why Paul says we must continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving, Colossians 4:2.

Because of this work of prayer, Israel was victorious over Amalek. We are left with no other option than to say that if Moses, Aaron, and Hur had not done the work in prayer, the battle would not have been won, and history would have been changed.

How much victory is lacking because God's people will not pray? When Jesus accomplished the greatest victory over Satan, His hands were stretched out. And after the victory, Moses built an altar and named it, 'the Lord is my banner', Exodus 17:15. And so God not only delivered His people from the Egyptians, but He also delivered them from the hands of the Amalekites.

'Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven.' Moses built an altar and called it The LORD is my Banner. He said, 'Because hands were lifted up against the throne of the LORD, the LORD will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation.' Exodus 17:14-16

God tells Moses to write on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven, Exodus 17:14.

Rawlinson, in his commentary, says the following.

'The original has 'write this in THE book.' It is clear that a book already existed, in which Moses entered events of interest, and now he was divinely commanded to record in it the great victory over Amalek, and the threat uttered against them.'

Kaiser, in his commentary, says the following.

'This is the first of five instances in the Pentateuch where we read that Moses wrote down something at the Lord's command, Exodus 24:4 / Exodus 24:7 / Exodus 34:27 / Numbers 33:1-2 / Deuteronomy 31:9 / Deuteronomy 31:24.' Though Moses knew his prayer was important, he wasn't foolish enough to think that he had won the battle, in worship, he builds an altar and praises the name of 'Yahweh-Nissi, that is to say, 'The Lord is My Banner', Exodus 17:15.

Nissi refers to a flag or a banner, this is the idea of God, victorious in battle. The same word is used of the serpent on the pole in Numbers 21:8-9. See also Psalm 60:4 / Isaiah 11:10. Because hands were lifted up against the throne of the LORD, the LORD will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation, Exodus 17:16.

Because of God's strong command to battle against Amalek until they are completely conquered, many see the Amalekites as a picture of our flesh, which constantly battles against the spirit and must be struggled against until completely conquered, Galatians 5:17.

Israel was disobedient to the command to constantly wage war against Amalek in the days of Saul. This was the primary act of disobedience that cost Saul the throne, 1 Samuel 15:2-9 / 1 Samuel 28:18. In the future, the Amalekites would be completely annihilated from history for this attack against Israel, 1 Chronicles 4:41-43.

Let me bring to your attention two other ongoing miraculous events which had already begun. These two miracles are often overlooked, and at this point in time, the Israelites didn't know about them yet.

In **Deuteronomy 29**, where we find God making a covenant with the Israelites in Moab, Moses records two miracles which have been going on for forty years. For forty years, the Israelite's clothes and their shoes didn't wear out, **Deuteronomy 29:5**.

Do you think they noticed that their clothes and sandals never wore out? I can imagine a man saying to his wife, 'You know, darling, it's been a long time since we provided our children or even each other with some new clothes or shoes.'

Now think about this for a moment, God preserved them with water, He preserved them with food, and He preserved them with clothes. In **Matthew 6:25-34**, Jesus reminds us that there are certain things we shouldn't be worried about, food, drink or clothing, **Matthew 6:31**.

Jesus is not talking about paying our mortgage or our mobile phone bill; He's talking about God supplying our most basic needs for life. And when we stop relying on God and trusting that He will meet those needs, then that becomes sinful.

God was supplying the daily basic needs for the Israelites, and He still does it today for Christians. We need to recognise that because the Greek word used for worry is 'merimnao', which literally means distraction.

If we are to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, then we can't allow ourselves to become distracted by the basic necessities of life. We must trust that God is going to supply those basic necessities.

CHAPTER 18

INTRODUCTION

'Now Jethro, the priest of Midian and father-in-law of Moses, heard of everything God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, and how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt. After Moses had sent away his wife Zipporah, his father-in-law Jethro received her and her two sons. One son was named Gershom, for Moses said, 'I have become a foreigner in a foreign land'; and the other was named Eliezer, for he said, 'My father's God was my helper; he saved me from the sword of Pharaoh.' Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, together with Moses' sons and wife, came to him in the wilderness, where he was camped near the mountain of God. Jethro had sent word to him, 'I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons.' Exodus 18:1-6

JETHRO VISITS MOSES

Moses meets with Jethro, his father-in-law, in the desert of Midian and heard everything that God had been doing through Moses, including their exodus from Egypt, **Exodus 18:1**.

Moses is reunited with his wife Zipporah, **Exodus 18:2** / **Exodus 4:18-26**, and his two sons Gershon and Eliezer, **Exodus 18:2**. Remember he had sent his family back to Midian, possible during the plagues of Egypt, **Exodus 4:24-26**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Jethro, now finding that God had delivered them, and totally discomfited the Egyptians, their enemies, thought it proper to bring Zipporah and her sons to Moses, while he was in the vicinity of Horeb.'

His sons, Gershom, whose name means foreigner, and Eliezer, whose name means Mt God is helper, were born while he lived with Jethro during the forty years he was in Sinai before going to Egypt, Exodus 18:3-4 / Exodus 2:22 / Exodus 4:25.

Jethro, together with Moses' sons and wife, came to him in the wilderness, where he was camped near the mountain of God, Exodus 18:5. Jethro had sent word to Moses informing him that he was coming to him with his wife and her two sons, Exodus 18:6.

Moses had a special relationship with Jethro, though he had been raised in all the wisdom and education of Egypt. Moses no doubt learned more about real leadership from the priest and shepherd Jethro, whose flocks Moses tended until his call at Sinai.

‘So, Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. They greeted each other and then went into the tent. Moses told his father-in-law about everything the LORD had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake and about all the hardships they had met along the way and how the LORD had saved them. Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the LORD had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians. He said, ‘Praise be to the LORD, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly.’ Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.’ Exodus 18:7-12

Moses goes out to meet Jethro, bows down and kisses him, then they greet each other and go into the tent, Exodus 18:7. There was obviously a great relationship between Moses and his father-in-law.

Though Moses had just brought a great nation of people out of Egypt to the land of Jethro, he was humble enough to bow down and show respect to his father-in-law.

Fields, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Moses respected Jethro for his wisdom, as well as his age, and for being his father-in-law. Such humility and respect for age is not popular in our times, but it is highly commended in the Scriptures and needs to be restored.’

Moses then tells his father-in-law about everything the LORD had done to Pharaoh, the Egyptians, for Israel's sake, about all the hardships they had met along the way and how the LORD had saved them, Exodus 18:8.

Jethro was delighted to hear about everything God had done regarding the Egyptians, Exodus 18:9, and then he glorifies God when Moses reports what the Lord has done, Exodus 18:10-11.

It's possible Jethro knew this before; he was the priest of Midian, Exodus 18:1. But hearing of God's great works over the gods of Egypt brings this truth more clearly than before.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Every part of Jethro's conduct proves him to have been a religious man and a true believer. His thanksgiving to Jehovah, Exodus 18:10, is a striking proof of it; he first blesses God for the preservation of Moses, and next for the deliverance of the people from their bondage.’

Jethro then brings a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and then Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with him in the presence of God, Exodus 18:12.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Jethro, who was a priest, Exodus 2:16, had a right to offer these sacrifices, nor can there be a doubt of his being a worshipper of the true God, for those Kenites, from whom the Rechabites came, were descended from him, 1 Chronicles 2:55 / Jeremiah 35:1-19.’

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Eating together in the ancient Near East was a solemn occasion because it constituted the establishment of an alliance between the parties involved. That is undoubtedly what it involved here. The fact that Aaron and all the elders of Israel were also present demonstrated its importance.’

We don’t know how much Jethro understood about the one true God of heaven, but we do know that he gave all glory to God for all that had transpired during Israel’s deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. It is possible that Jethro was a descendant of one of Abraham’s other children through Keturah, named Midian, [Genesis 25:1-2](#).

This is one possible reason he is aware of who God is, [Exodus 2:16](#) / [Exodus 3:1](#) / [Exodus 18:1](#). Though the Midianites were later portrayed as the enemies of God, [Numbers 31](#), Jethro, a priest of Midian, stood as a light of righteousness in an evil nation, [Genesis 14:18-20](#) / [Genesis 20:6](#) / [Job 1:1](#) / [Job 1:8](#).

‘The next day, Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, ‘What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?’

Moses answered him, ‘Because the people come to me to seek God’s will. Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God’s decrees and instructions.’ Exodus 18:13-16

It’s not surprising that there would be many disputes and questions about where they settled, especially since there were a lot of people. Moses here acted as a judge from morning until evening, obviously dealing with one case at a time, [Exodus 18:13](#).

Jethro observes Moses as he settles disputes among the children of Israel, [Exodus 18:14](#). Moses, because he knew the statutes of God and His laws, was fit to settle disputes among the children of Israel, [Exodus 18:15-16](#).

‘Moses’ father-in-law replied, ‘What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. Listen now to me, and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people’s representative before God and bring their disputes to him. Teach them his decrees and instructions and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave.

But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter because they will share it with you. If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied.’ Exodus 18:17-23

Jethro observes that Moses taking all this responsibility to himself was a massive burden, [Exodus 18:17-18](#). Jethro now gives Moses some advice as well as God’s guidance. He tells Moses that he must represent before God and bring their disputes to Him, [Exodus 18:19](#).

For Moses to effectively delegate, he must first stand before God for the people; that is, he must pray for the people. Delegation will not work if the blessing of God is not upon it.

For Moses to effectively delegate, he must teach them the statutes and the laws, show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave, [Exodus 18:20](#). This means he must educate not only those who will hear the disputes but also those who might dispute in God’s Word.

He tells Moses to teach them God’s decrees and instructions, and for Moses to effectively delegate, he must next select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, [Exodus 18:21](#).

These men should be appointed as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, [Exodus 18:21](#). Delegation fails if the job is not put into the hands of able, godly men, [Exodus 18:21](#). Paul gave the same counsel to Timothy in [2 Timothy 2:2](#).

Josephus, in his writings, says the following.

‘Moses, by the advice of Jethro, appointed rulers over myriads, and then over thousands; these he divided into five hundreds, and again into hundreds, and into fifties; and appointed rulers over each of these, who divided them into thirties, and at last into twenties and tens; that each of these companies had a chief, who took his name from the number of persons who were under his direction and government.’

By having these men serve as judges for the people at all times and by bringing every difficult case to Moses, this will make Moses’ load lighter, because they will share it with him, Exodus 18:22.

For Moses to effectively delegate, he must still have oversight and leadership over those under him, every great matter they shall bring to him, Exodus 18:22. Delegation is the exercise of leadership, not the abandoning of it. If Moses effectively delegates, the result will be a blessing for all. You will be able to endure, Moses will be able to do his job better than ever, and all these people will also go to their place in peace; the people will be effectively ministered to.

This method also had the advantage of settling problems quickly; people didn’t need to wait in line for Moses. Jesus said we should agree with our adversary quickly, Matthew 5:25.

If Moses does this and if God commands, he will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied, Exodus 18:23. If the people knew God’s Word for themselves, many disputes could be settled immediately. Also, if the people knew God’s Word for themselves, they would not be discouraged if they could not bring their case to Moses himself; they would know one of Moses’ delegates could give them counsel from God’s wisdom.

Much to Moses’ credit, he is teachable. When Jethro says the thing that you do is not good, he listens to Jethro. Moses knew how not only to bow to the complaints of the children of Israel, Exodus 17:3, but how to hear the godly counsel from a man like Jethro.

The problem was simply that the job was too big for Moses to do; his energies were being spent unwisely. Moses must delegate, even as in Acts 6:2-4, the apostles insisted they needed to delegate so they would not leave the Word of God and serve tables.

Meyer, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The longer a controversy lasts, the worse the tangle becomes, the more hot words are spoken, the more bystanders become involved.’

‘Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. They served as judges for the people at all times. The difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves. Then Moses sent his father-in-law on his way, and Jethro returned to his own country.’ Exodus 18:24-27

Moses wisely follows Jethro’s suggestions, and did everything Jethro told him to do, Exodus 18:24. He chose capable men made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, Exodus 18:25. They served as judges at all times and the difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves, Exodus 18:26.

Moody, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is better to set a hundred men to work than to do the work of a hundred men. You do a service to a man when you evoke his latent faculty. It is no kindness to others or service to God to do more than your share in the sacred duties of Church life.’

We should note that the actual appointment of the judges came later in Deuteronomy 1:12-18, where it appears that Moses also added a refinement of his own.

He charged the people with the responsibility of picking out their judges, much in the same way as the apostles instructed the people to choose the seven, Acts 6:1-6.

In Moses' method of administration, some had a higher position than others, but only in the eyes of men; God honoured the faithful service of the man over tens as much as the service of the man over thousands.

After Jethro had given his advice, and the organisation of judgment was put into place, he returned to his own land. Exodus 18:27 / Numbers 10:29. Zipporah and their two sons, Gershom and Eliezer, remained with Moses as the nation moved on to Mount Sinai.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The last verse of the chapter tells of the departure of Jethro. A moment's reflection will emphasise what an important and significant visit he had made.

1. He restored Moses' family to him, after their having been separated for about one year.
2. As a legitimate priest of the Highest One, Jethro no doubt encouraged Moses, mentioning their peaceful entry into Canaan.
3. Through his timely suggestion of a system of judges, he made a significant contribution to the subsequent history of Israel.
4. By the same device, he also greatly alleviated the heavy burden of administration, which until then had rested upon Moses, and
5. He also offered burnt offerings and sacrifices to the true God and enjoyed a wonderful meal of religious fellowship with the leaders of God's Chosen People.’

CHAPTER 19

INTRODUCTION

‘On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on that very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai. After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain.’ Exodus 19:1-2

AT MOUNT SINAI

It took them twenty days to travel three hundred and four miles to the Red Sea, and they spent eight days camped there until Pharaoh's armies arrived, and they crossed the Red Sea.

It took them another twenty days to travel one hundred and sixty-one miles to Sinai after crossing the Red Sea, including seven days camping in the wilderness of Sin and two days battling the Amalekites at Rephidim.

Therefore, they left Goshen on Passover, on the 14th day of the first month, arrived at the Wilderness of Sin on the 15th day of the second month and arrived at the Desert of Sinai on the 1st day of the third month, Exodus 19:1-2.

So all in all, the Bible tells us that it was a forty-four-day journey, covering around four hundred and sixty-five miles in distance from Goshen to Sinai, which is roughly the same distance from London to Scotland.

It has taken them three months of trusting God to get to this place, but they are finally here. They have seen God's deliverance from Egypt, received His guidance on the way to go, seen His glorious victory at the Red Sea, seen God provide food and water miraculously, and have seen a prayerful victory won over the Amalekites.

Israel will stay here until Numbers 10, which is more than fifty-seven chapters of Scripture which are devoted to what happened to Israel in the year they camped out at Mount Sinai.

In one sense, all that has gone before has meant to bring them to this place. God said 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. Sinai was the place where Moses had his 'burning bush' experience with God; now the people will experience some of what Moses had before. If the people are going to meet God at this mountain, it can only happen because Moses had already been there.

The people can't go further than their leader. If Mount Sinai looks like anything, it looks like a huge pulpit, a sudden, steep outcropping of mountains out in the wilderness. Here, God would preach the most dramatic sermon ever heard!

'Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, 'This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.' Exodus 19:3-6

Moses, led by God, goes up on the mountain to meet with God, Exodus 3:12, and the Lord speaks to Moses again. God associates the nation with the weakest and most carnal of the patriarchs; they are more like Jacob than Abraham or Isaac, Exodus 19:3 / Jeremiah 31:31.

God gave a message to the people through Moses, a message regarding the purpose and destiny He had for Israel, a destiny based on what God had already done for them.

God's love and care were shown for Israel already, as He bore them on eagle's wings, Exodus 19:4. This implies He brought them with a view to having fellowship with Him. God didn't deliver Israel so they could 'do their own thing,' but so they could be God's people.

It is said that an eagle does not carry her young in her claws like other birds; the young eagles attach themselves to the back of the mother eagle and are protected as they are carried. An arrow from a hunter must pass through the mother eagle before it can touch the young eagle on her back.

Notice the terms and conditions are laid down with a choice; the word 'if' tells us it's a choice, Exodus 19:5 / Joshua 24:15. If they fully obey God and if they keep His covenant.

He says, Keep My covenant, the covenant was greater than the law itself, the covenant God would make with Israel involved law, sacrifice, and the choice to obey and be blessed or disobey and be cursed, Exodus 19:5.

God intended for Israel to be a special treasure unto Him, a people with a unique place in God's great plan, a people of great value and concern to God. And so if they meet this requirement, then God will choose them to be His treasured possession, His kingdom of priests and His holy nation, Exodus 19:6.

All this could only be fulfilled if Israel would stay in God's Word, if they would obey God's voice and keep His covenant, then. Apart from knowing and doing God's Word, God's destiny for the nation would never be fulfilled.

Dummelow, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Jewish nation fulfilled its destiny, through its rejection of the Messiah; however, the sacred function of Israel passed over to the Christian church, to which St. Peter transferred the titles given to Israel in these two verses, Exodus 19:5-6 / 1 Peter 2:9 / Revelation 1:6.’

Paul longed for Christians to know how great a treasure they were to God; he prayed they would know what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, Ephesians 1:18.

God intended for Israel to be a kingdom of priests, where every believer could come before God themselves, and everyone could represent God to the nations. Peter reminds us we are a royal priesthood, those who serve God as both kings and priests, and He has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, Revelation 1:6.

God’s original plan was for all of the Israelites to be these things, not just a select few. And their task was to reconcile the world back to God, and that task still applies to Christians today. In contrast to those who did not believe, as the Israel of the Old Testament, Peter says that Christians are four things, 1 Peter 2:9.

1. All Christians are a chosen people or a chosen generation, as some translations have it.

We didn’t choose God; God chose us, Ephesians 1:4. All Christians are a part of the family of God with whom God has established a covenant relationship according to Matthew 26:26-29.

2. All Christians are a part of a royal priesthood.

All Christians are now the priests of God, and we all offer up spiritual sacrifices and the service of our lives in service to the world according to Romans 12:1. And so the church is God’s royal priesthood to minister to the world of unbelievers.

3. All Christians are part of a holy nation.

The church of God’s people has been separated from the world because we voluntarily submit to our King Jesus. And as John 17:14-17 reminds us, Christians are in the world, but not of the world.

4. All Christians are God’s special possession.

Now, if we were around during New Testament times, the chances are you would have encountered someone who was demon-possessed. And how would you know that they were demon-possessed? Because of their behaviour and the way they live and talk.

How is the world going to know we belong to God? Well, to put it simply, the world should know we belong to God because we should be people who are possessed by God. And that possession is shown in the way we act, the way we think, live and talk, Galatians 5:22-23.

And so God’s plan for Israel here at Sinai was that every single one of them should be His treasured possession, a part of His kingdom of priests and His holy nation. And their task was the same as our task today, to proclaim that good news, which we call the Gospel.

God intended for Israel to be a holy nation, a nation and people set apart from the rest of the world, the particular possession of God, fit for His purposes. As God’s people, we must be set apart, thinking, and doing differently from others in this world.

‘So, Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak. The people all responded together, ‘We will do everything the LORD has said.’ So, Moses brought their answer back to the LORD. The LORD said to Moses, ‘I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you.’ Then Moses told the LORD what the people had said.’ Exodus 19:7-9

Moses goes back and summons the elders and sets before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak, Exodus 19:7. Before God lays out His covenant with Israel, He desires to know their state of heart, will they accept it or reject it? Deuteronomy 5:29.

The people agree to obey the covenant, and Moses returns to the LORD, Exodus 19:8 / Deuteronomy 5:27-28. The people will later be challenged to receive the covenant again, after they have heard its terms, and they do, Exodus 24:1-8.

Moses here is acting as a true priest, as an intermedium between God and the people, yet God spoke audibly to Moses, that the people may hear when God speak with him, so everyone would know that it was really God speaking, Exodus 19:9.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Jews consider this as the fullest evidence their fathers had of the Divine mission of Moses; themselves were permitted to see this awfully glorious sight, and to hear God himself speak out of the thick darkness: for before this, as Rabbi Maymon remarks, they might have thought that Moses wrought his miracles by sorcery or enchantment; but now, hearing the voice of God himself, they could no longer disbelieve nor even doubt.’

God may refuse to speak to the resisting heart if there is not an initial openness to the things of God; God may honour that person’s hardness and refuse to bring His life-giving Word. Are we playing games and resisting God’s word?

‘And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and be ready by the third day, because on that day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, ‘Be careful that you do not approach the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain is to be put to death. They are to be stoned or shot with arrows; not a hand is to be laid on them. No person or animal shall be permitted to live.’ Only when the ram’s horn sounds a long blast may they approach the mountain.’ Exodus 19:10-13

God commands that His holy presence on Sinai be respected. God was going to appear to Israel in a spectacular fashion, and before this could happen, the people had to prepare themselves. They had to be consecrated, Exodus 13:2, for two days and wash their clothes, Exodus 19:10 / Hebrews 4:16.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A customary element of consecration or sanctification was that of changing to clean clothes, as when Jacob ordered his family so to do in Genesis 35:2.’

They had to be ready by the third day because God was going to come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people, Exodus 19:11. The coming of God to Mount Sinai did not mean the people were free to go to the mountain and fellowship with God. They had to keep their distance behind a barrier, and the penalty for failing to keep their distance was death, Exodus 19:12.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Whether this was a line marked out on the ground, beyond which they were not to go, or whether a fence was actually made to keep them off, we cannot tell; or whether this fence was made all round the mountain, or only at that part to which one wing of the camp extended, is not evident.’

Any person or animal killed for getting too close would be regarded as so unholy they could not even be touched, they had to be executed with stones or arrows, Exodus 19:13 / Hebrews 12:20.

The people could only come near at God’s invitation when the trumpet sounds long, Exodus 19:13 / Exodus 19:16 / Exodus 19:19. When the signal was given, Moses, with the priests and elders, could come up the mountain, but only Moses was to approach God, Exodus 24:1-2.

If there is anything basic to human nature, it is that we need boundaries. In setting these boundaries and providing the death penalty for breaching them, God is showing Israel that obedience is more important than their feelings. We don't doubt that some bold Israelites felt like going beyond the boundaries, but they were to submit their feelings to obedience.

‘After Moses had gone down the mountain to the people, he consecrated them, and they washed their clothes. Then he said to the people, ‘Prepare yourselves for the third day. Abstain from sexual relations.’ Exodus 19:14-15

The people had to demonstrate their desire for purity by putting on clean clothes, [Exodus 19:14](#), and restraining their flesh. That is not having sexual relations with their wives, [Exodus 19:15](#).

The meeting with God could only come on the third day, [Exodus 19:15](#); anyone who tried to meet with God before this would be coming before God had opened the way.

‘On the morning of the third day, there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently. As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and the voice of God answered him.’ Exodus 19:16-19

On the morning of the third day, notice there was thunder, lightning, a thick cloud over the mountain, [Exodus 19:16](#). The presence of God was signalled by signs of His power and glory, the thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud must have seemed terrifying to the people, [Hebrews 12:21](#).

Beyond all one could see, hear, and feel there, then came along a loud blast of a trumpet, a trumpet coming not from the camp but from heaven itself, no wonder all the people who were in the camp trembled! [Exodus 19:16](#).

Then, Moses could lead the people right up to the barrier, to the very foot of Mount Sinai, where they could see, smell, hear, and virtually taste the fire which engulfed the mountain, as well as feel the earth shake under their feet when the whole mountain quaked greatly, [Exodus 19:17-18](#).

Crake, in his commentary, says the following.

‘For though they might not touch the mount till they had permission, yet when the trumpet sounded long, it appears they might come up to the nether part of the mount, [Exodus 19:13](#) / [Deuteronomy 4:11](#), and when the trumpet had ceased to sound, they might then go up unto the mountain, as to any other place.’

When God comes down, Mount Sinai is completely enveloped in smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire, [Exodus 19:18](#). There was thunder, lightning, and thick smoke, and the entire mountain was shaken. God then descends upon Mount Sinai in fire; the smoke was like the smoke of a furnace because of the way it was ascending off of the mountain, [Exodus 19:18](#).

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God again used the symbol of fire to reveal Himself on this mountain, [Exodus 3:2-5](#). Fire is a symbol of His holiness that enlightens, purges, and refines.’

In the midst of all this, the sound of the trumpet blast becomes longer and louder and longer and louder, until Moses speaks to God, [Exodus 19:19](#), perhaps asking Him to stop!

What Israel heard from the cloud was a sound that they recognised was from God, [Exodus 20:1](#) / [Deuteronomy 4:11-12](#). They did not actually hear the audible words that Moses heard.

‘The LORD descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So, Moses went up.’
Exodus 19:20

Moses goes up on Mount Sinai to the immediate presence of God, Hebrews 12:28-29. As the people trembled in terror at the foot of the mountain, Moses needed the courage to go to the top and meet with God.

We can imagine all the people of Israel thinking Moses was crazy for going up there! Yet, of all people, Moses could have such courage because he knew God not only in terms of this awesome power but also in terms of His gracious kindness.

‘And the LORD said to him, ‘Go down and warn the people so they do not force their way through to see the LORD, and many of them perish. Even the priests, who approach the LORD, must consecrate themselves, or the LORD will break out against them.’ Moses said to the LORD, ‘The people cannot come up Mount Sinai, because you yourself warned us, ‘Put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy.’ The LORD replied, ‘Go down and bring Aaron up with you. But the priests and the people must not force their way through to come up to the LORD, or he will break out against them.’ So, Moses went down to the people and told them’ Exodus 19:21-25

God tells Moses to go back down and warn the people again about respecting the holiness of His presence on Sinai, Exodus 19:21. Those who through rebellion, curiosity, or raw daring who would presume to go up on the mountain would perish, Exodus 19:21.

The glory and greatness of God weren't to be a matter subjected to scientific inquiry or a way to prove one's own manhood. Even the priests, who approach the LORD, need to be consecrated, or the LORD will break out against them, Exodus 19:22. No one ones who these priests are but we do know they are Levitical priests because that didn't existence at this time, Exodus 28:1.

Moses says to the LORD that the people cannot come up Mount Sinai, because God Himself warned them to put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy, Exodus 19:23.

Just because God called Moses and Aaron up did not mean there was an open invitation for the whole nation to meet with God on Mount Sinai; the barrier was still to stand, God would break out against them, Exodus 19:24 / 2 Corinthians 3:7. Moses went down to the people and told them what God had said, Exodus 19:25.

Try to imagine being there, imagine that God the Father Himself is descending from His throne in heaven to visit these people with His manifest presence. What a sight and sound this must have been, and so God calls Moses to come to the top of the mountain to meet and talk with Him; no one else was allowed to go up.

Exodus 19 gives a powerful picture of the awesome fear each Israelite must have felt at Mount Sinai; surely this would have inspired them to a holy walk! In fact, many today feel we need to get more of the thunder and fire and trembling of Mount Sinai into people as a way of keeping them from sin.

Yet, not forty days from this event, the whole nation will be practising an orgy around a golden calf, praising it as the god which brought them out of Egypt! Israel had awe, but little submission of their will.

Chadwick, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Awe is one thing: the submission of the will is another.’

Hebrews 12 tells us loud and clear that we have come to a different mountain, that our salvation and relationship with God is centred at Mount Zion, not Mount Sinai, Hebrews 12:18-24.

Sinai speaks of fear and terror, but Zion speaks of love and forgiveness. Sinai is in a dry desert, but Zion is the city of the Living God. Sinai, with all its tears and power, is earthly, but the Mount Zion we come to is heavenly and spiritual.

At Sinai, only Moses could come and meet God, but at Zion, there is an innumerable company, a general assembly. Sinai had guilty men in fear, but Zion has just men made perfect.

At Sinai, Moses is the mediator, but at Zion, Jesus is the mediator. Sinai put forth an old covenant, ratified by the blood of animals, but Zion has a New Covenant, ratified by the blood of God's precious Son. Sinai was about barriers and exclusion, but Zion is all about the invitation. Sinai is Law, Zion is grace.

Therefore, we shouldn't come to Zion as if we were coming to Sinai, put away your hesitation and get bold in coming to God! However, there is much for us to learn at Mount Sinai.

We learn of God's holy requirements and what we must do before we can come to Him. We must be willing to receive God's word, we must be set apart, and we must be cleansed. We can only come after the third day; we must respect God's boundary; we must restrain the flesh, and we must know that we come to a holy God.

CHAPTER 20

INTRODUCTION

‘And God spoke all these words: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.’ Exodus 20:1-2

God communicated to Moses through the language of men, but to the people, the ‘voice’ was an awesome sound that struck reverence in their hearts, [Exodus 20:1](#) / [Exodus 20:18](#) / [Exodus 19:16](#) / [Deuteronomy 5:22](#). God declares Himself as the One who brought the Israelites out of Egypt, the land of slavery, [Exodus 20:2](#).

We should note that although Moses doesn't mention it here, angels played some part in mediating the law from God to the Israelites through him, [Deuteronomy 33:2](#) / [Galatians 3:19](#) / [Hebrews 2:2](#).

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

When it comes to the Ten Commandments, we must remember that they were given by God to the Israelites and the Israelites only, [Exodus 19:5-6](#). The laws were given for the social security and health of the nation of Israel, which would help them live together as a society in this new land called Canaan.

These ten commands are the basis for the Hebrew law; the first four are focused on their relationship with God, and the next six are focused on their relationship with each other and other people. God is going to give these laws because He wants them to love Him because of what He's done for them up to this point in time.

Please note that there are some slight differences between the statements of the Ten Commandments found in [Exodus 20:1-17](#) and the statements found in [Deuteronomy 5:6-12](#).

The reason for this is obvious, in Deuteronomy the commandments are given to those Israelites who are preparing to live in the Promised Land, but in Exodus the commandments were given to those Israelites to those who would eventually die in the wilderness. In other words, the words written in Deuteronomy were given to a new generation of people, who were preparing to enter the Promised Land.

ISRAEL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

OTHER GODS

‘You shall have no other gods before me.’ Exodus 20:3

In this first command, we learn about the uniqueness of God, Deuteronomy 6:4. God was to be their only God; they were to be monotheists, Deuteronomy 5:7 / Exodus 20:3. They weren't to be atheistic, believing that there was no God, nor were they to be polytheistic, believing in many gods.

They weren't to be pantheistic, believing in nature worship; they weren't to be deistic, the belief that God created everything but just left them to it, and they weren't to be agnostic, believing that they couldn't know God. God was to be their only God.

Sloyen, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Because God had initiated love toward Israel by redeeming the nation, Deuteronomy 5:6, the people were to respond appropriately by loving Him in return. This is the essence of God's grace. He initiates love, and the only reasonable response is to love Him for what He has done, Romans 12:1-2. God does not just love us when we love Him. More fundamentally, He loves us first, Romans 5:10 / Ephesians 1:4-5 / 1 John 4:19. In the game of love, God always makes the first move.’

Although the word ‘you’ is plural, as referring to the Israelites as a whole, it also implies that each person was responsible for their own actions. Each individual was to have no other gods before them, but we need to ask the question: Is God implying that there are other gods?

The answer is no, it's not that other gods are excited, rather He's referring to the gods of their imaginations, gods which people create after their own image. God is warning them against following after their own religious imaginations in order to establish their own religious laws.

It's true that Israel wouldn't give up their knowledge of the One True God, but over time, it would eventually give in to worshipping the gods of the nations around them. God is laying the foundation that He won't tolerate His people worshipping these other ‘gods’ which they have made up in their minds.

Durham, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Yahweh had opened himself to a special relationship with Israel, but that relationship could develop only if Israel committed itself to Yahweh alone. Yahweh had rescued them and freed them, delivered them and guided them, then came to them. The next step, if there was to be a next step, belonged to them. If they were to remain in his Presence, they were not to have other gods.’

IMAGES

‘You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.’ Exodus 20:4-6

The first command shows us the uniqueness of God, and the second command shows us God's nature, He is spirit, Deuteronomy 5:8-10 / Exodus 20:4-6. God is a loving God who wants nothing more than people to love Him back in worship. This is all about having a proper relationship with Him.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following concerning making images.

1. Any material representation of the Lord slanders Him. He is greater than anything humans can conceive in our minds, let alone make with our hands.
2. By making and using images of Yahweh, the worshipper would gain a sense of control over Him. God is the Creator, and we are His creatures. He is also sovereign over all.

Rather than accepting his place as a subject creature under the sovereign Creator, the person who makes an image of God puts himself in the position of creator.

In effect, he puts God in the place of a created thing. He usurps God's sovereignty. Since God made man in His image, it is inappropriate for us to try to make God in our image, much less in the image of an animal.

3. It is easy for anyone to confuse an object that represents a deity with that deity. Instead of worshipping the god the object represents, people have always transferred their worship to the object. This is our natural tendency as material beings who give preference to what we can see over what we cannot see.'

It doesn't take much to move from creating a god in your mind to making some physical representation of that god as a reminder; this is called idolatry. God is telling them that they must not make an image of any kind, of any representation of any god they make up in their minds. They mustn't bow down to any image as if it were real, as it had some power to direct their lives and their behaviour.

When you think about it, God is spirit, John 4:24, and so because He's spirit, they wouldn't need any kind of physical representation of Him. I think it's important to point out that it's not wrong to make things that have some kind of religious significance.

After all, at God's command, the Israelites would do this later with the items they created for the tabernacle, Exodus 25:31-34, and later for the temple, 1 Kings 6:18 / 1 Kings 6:29.

Idolatry comes in when the people who make these items believe that the items have some kind of emotional or spiritual power over their lives, Isaiah 44:9-20. We know that stones or trees don't have any power; it's all in people's minds, they believe that these objects possess some kind of supernatural power.

Idolatry was a big problem for the Israelites when they entered the Promised Land. The good news is that after their Babylonian captivity, they learned the lesson and never committed idolatry again.

The sad news is that many people commit idolatry today, even without thinking about it. They worship people, objects and images; they pray to statues, believe that rosary beads help them with their prayers, etc., 1 Corinthians 10:14 / Colossians 3:5 / 1 Peter 4:3.

God tells Israel that they mustn't make any images, otherwise, they'll end up bowing down and worshipping those images. As I mentioned, God is spirit, and He's not to be worshipped by using an idol; we can't squeeze Him into an object.

The word 'jealous', Deuteronomy 5:9 / Exodus 20:5, can be very misleading; the word here simply means He is zealous. In other words, He's zealous for the protection of His own honour as the 'one True God', Isaiah 42:80. Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'Yahweh's jealousy is a part of his holiness, Exodus 34:14, and is demanded by what he is. It is justified by the fact that it comes only upon those who, having promised to have no God but him, have gone back on that promise. Those

who do so show that they ‘hate’ him, that they hold him in contempt: upon them in result must come a deserved judgment, across four generations.’

God is a loving God who wants nothing more than people to love Him back in worship, Exodus 20:5-6 / Deuteronomy 5:9-10. This is all about having a proper relationship with Him.

I think it’s important to point out that it’s not wrong to make things that have some kind of religious significance. After all, at God’s command, the Israelites would do this later with the items they created for the tabernacle, Exodus 25:31-34, and later for the temple, 1 Kings 6:18 / 1 Kings 6:29.

MISUSING GOD’S NAME

‘You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.’ Exodus 20:7

Misusing God’s Name or using His Name in vain, Deuteronomy 5:11 / Exodus 3:13-14 / Exodus 20:7 / Matthew 6:9, carries with it the idea of calling upon the Name of the Lord for superstitious reasons in order to determine the destiny of things in this world. This would include the making of offhand oaths and promises in the Name of God, Deuteronomy 6:13 / Leviticus 24:14-16 / Matthew 5:33-34.

What is God’s name? Well, God has many names. Yahweh, the self-existent One. He has always existed and will always exist. You can always rely on Him because He is your eternal source of strength, Genesis 2:4 / Isaiah 40:3 / Exodus 3:14.

Adonai, God is the Lord overall. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He reigns forever. Therefore, you find safety in Him and Him alone, Genesis 15:2 / Judges 6:15 / Deuteronomy 10:17.

The point is that God wants the Israelites to understand that He is a holy God, 1 Peter 1:16, and because He is a holy God, His Name is holy and is to be revered, and so we must use it respectfully.

Sadly, in today’s society, many people use the Lord’s Name to emphasise they’re telling the truth, but to take His name in vain means to make Him less significant.

THE SABBATH DAY

‘Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.’ Exodus 20:8-11

The Exodus passage tells them to ‘remember the Sabbath day’, Exodus 20:8-11, and the Deuteronomy passage tells them to ‘observe the Sabbath day’, Deuteronomy 5:12-15.

God understands that life can get very busy, and He knows that the Israelites, just like many people do today, don’t take any time out from work and consume themselves with work.

The idea is that the more we work, the more money we’ll earn, therefore, the more we can spend on ourselves. It’s such a shame that many people don’t work for a living, but they live to work.

God is telling the Israelites that six days are more than enough time to do all the things which are necessary for living. In other words, the Sabbath is made for man to rest, Mark 2:23-28.

The meaning of the word ‘Sabbath’ teaches us the purpose for keeping the day; the word doesn’t mean ‘seventh’, it means ‘rest’. The Israelites were to rest from work on this day.

The reason for this rest day is illustrated in God’s creation, He rested from His work in creation. God could easily have created the heavens and earth in a shorter or longer time, but to establish an example for man in reference to his work, God set the pattern by the six 24-hour days of creation.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Before God gave the Mosaic Law, He told the Israelites to refrain from gathering manna on the seventh day of the week, Exodus 16:22-30. Later, God made abstinence from work on the Sabbath Day a law for the Israelites, Exodus 20:8-11. The reasons were to memorialise God’s creation of the universe, Exodus 20:11, and to memorialise His creation of the nation Israel, Deuteronomy 5:15.’

For the Israelites, keeping the Sabbath was also a sign of their covenant with God. The Sabbath and circumcision were the two signs of the covenant, and so when Israel as a nation rested on this day, the other nations around them would see this and know Israel was in a covenant relationship with God. Remember also, it wasn’t simply a sign to the nations around them, but mainly a sign to God that Israel was keeping the covenant.

Why did He tell them to keep the Sabbath day holy? Deuteronomy 5:12 / Exodus 20:8. It was to remind them of what God had done for them in Egypt, and please note that the Sabbath wasn’t given as a ‘religious day’, but as a day where there would be common respect between the citizens of society.

Those who employed people to work for them couldn’t force their employees to work on the Sabbath; this is respect, even the animals were not allowed to be put to work. The Sabbath was made for man in order to give him rest, a rest from all the earthly things, so that he had time to think about spiritual things.

Fruchtenbaum, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is the only one of the Ten Commandments not reiterated for the church in the New Testament. Traditionally, the church has celebrated the first day of the week as a memorial to Jesus Christ’s resurrection, which event is the ground of our rest, Romans 4:25.’

Many people believe that the Sabbath Day command is still binding upon Christians today, but note that this is the only command that’s not reinstated in the New Testament. Why? Simply because this commandment was given to the Israelites to remind them that God brought them out of Egypt, Deuteronomy 5:15.

A few people turn to Genesis 2:1-3 to argue that the Sabbath Day’s rest is still in force today. This is basically a summary of Genesis 1, and notice it’s not stated here that God rested from all activity, but that He rested from creation, ‘the work which he had been doing,’ which is an expression repeated twice.

Please note that this has no reference whatever to the Jewish sabbath. This doesn’t refer to the days of the week, but the days of the creation. This day of God’s rest is still going on, Hebrews 4:4-6 / Hebrews 4:11, and will obviously continue until Christ returns.

There is no command here for man to rest, no revelation whatever to Adam or his posterity suggesting or commanding the observance of any such thing as the Jewish sabbath.

Notice also, the specific thing from which it’s stated that God rested is the work of creation, a fact which is obvious enough in the fact that the creation isn’t still going on.

There is also no mention here of ‘evening and morning,’ which tells us that the close of the seventh day is still in progress. We must remember that the sabbath that God blessed was the first day of Adam’s life, not the seventh, and there’s no indication whatever that Adam ever heard of a sabbath.

The sabbath was made known, not to Adam, but Moses, [Nehemiah 9:13-14](#), and the reason for the Jewish observance of the sabbath given to them wasn’t because God rested on the creation sabbath, but ‘the deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt,’ [Deuteronomy 5:15](#).

The sabbath was never a sign between God and all men, but ‘it is a sign between me (God) and the children of Israel.’ [Exodus 31:17](#). God created everything in six days, [Genesis 1](#) / [Exodus 20:11](#). At the end of the sixth day, God looked at everything He had made and said it was ‘very good’, [Genesis 1:31](#).

The next day, day seven, God rested from His work of creating because it was all finished, [Genesis 2:2](#). God then blessed this day because it was the day that He chose to rest from His work, [Genesis 2:3](#).

Why did God rest? Was he tired from all the work of creating? Not at all! The Bible tells us that God doesn’t get tired or sleep, [Psalm 121:3-4](#). He rested to establish a pattern for us to follow.

ISRAEL’S RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

HONOUR YOUR PARENTS

‘Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.’
Exodus 20:12

Honouring or respecting parents is the building block upon which society is built; the whole of society is dependent on this, [Deuteronomy 5:16](#) / [Exodus 20:12](#). Children have their first relationship with their parents, and it’s from them we learn how to behave in society.

The first lesson of disobedience and obedience is taught in the family, [Leviticus 20:9](#) / [Ephesians 6:1-3](#) / [1 Timothy 5:4](#). Obedience to parents is a duty to God, [Leviticus 19:3](#) / [John 19:26-27](#), but disobedient parents are a hallmark of the Gentile community. God is telling the Israelite children the terms and conditions for long life in a healthy society, in the Promised Land, [Ephesians 6:1-3](#).

Sadly, Israel as a nation failed to maintain the sacredness of the family, and so, even as we see in our society today, whenever the family of any society breaks down, then the society breaks down as a whole. God tells the children of Israel that if they honour their parents, they will live long in the land.

Out of all the Ten Commandments, this is the only one that has the promise ‘that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth,’ [Exodus 20:12](#) / [Deuteronomy 5:16](#).

This doesn’t mean if children honour their parents that they’ll live to one hundred and get a letter from the king of England. There have been some godly people who’ve lived long, and there have been some who’ve died young, despite honouring their parents. Jesus was obedient to His parents, but He still died at thirty-three years of age.

So, what does it mean? The answer is simple, just like God, parents want things to go well for their children; they want them to have a long life. Too many kids’ lives have come to an end prematurely simply because they haven’t listened to their parents’ advice, [Proverbs 15:5](#).

They got involved in gangs, they ended up with addictions, they caught a sexually transmitted disease, and they had children of their own and can't handle being a parent. Honouring our parents and listening to their advice may help us live longer.

MURDER

‘You shall not murder.’ Exodus 20:13

Here God teaches Israel about the sacredness of human life, [Deuteronomy 5:17](#) / [Exodus 20:13](#). If there's no regard for human life, then society will end up in social chaos.

Although there are different types of murder, [Exodus 21:12-13](#) / [Numbers 35:22-23](#) / [Exodus 22:2-3](#) / [Leviticus 24](#), it's all about the sacredness of human life, [Deuteronomy 22:8](#) / [Leviticus 19:14](#) / [Leviticus 19:18](#) / [Leviticus 19:19](#). These laws were given to give them stability; this is our duty to our fellow man, we must respect human life, [Matthew 19:18](#).

ADULTERY

‘You shall not commit adultery.’ Exodus 20:14

Adultery has been rising throughout the world at an alarming rate, and the effect has been devastating in our society. How many families have been ripped apart because the husband or the wife has an affair with someone else?

The reason God tells the Israelites not to commit adultery is obvious, [Deuteronomy 5:18](#) / [Exodus 20:14](#); marriage is sacred, and when adultery is committed, it's a sure sign that the marriage relationship is breaking down, [Matthew 5:27-28](#).

We know how serious this crime was because the punishment for adultery was stoning to death, [Leviticus 20:10](#) / [Deuteronomy 22:23-29](#) / [Matthew 5:27-28](#) / [1 Corinthians 6:9-20](#).

Jantz, in his commentary, says the following.

‘How can we guard against committing adultery? First, Scripture stresses the importance of guarding our own hearts, the seat of our affections, [Matthew 15:19](#) / [Proverbs 4:23](#) / [Proverbs 7:25](#). Second, we should realise that God has a claim on our bodies as well as our souls, [1 Corinthians 6:13-20](#). Third, we should cultivate our relationship with our spouses, [1 Corinthians 7:1-5](#). The husband-wife relationship is more fundamental than the parent-child relationship. Husbands need to take the initiative in cultivating this relationship, [Ephesians 5:25-31](#).’

STEALING

‘You shall not steal.’ Exodus 20:15

This is all about respecting other people's property, [Deuteronomy 5:19](#) / [Exodus 20:15](#) / [Ephesians 4:28](#) / [Exodus 22:1-3](#) / [Proverbs 6:30-31](#). If an Israelite stole, they were to return what they had stolen if possible, to make

restitution, and to add twenty per cent of the value as a penalty for their theft. [Leviticus 5:16](#) / [Leviticus 6:5](#) / [Numbers 5:7](#) / [Luke 19:8](#).

There are many lazy people in the world who don't work but want everything. They see other people with their material possessions, but instead of buying them for themselves, they decide they want them, and so they go out of their way to get them, even if that means breaking into someone's home to steal them.

Stealing in any shape or form is sinful; any act where someone takes something which belongs to someone else is theft. If anyone steals anything, it's an act of selfishness because they're not concerned about the person they're stealing from; they have no respect for anyone.

God is teaching them to be content with what they have, [Philippians 4:12](#). He wants them to enjoy the material blessings God has given them, rather than stealing other people's material blessings.

FALSE TESTIMONY

‘You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.’ Exodus 20:16

If anyone wants to destroy someone's character, then making up a lot of false stories, along with false accusations, is the way to do it, [Deuteronomy 5:20](#) / [Exodus 20:16](#).

God wants to protect the individuals of Israel from such horrendous circumstances, [Deuteronomy 19:16-20](#) / [Ephesians 4:25](#). This would include slander, gossip, unproven accusations, false witnessing, and half-truths concerning an individual, [Psalms 101:5](#) / [Proverbs 6:16-19](#) / [Acts 5:3](#).

COVETING

‘You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.’ Exodus 20:17

God commands Israel not to covet because He wants their hearts, [Deuteronomy 5:21](#) / [Exodus 20:17](#) / [Colossians 3:5-6](#). Anyone who covets is selfish, only thinking about themselves and not the consequences of their actions. It all begins in the heart, which then leads to action. Coveting a neighbour's wife is a clear signal that a man's relationship with his wife is failing.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The seriousness of this sin is obvious from the fact that God forbade it many times in Scripture. [Psalms 10:3](#) / [Proverbs 28:16](#) / [Mark 7:21-23](#) / [Luke 12:15](#) / [Romans 1:28-29](#) / [Ephesians 5:3](#) / [Ephesians 5:5](#) / [1 Timothy 6:9-10](#) / [2 Timothy 3:1-5](#).’

SUMMARY

The first four commandments were focused on Israel's relationship with God; the first is about loyalty, the second is about worship, the third is about reverence, and the fourth is about sanctification and relationships. The next six commandments were focused on Israel's relationship with each other and with other people.

The fifth commandment is about respect for parental authority, the sixth is about respect for human life, the seventh is about purity in relationships, the eighth is about honesty, the ninth is about truthfulness, and finally, the tenth is about contentment.

It's through these commandments that God reveals His true nature. He is just and righteous, because He is a holy God; His laws are holy. People need to see, know, and understand their own sinfulness. God knew that no one could keep His laws, but He wanted to help us see just how far from His holiness we actually are.

The law itself provided the building blocks for a great society, for a just society. God made them into a holy nation, [Exodus 19:5-6](#), and now He's laying the foundations of how this new nation should behave and interact with God and each other.

As I mentioned earlier, many people believe that the Sabbath Day command is still binding upon Christians today, but note again in the table below that this is the only command that's not reinstated in the New Testament.

The Ten Commandments	
Exodus 20:1-17 / Deuteronomy 5:6-17	New Testament
1. You shall have no other gods before me.	1. Commandment 4:8 / Acts 14:15
2. You shall not make for yourself an image.	Acts 17:24
3. You shall not bow down to any image.	Matthew 4:8
4. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.	1 Peter 4:11
5. Honor your father and mother.	Ephesians 6:2
6. You shall not murder.	Romans 13:9 / Revelation 21:8
7. You shall not commit adultery.	Romans 13:9 / Hebrews 12:4
8. You shall not steal.	Romans 13:9 / Ephesians 4:28
9. You shall not bear false witness.	Romans 13:9 / Ephesians 4:25
10. You shall not covet.	Romans 13:9 / Colossians 3:5

It's such a blessing to know that we can't be saved by keeping the ten commandments today, [Galatians 3:24](#). The old law pointed out our sin and condemned us, [Galatians 3:10](#).

As Christians, there are many commands to obey, nine of which are found within the Ten Commandments, but forgiveness of our sins is found through Christ for anyone who repents and is baptised, [Acts 2:38](#), and for the Christian who tries to live right and confesses their sins to God, [1 John 1:7-9](#). For those who are trying to obey the law, please read James' inspired words, [James 2:10](#).

'When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself, and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us, or we will die." Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning." The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.' Exodus 20:18-21

We can clearly understand why the people tremble in fear when they see the thunder and lightning hear the trumpet, and see the mountain in smoke, [Exodus 20:18](#).

Cole, in his commentary, says the following concerning the lightning.

'The word here is unusual and might be translated as 'torches', meaning 'flashes' or 'fireballs'. This is the same word used for the symbol of God's presence that Abraham sees at the making of God's covenant with him, [Genesis 15](#).'

[Deuteronomy 5:23](#) explains why the mountain smoked; the mountain was burning with fire. It's not surprising that the people's reaction was one of fear, which led them to back away from the mountain.

The people ask Moses to speak to them himself, and they will listen, but they don't want God to speak to them in fear of dying, [Exodus 20:19](#). It's interesting to note that despite being in awe of God, their fear prompted them to ask God not to speak to them directly but to speak through Moses, [1 Timothy 2:5](#).

Moses then reassures them by telling them not to be afraid and tells them that God has come to test them, so that the fear of God will be with them to keep them from sinning, Exodus 20:20.

This was the reaction God wanted because fearing Him brought about reverence and obedience for Him, Isaiah 6:1-5 / Revelation 1:17. As the people backed away, Moses moved forward in faith, Exodus 20:20 / 1 John 4:18-19.

IDOLS AND ALTARS

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites this: ‘You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven: Do not make any gods to be alongside me; do not make for yourselves gods of silver or gods of gold. ““Make an altar of earth for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, your sheep and goats and your cattle. Wherever I cause my name to be honoured, I will come to you and bless you. If you make an altar of stones for me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it. And do not go up to my altar on steps, or your private parts may be exposed.’ Exodus 20:22-26

The NET Bible says the following.

‘The point of the section is this: those who worship this holy God must preserve holiness in the way they worship—they worship where he permits, in the manner he prescribes, and with the blessings he promises.’

Moses is to tell the Israelites they have seen for themselves that God has spoken to them from heaven, Exodus 20:22. God commands them not to make any other gods that would condone their misguided religious behaviour, Exodus 20:23.

When God created mankind, he blessed us all with great imaginations. Sadly, some take those imaginations and turn them into idols. This is always the end result when people have no knowledge of God Himself, Romans 1:18-32. The implication here is that any idol made would show they have given up in their knowledge of the One true God, and the idol itself would be a witness against them.

God asks them to make an altar of earth for Him and sacrifice on it their burnt offerings, fellowship offerings, sheep, goats, and your cattle, Exodus 29:24. He also says wherever He causes His name to be honoured, He will come to them and bless them, Exodus 29:24.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the words, ‘wherever I cause my name to be honoured’.

‘Scholars have trouble finding the exact significance of this, but it doubtless has two applications.

1. Later in the wanderings, the tabernacle would be moved from place to place, and God’s name recorded at every place where the tabernacle came was an assurance of his blessing.

2. In the New Covenant, which is always pre-shadowed by everything that happened in Exodus, there would, of course, never be a physical altar, but the promise here still has a significant meaning. Just where has God recorded His name in the New Dispensation? There is utterly no denial that the triple, holy name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is subjoined to only one ordinance in the entire Bible, that being the ordinance of Christian baptism, by which penitent believers are baptised into THE NAME of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Matthew 28:18-20. The fulfilment of the promise here is that in every man’s baptism into Christ God indeed will meet him there and bless him there in the total forgiveness and remission of all of his past sins.’

Notice that if they make an altar to Him, the altars were to be made of uncut stone, not ‘dressed stone’, Exodus 20:25. The reason for this is simply because it removes the temptation to cut an image in the stone to a false god.

In other words, if they lift up their tools to make an idol, they would bring them over into their worship of God, 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 / 2 Corinthians 11:3. In order to protect the priest from exposing his nakedness under his robe, there were to be no steps leading up to an altar, Exodus 20:26 / Exodus 28:42.

Cassuto, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Possibly the verse intends to oppose the practice of certain peoples in the ancient East, like the Sumerians, for instance, whose priests used to perform every ritual ceremony in a state of nakedness. Likewise, the Egyptian priests used to wear only a linen ephod, a kind of short, primitive apron.’

When altars with steps were permitted to be built, Leviticus 9:22 / Ezekiel 43:13-17, the priests were instructed to wear linen undershorts, Exodus 28:40-42 / Ezekiel 44:18.

CHAPTER 21

INTRODUCTION

‘These are the laws you are to set before them: If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything. If he comes alone, he is to go free alone; but if he has a wife when he comes, she is to go with him. If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to her master, and only the man shall go free. “But if the servant declares, ‘I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,’ then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life.’ Exodus 21:1-6

HEBREW SERVANTS

We must remember that among the Hebrews, debts didn’t really exist at this point in time, but He knew that when one became so indebted to another that he would have to give himself to the service of another until his debt was paid. God’s main concern here is the conduct of His own people; the problem of foreign slaves was dealt with later, Leviticus 25:44-46.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Why did God permit slavery at all? Slavery as a social institution becomes evil when others disregard the human rights of slaves. God protected the rights of slaves in Israel. Likewise, the apostle Paul did not urge Philemon to set his slave Onesimus free but to treat him as a brother, Philemon 1:15-17.’

How did a person become a slave?

1. He could sell himself to get out of debt, 2 Kings 4:1.
2. He could be sold by his parents in need of money, Nehemiah 5:2.

If a man was struck with poverty, he could sell himself as a slave to a fellow Hebrew, Exodus 21:1. However, after serving his master for six years, in the seventh year, he would be free of his obligation and didn’t have to pay anything, Exodus 21:2.

This meant he could leave in the seventh, or sabbatical year of his servitude, but on every 50th year, when the year of Jubilee came, if it happened to come before the full six years was concluded, he went free then, Leviticus 25:10. Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Also, Deuteronomy 15:13-15 enjoined the master to bestow handsome presents upon his slaves when they departed. It was in keeping with this that Abraham had given great gifts to his concubines before sending them away, Genesis 25:6.’

If the man was married when he became a slave, he could take her and then be set free, Exodus 21:3. However, if the man married a fellow slave and had children with her, he couldn’t take either her or his children if he chose to be set free, Exodus 21:4.

There would be occasions, when the slave decides he wants to stay under his master’s care, Exodus 21:5, if this is the case, the master would take the slave to the doorpost of his house, he would take an awl and pierce the slave’s ears, Exodus 21:6.

They would usually put something in the pierced ear, usually something which signified that the slave wanted to remain under his master’s care for the rest of his life.

When we think of slaves today, we don’t think that they have any rights, and in times past, this was very much the case. But here God has blessed slaves with many wonderful rights.

1. He was guaranteed the right of just and honourable treatment.
2. He could occupy positions of great trust and responsibility, as did Eliezer of Damascus for Abraham, Genesis 15:2.
3. He couldn’t be bound for more than six years without his consent.
4. He could hold property, with the possibility that he might, in time, redeem himself.
5. He was protected from the sadistic violence of a brutal master, Exodus 21:20.
6. He could claim compensation for bodily injury, Exodus 21:26-27.
7. He had full rights of rest on the sabbath, Exodus 20:10.

By the time the Romans came along, slavery was ripe, with an estimated two million slaves within the Roman Empire. How did you become a slave in Roman times? Well, you could become a slave in one of three ways.

1. Your father was a slave, and if his dad was a slave and he was born into that family, he was the owner’s property. The owner could sell him and do whatever he wants with him.
2. Maybe he was a thief who stole money, and under Jewish or even Roman law, if you stole and could not pay back, then they could take you as a slave.
3. Maybe he was a murderer, but instead of killing him, they would decide to give him to the victim’s family and the family could take him, sell him or do whatever they liked.

For whatever reason, a slave has no rights whatsoever; he was a piece of property, and his master owned him. And at the slave market, they would auction them off; someone would buy them for so many shekels, and now the slave belongs to him.

‘If a man sells his daughter as a servant, she is not to go free as male servants do. If she does not please the master who has selected her for himself, he must let her be redeemed. He has no right to sell her to foreigners because he has broken faith with her. If he selects her for his son, he must grant her the rights of a daughter. If he marries another woman, he must not deprive the first one of her food, clothing, and marital rights. If he does not provide her with these three things, she is to go free, without any payment of money.’ Exodus 21:7-11

Not unlike some cultures today, a man would sell his daughter as a servant, Exodus 21:7, simply because the life of the father would be bettered because his daughter married into a family for financial reasons.

These regulations prevented a wealthier family from taking advantage of a poorer family. In those days, female slaves were socially protected more than the male slaves, Exodus 21:7. As with the male slaves, she had rights too; at the end of the sixth year, she had the choice to go free, Exodus 21:8 / Deuteronomy 15:12-17.

If a father sold his daughter to become a wife to his master or his master's son, and the husband wasn't pleased with her, she could be redeemed, that is, bought back by the father, Exodus 21:8.

Clement, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A slave wife could be unfairly treated if they fell into disfavour, and the price of such unfair treatment was that which gave her freedom.’

Her husband, however, couldn't sell her to a foreigner, Exodus 21:8, and if she was given to his son as a wife, then she was to be counted as one of his daughters, Exodus 21:9 / Ephesians 5:22-24 / Colossians 3:18.

If she became a second wife, all her rights as a wife were to be continued, Exodus 21:10. If the husband failed to provide any of his duties toward her, she was free without charge, Exodus 21:11 / Leviticus 25:39-55.

Many people ask, why did God allow slavery in the first place? We could also ask, why did God allow divorce in the first place? Matthew 19:3-9. Why did God allow earthly kings in the first place? 1 Samuel 8:7-9. Why did God allow a representative priesthood instead of the priesthood of all Israel? Exodus 19:6. Why did God allow the building of the temple? 2 Samuel 7:5-17.

Maybe we'll never be able to fully answer those questions, but it appears that people were going to do those things anyway. Maybe God knew that slave trafficking was going to happen, and so, these laws were established to give some kind of protection to the enslaved.

PERSONAL INJURIES

‘Anyone who strikes a person with a fatal blow is to be put to death. However, if it is not done intentionally, but God lets it happen, they are to flee to a place I will designate. But if anyone schemes and kills someone deliberately, that person is to be taken from my altar and put to death. “Anyone who attacks their father or mother is to be put to death. “Anyone who kidnaps someone is to be put to death, whether the victim has been sold or is still in the kidnapper's possession. “Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’ Exodus 21:12-17

Here we find laws concerning murder, Exodus 21:12 / Genesis 9:6 / Exodus 20:13 / Deuteronomy 5:17, which were punishable by death. Remember, there were no prisons in those days, so those who gave up their right to life by willingly taking the life of another were to be taken out of society.

Notice that God makes a distinction between the accidental killing and intentional murder of another person. If someone accidentally kills someone, they are to go to a place which God has designated, Exodus 21:13.

These would be the cities of refuge, and there were six of them throughout Canaan, Numbers 35:22-28 / Joshua 20:1-9. These cities weren't prisons as such, but the person who fled there would stay there until the time of his trial.

If the person was convicted of the killing, they were to be taken to the altar and put to death, Exodus 21:14. Although some thought they could simply go to an altar for refuge, if they were found guilty, they were to be taken from the altar and put to death, Exodus 21:14.

Honeycutt, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is the Biblical way of saying that the death was not planned. Since the Bible does not deal with secondary causes, ‘chance happenings,’ anything which man did not specially plan must have been caused by God's action.’

It's clear that parents had great responsibilities for their children, and they were given authority by God to rule over their children. If a child was at the age of accountability, then they were accountable for their own actions, and so if the child attacked their parents, then that child was to be put to death, Exodus 21:15.

Anyone who was found guilty of kidnapping was also to be put to death, Exodus 21:16. In the eyes of God, criminally enslaving someone wasn't far from murdering them.

A child cursing their parents, Exodus 21:17, basically means invoking God to act against His representative on earth, the parent. It carries with it the idea that an adult child threatens their parents in some way.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Kidnapping was also a capital offence, Exodus 21:16 / Exodus 20:15 / Genesis 37:28, as was cursing (dishonouring) one's parents, Exodus 21:17 / Exodus 20:12. Exodus 21:15 deals with a criminal offence, but Exodus 21:17 describes a civil offence, Leviticus 20:9 / Deuteronomy 27:16 / Proverbs 20:20 / Proverbs 30:11.’

There are also rights for the child involved in this. In Deuteronomy 21:18-21, we read that the parents didn't have the right to carry out this punishment, but they had to bring the accused child before the elders and judges of the city.

‘If people quarrel and one person hits another with a stone or with their fist and the victim does not die but is confined to bed, the one who struck the blow will not be held liable if the other can get up and walk around outside with a staff; however, the guilty party must pay the injured person for any loss of time and see that the victim is completely healed,’ Exodus 21:18-19.

If there is a dispute between two people which ended in one person striking another with either a stone or a fist, with no intent to kill, and the victim doesn't die but could rise and walk, then the penalty was the one who made the striking blow had to pay for loss of time for the victim and medical care for him until he was completely recovered.

In other words, a person has the right to be free of the charge of murder unless the man died, the person who was injured had the right to claim compensation, that is, for time lost or any medical care they need.

‘Anyone who beats their male or female slave with a rod must be punished if the slave dies as a direct result, but they are not to be punished if the slave recovers after a day or two, since the slave is their property.’ Exodus 21:20-21

If a slave master struck a slave, and after a day or two the slave recovered, then the master would suffer no penalty. However, if the slave died, the master was to suffer all economic loss. The master was held free of the penalty of punishment because the loss of his slave was accounted a sufficient penalty.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The loss of the slave, under the circumstances, was accounted as a punishment.’

‘If people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely, but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands, and the court allows. But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise. “An owner who hits a male or female slave in the eye and destroys it must let the slave go free to compensate for the eye. And an owner who knocks out the tooth of a male or female slave must let the slave go free to compensate for the tooth.’ Exodus 21:22-27

If a pregnant wife intervened in a fight between her husband and another person, and the wife lost the unborn child, then the one who hurt the wife was to pay a fine that was determined by the judges, Exodus 21:22. If the death of the child was accidental, then the offender wouldn't suffer the death penalty.

However, if it was intentional, then they were subject to the death penalty, Exodus 21:23. The deliberate death of a unborn child, which would also include abortion is taken seriously by God, because even in the womb that unborn

child is a human, [Job 10:8-12](#) / [Job 15:14](#) / [Psalms 51:5](#) / [Psalms 58:3](#) / [Psalms 139:13-16](#) / [Ecclesiastes 11:5](#) / [Jeremiah 1:5](#) / [Galatians 1:15](#).

In the days of Jesus, the Jews twisted the teaching of the Old Testament law on this matter; they basically took these principles and applied them to their everyday relationships.

The ‘eye for an eye, ‘ etc., was a civil law of the Old Testament where the people had the authority to punish offenders, but the punishment must fit the crime, [Exodus 21:24-27](#).

The retaliation law that was given to Israel was more compassionate than the law that existed previously to the giving of the law to Israel. In reference to this law, Jesus stated that love should succeed over the will to retaliate against our neighbour, [Leviticus 24:19-20](#).

The principle of the law would be that the death penalty would be given to those who voluntarily murdered another person. If someone voluntarily took the life of another, he had his right to life taken from him, [Deuteronomy 19:21](#). This law made accusers think twice before slanderously accusing someone of a deed for which they had no evidence. We have to remember that the law of the land before God gave His instructions was really bad.

If you kill my child, I will kill all your children, your wife, your brothers, your whole generation! If you knock out my tooth or eye, I will knock out all of yours and kill you also.

In [Matthew 5:38-42](#), Jesus is teaching against the concept of retaliation. What Jesus was condemning was the Pharisees’ misapplication of the principle of this law.

They were using the principle as a justification for personal revenge. They misunderstood the principle of the law. That principle is that there is a punishment for the violation of the law, and the punishment must match the crime. In other words, the death penalty wouldn’t be given to one who told a lie.

LAWS ABOUT ANIMALS

‘If a bull gores a man or woman to death, the bull is to be stoned to death, and its meat must not be eaten. But the owner of the bull will not be held responsible. If, however, the bull has had the habit of goring and the owner has been warned but has not kept it penned up, and it kills a man or woman, the bull is to be stoned, and its owner also is to be put to death. However, if payment is demanded, the owner may redeem his life by the payment of whatever is demanded. This law also applies if the bull gores a son or daughter. If the bull gores a male or female slave, the owner must pay thirty shekels of silver to the master of the slave, and the bull is to be stoned to death.’ Exodus 21:28-

32

If a bull gores a man or woman to death, the bull is to be stoned to death, and its meat must not be eaten, [Exodus 21:28](#). However, the owner of the bull is not held responsible, [Exodus 21:28](#).

If the bull was in the habit of goring and the owner has been warned but didn’t keep it penned up and it kills a man or woman, the bull is to be stoned and its owner also is to be put to death, [Exodus 21:29](#).

If a man owned a bull which he knew was dangerous but didn’t do anything to protect others from the animal, this was classed as criminal negligence on his part.

If someone was killed by a dangerous bull, the victim’s family were to be compensated, [Exodus 21:30](#). The owner would have to pay the compensation in order to escape the death penalty. This law also applies if the bull gores a son or daughter, [Exodus 21:31](#).

If the bull gores a male or female slave, the owner must pay thirty shekels of silver, [Matthew 26:15](#), that is, around twelve ounces, to the master of the slave, and the bull is to be stoned to death, [Exodus 21:32](#).

Jamieson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is the only case where money compensation, instead of capital punishment, was expressly allowed in the Mosaic Law.’

‘If anyone uncovers a pit or digs one and fails to cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, the one who opened the pit must pay the owner for the loss and take the dead animal in exchange. “If anyone’s bull injures someone else’s bull and it dies, the two parties are to sell the live one and divide both the money and the dead animal equally. However, if it was known that the bull had the habit of goring, yet the owner did not keep it penned up, the owner must pay, animal for animal, and take the dead animal in exchange.’ Exodus 21:33-36

Open pits and wells had to be protected, but if they weren’t, and a neighbour’s animal fell in the pit, then the one who opened the pit was held responsible, Exodus 21:33. They must pay the owner for the loss and take the dead animal in exchange, Exodus 21:34.

If anyone’s bull injures someone else’s bull and it dies, then the two parties involved are to sell the live one and divide both the money and the dead animal equally, Exodus 21:35.

However, if it was known that the bull was in the habit of goring, and the owner didn’t keep it penned up, the owner must pay, animal for animal, and take the dead animal in exchange, Exodus 21:36.

CHAPTER 22

INTRODUCTION

‘Whoever steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep. “If a thief is caught breaking in at night and is struck a fatal blow, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed; but if it happens after sunrise, the defender is guilty of bloodshed. “Anyone who steals must certainly make restitution, but if they have nothing, they must be sold to pay for their theft. If the stolen animal is found alive in their possession—whether ox or donkey or sheep—they must pay back double.’ Exodus 22:1-4

PROTECTION OF PROPERTY

Unlike today, when thieves are caught and sent to jail, God says if a thief is caught, the thief was to restore what they stole, plus an additional penalty, Exodus 22:1. If a thief was caught in the act and killed, then the owner of what the thief was trying to steal wasn’t held responsible, Exodus 22:2.

Johnson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The life, even of a thief, is of consequence in the eyes of God.’

Notice that the owner had the right to use reasonable force to protect what they owned, however, if the owner waited until daylight to kill the thief, then he was guilty of the death of the thief, Exodus 22:2.

Anyone who steals must make restitution, but if they have nothing, they must be sold to pay for their theft, Exodus 22:3. If the stolen animal is found alive in their possession, they must pay back double, Exodus 22:4.

‘If anyone grazes their livestock in a field or vineyard and lets them stray and they graze in someone else’s field, the offender must make restitution from the best of their own field or vineyard. “If a fire breaks out and spreads into

thornbushes so that it burns shocks of grain or standing grain or the whole field, the one who started the fire must make restitution.’ Exodus 22:5-6

Although most animals grazed in the open fields, some people owned private land for their animals to graze in. Here God says that no man’s livestock was allowed to graze on another’s private property, Exodus 22:5. This tells us that the owner of an animal was responsible for the grazing of his animals, and he was to respect his neighbour’s property. Restitution was paid according to a predetermined amount or percentage; it wasn’t left to the victims or the judges to decide how much was to be paid. The same principle is applied if a fire breaks out and spreads into thornbushes so that it burns shocks of grain or standing grain or the whole field, Exodus 22:6.

‘If anyone gives a neighbour silver or goods for safekeeping and they are stolen from the neighbour’s house, the thief, if caught, must pay back double. But if the thief is not found, the owner of the house must appear before the judges, and they must determine whether the owner of the house has laid hands on the other person’s property. In all cases of illegal possession of an ox, a donkey, a sheep, a garment, or any other lost property about which somebody says, ‘This is mine,’ both parties are to bring their cases before the judges. The one whom the judges declare guilty must pay back double to the other. “If anyone gives a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any other animal to their neighbour for safekeeping and it dies or is injured or is taken away while no one is looking, the issue between them will be settled by the taking of an oath before the LORD that the neighbour did not lay hands on the other person’s property. The owner is to accept this, and no restitution is required. But if the animal was stolen from the neighbour, restitution must be made to the owner. If it was torn to pieces by a wild animal, the neighbour shall bring in the remains as evidence and shall not be required to pay for the torn animal.’ Exodus 22:7-13

Here we read that a person could entrust his possessions or livestock into the hands of a neighbour. These protective laws were to direct the proper handling of a man’s possessions if they were entrusted to another for safekeeping.

Remember, there were no banks like we have today, so people would often take their valuables to their neighbour for safekeeping, Exodus 22:7. However, if they were stolen from their neighbour’s house, the thief, if caught, must pay back double, Exodus 22:7.

If the thief isn’t found, then the owner of the house must appear before the judges, and the judges need to determine whether the owner of the house has laid hands on the other person’s property, Exodus 22:8.

In all cases of illegal possession of an ox, a donkey, a sheep, a garment, or any other lost property about which somebody says, ‘This is mine,’ both parties are to bring their cases before the judges, note the footnote says, ‘before God’, but the guilty party must pay back double to the other, Exodus 22:9.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Bringing such a dispute before the duly-constituted authorities was considered bringing it ‘before God.’ Also, ‘He whom God condemns’ is a reference to a judgment by the magistrates.’

If anyone gives an animal to their neighbour for safekeeping and it dies or is injured or is taken away while no one is looking, then the issue will be settled by the taking of an oath before the LORD that the neighbour did not lay hands on the other person’s property. The owner is to accept this, and no restitution is required, Exodus 22:10-11.

However, if the animal was stolen from the neighbour, restitution must be made to the owner, Exodus 22:12. If the animal was torn to pieces by a wild animal, then the neighbour needs to bring the remains as evidence and won’t be required to pay for the torn animal, Exodus 22:13.

Johnson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The requirement that the one with whom deposits were left had to make restitution actually served as the neighbour’s bond.’

The point here is that if a person entrusted another with their possessions, then the person they entrusted their possessions with was held responsible for looking after them, Amos 3:12.

There was a time when a man's word meant everything, and people respected a man's word until they had a reason not to trust him anymore. Even today in our court system, people are assumed innocent until they are proven guilty, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8.

'If anyone borrows an animal from their neighbour and it is injured or dies while the owner is not present, they must make restitution. But if the owner is with the animal, the borrower will not have to pay. If the animal was hired, the money paid for the hire covers the loss.' Exodus 22:14-15

Here again, we're reminded that if anyone borrowed another person's possession, the person borrowing took on the full responsibility of keeping the borrowed item safe, Exodus 22:14.

If what had been borrowed was lost or damaged without the owner being present, then the one who borrowed was responsible for restoring what was lost, Exodus 22:14.

Esses, in his commentary, says the following.

'If you ask your neighbour to lend you something, you are then responsible for seeing that no harm comes to it. If you fail in that responsibility, you must make restitution.'

There were times when animals were not borrowed but hired, and the cost of the hired possession would have been automatically included in the hiring price, Exodus 22:15. In this case, the one who hired the possession didn't have to repay the cost if it was damaged or lost.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

'If a man seduces a virgin who is not pledged to be married and sleeps with her, he must pay the bride price, and she shall be his wife. If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he must still pay the bride price for virgins.' Exodus 22:16-17

If a man seduces a woman who isn't married and not pledged to be married and sleeps with her, he must pay the bride price, and she shall be his wife, Exodus 22:16. If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he must still pay the bride price for virgins, Exodus 22:17.

Because a father expected the marriage of his daughter to bring him a dowry, that 'the bride price', Deuteronomy 22:28-29. The seduction of a daughter was considered theft, Deuteronomy 22:23-30.

Dummelow, in his commentary, says the following.

'Among the Hebrews, and among the Arabs today, a woman who has been unchaste has almost no chance of marriage; thus, the seducer, it is here enacted, must marry her, or if the father objects, make good the dowry.'

'Do not allow a sorceress to live. "Anyone who has sexual relations with an animal is to be put to death. "Whoever sacrifices to any god other than the LORD must be destroyed.' Exodus 22:18-20

A sorceress was a person who sought to captivate the minds of others through the practice of magical tricks, which often included the use of drugs. By doing this, they were distracting people's thinking away from God and His will. It's because of this that God wanted them out of Israel. They were not permitted to live, Exodus 22:18 / Leviticus 20:27.

Dummelow, in his commentary, says the following.

'Sorcery, or the pretended holding of communications with evil spirits, is a form of idolatry or rebellion against Jehovah, and punished as such.'

Anyone having sexual relations, bestiality, with an animal was seen as evil and not to be tolerated in Israel, Exodus 22:19. Having sexual relations with animals was punishable by death, Leviticus 20:15-16 / Deuteronomy 27:21. Sacrificing to any other god was idolatry and punishable by death, Exodus 22:20 / Exodus 20:3 / Deuteronomy 5:6 / Deuteronomy 13:1-16 / Jeremiah 22:3-5.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Having intercourse with animals (bestiality, Exodus 22:19) was something the Canaanites and Mesopotamians attributed to their gods and which they practised in worshipping those gods. Whereas some law codes imposed the death penalty for having intercourse with certain animals, the Torah prohibited this practice completely.’

‘Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt. “Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless.’ Exodus 22:21-24

Here we read that Israel were to remember that they were foreigners when they were in of Egypt, and so they weren’t mistreated or oppressed by any foreigner who was in the land or who was passing through the land, Exodus 22:21. Notice again how God defends and protects the vulnerable in society, the widows and the fatherless, Exodus 22:22 / James 1:27.

God’s warning against those who would take advantage of the vulnerable is severe; He will get angry, and He will kill them with the sword, and their wives will become widows and their children fatherless, Exodus 22:23-24. As time went by, God’s people neglected this command, which resulted in their widows and orphans as God judged Israel through invading armies.

Rawlinson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It was, in large measure, on account of the neglect of this precept, that the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and destruction of its inhabitants, was allowed to take place, Jeremiah 22:3-5.’

‘If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not treat it like a business deal; charge no interest. If you take your neighbour’s cloak as a pledge, return it by sunset, because that cloak is the only covering your neighbour has. What else can they sleep in? When they cry out to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.’ Exodus 22:25-27

Here we have a law concerning lending to the needy; those who lend are allowed to treat it like a business deal, in other words, they are allowed to charge interest, Exodus 22:25.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is evident that what is here said must be understood of accumulated usury, or what we call compound interest only, and accordingly neshech is mentioned with and distinguished from tarbith and marbith, interest or simple interest, Leviticus 25:36-37 / Proverbs 28:8 / Ezekiel 18:8 / Ezekiel 18:13 / Ezekiel 18:17 / Ezekiel 22:12.’

If a coat were taken as a pledge, it was to be returned before sundown, before the coolness of the night set in, Exodus 22:26 / Amos 2:6 / Amos 4:1 / Deuteronomy 24:6. God promises to hear the cries of the poor because He is compassionate, Exodus 22:27.

‘Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people. “Do not hold back offerings from your granaries or your vats. “You must give me the firstborn of your sons. Do the same with your cattle and your sheep. Let them stay with their mothers for seven days, but give them to me on the eighth day. “You are to be my holy people. So do not eat the meat of an animal torn by wild beasts; throw it to the dogs.’ Exodus 22:28-31

Although the N.I.V. uses the word ‘blaspheme’, Exodus 22:28, other translations use the word, ‘revile’, but the principle is the same, God cares how we talk about Him and those He has put us into submission to.

Once a ruler has been assigned, everyone must respect and honour them. The reason for this is simply that it was God who organised leadership and government, Romans 13:1-10.

The first cuttings of the harvest belonged to God, as well as the firstborn of the families and animals, Exodus 22:28-29 / Exodus 13:1-16. The firstborn from the livestock was to remain with the mother so that the mother would be reassured, Exodus 22:30.

On the eighth day, the animal was to be given to the Lord for a sacrifice, Exodus 22:30. God's people are commanded to act differently from the animals; they are to be holy, Exodus 22:31, that is, set apart. We shouldn't act and eat certain food as the animals do, Exodus 22:31.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'Animal flesh torn in the field before humans ate it was unsuitable for Israelite consumption. Not only might the animal have died from a communicable disease, but second-rate food like this was inappropriate for people set apart to a holy God.'

Remember, they didn't know back then what we now know today. If an animal was torn, that is, ripped apart by a wild beast, the chances are that the meat would now be infected with some kind of disease from the animal which killed it. God knew of the health risks way before we thought we discovered them.

CHAPTER 23

INTRODUCTION

'Do not spread false reports. Do not help a guilty person by being a malicious witness. "Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd, and do not show favouritism to a poor person in a lawsuit. "If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to return it. If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help them with it. "Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits. Have nothing to do with a false charge and do not put an innocent or honest person to death, for I will not acquit the guilty. "Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the innocent. "Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt.' Exodus 23:1-9

LAWS OF JUSTICE AND MERCY

The laws we find here were given to the Hebrews in connection with their neighbours. These were minor civil ordinances that would direct their behaviour toward their neighbour after the manner of loving one's neighbour as himself, Leviticus 19:18 / Mark 12:29-31.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'This section appeals for justice toward all people. The subject of the legislation now shifts from love for all to justice for all. The Israelites should treat all people justly, not only the rich but also the poor, Exodus 23:3, the enemy as well as the friend, Exodus 23:4. Jezebel later did to Naboth what Exodus 23:7 warns against, 1 Kings 21:9-14.'

The spreading of a false report and helping a guilty person by a malicious witness, [Exodus 23:1](#), was a major way of following the crowd, [Exodus 23:2](#) / [1 Corinthians 15:33](#). The only way to stop the spreading of a false report is to stop it in its tracks by asking the proper questions and acquiring proof, [Deuteronomy 19:15](#).

Bribing a judge with a gift, [Exodus 23:2](#), is one of the most popular ways to swing a judge in your favour, [1 Samuel 8:3](#) / [Isaiah 1:23](#) / [Isaiah 5:23](#). Justice is never really served when corruption by bribery is involved.

It appears that the Israelites totally ignored this command, [1 Samuel 7:3](#) / [Psalms 26:10](#) / [Proverbs 17:23](#) / [Isaiah 1:23](#) / [Isaiah 5:23](#) / [Micah 3:9-11](#) / [Zephaniah 3:3](#). They were also not permitted to show favouritism to a poor person in a lawsuit, [Exodus 23:3](#).

In Judaism, kindness and thoughtfulness for animals were required by God. If someone comes across their enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, they need to return it, [Exodus 23:4](#).

If they see the donkey of someone who hates them fallen down under its load, do not leave it there, they must help them with it, [Exodus 23:5](#) / [Exodus 20:10](#) / [Leviticus 22:27](#) / [Deuteronomy 22:6-7](#) / [Deuteronomy 25:4](#). In these verses we also see helping our enemies is also required, [Matthew 5:43](#) / [Luke 10:30-37](#) / [Luke 10:27](#).

They were not permitted to deny justice to their poor people in their lawsuits, [Exodus 23:6](#). They were also not to have nothing to do with a false charge or put an innocent or honest person to death, for God will not acquit the guilty, [Exodus 23:7](#).

They were also not permitted to accept a bribe, because a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the innocent, [Exodus 23:8](#). They weren't to oppress a foreigner because they themselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because they were foreigners in Egypt, [Exodus 23:9](#).

SABBATH LAWS

'For six years you are to sow your fields and harvest the crops, but during the seventh year let the land lie unploughed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what is left. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove. "Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and so that the slave born in your household and the foreigner living among you may be refreshed. "Be careful to do everything I have said to you. Do not invoke the names of other gods; do not let them be heard on your lips.' Exodus 23:10-13

For six years they are to sow their fields and harvest the crops, [Exodus 23:10](#), but during the seventh year they are to let the land lie unploughed and unused, [Exodus 23:11](#).

By doing as God commands, the poor among them will have food to eat and the wild animals may eat the leftovers, [Exodus 23:11](#). They were to do the same with their vineyard and their olive grove, [Exodus 23:11](#).

In other words, If the Israelites wanted the best out of the land and if they were to help the poor in their society, then they were to leave the land alone for a year every seven years.

As we know, as time went on, the Israelites failed to obey this command of giving the land rest every seven years and as a result, they were taken into Babylonian exile, [Leviticus 26:32-35](#) / [2 Chronicles 36:20-21](#).

They have six days to work, but work isn't permitted on the seventh day, which was to allow their ox and their donkey time to rest, [Exodus 23:12](#). The same applied to the slave born in their household and the foreigner living among them, [Exodus 23:12](#).

Common sense tells us that any good farmer would have stored up enough of his crops throughout the six years, in order to have enough to last through the seventh year when the land was to be rested.

We must note that the farmer would also stagger his ‘seventh-year’ planting with different fields. In other words, when one field is resting during the seventh year, other fields would be producing crops.

It was during the seventh year, when the field was resting, that the poor were allowed to use the land. Notice that God commands them not to invoke the name of other gods, [Exodus 23:13](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The commandment not to mention pagan gods was generally observed, and this probably accounts for the changes made by the Jews in certain names containing the name of Baal. ‘Instead of Baal, the word ‘bosheth’, meaning shame, was introduced.’

A few examples of this are seen in [Judges 6:32](#), where the name Jerubbaal became Jerubbosheth, [2 Samuel 11:21](#). In [1 Chronicles 8:33](#), the name Eshbaal became Ishbosheth, [2 Samuel 2:8](#). In [1 Chronicles 8:34](#), the name Meribaal became Mephibosheth, [2 Samuel 4:4](#).

THE THREE ANNUAL FESTIVALS

‘Three times a year, you are to celebrate a festival to me. “Celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread; for seven days eat bread made without yeast, as I commanded you. Do this at the appointed time in the month of Aviv, for in that month you came out of Egypt. “No one is to appear before me empty-handed. “Celebrate the Festival of Harvest with the firstfruits of the crops you sow in your field. “Celebrate the Festival of Ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in your crops from the field. “Three times a year, all the men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD. “Do not offer the blood of a sacrifice to me along with anything containing yeast. “The fat of my festival offerings must not be kept until morning. “Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God. “Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.’ Exodus 23:14-19

The Israelite males were to appear before the Lord at three special feasts, [Exodus 23:14](#).

1. The feast of the unleavened bread, which was associated with the Passover, [Exodus 23:15](#) / [Exodus 12:14](#) / [Leviticus 23:5](#).

This was kept at the beginning of the harvest and commemorated the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage.

2. The feast of harvest, or Pentecost, [Exodus 23:16](#) / [Leviticus 23:15-22](#) / [Numbers 28:26-31](#) / [Deuteronomy 16:9-12](#).

This was kept at the conclusion of the harvest and commemorated Israel’s passage through the Red Sea.

3. The feast of the ingathering, which was also called the feast of tabernacles, [Exodus 23:16](#) / [Leviticus 23:34-43](#) / [Numbers 29:12-40](#) / [Deuteronomy 16:13-14](#).

This was observed in the autumn when all crops had been gathered for storage. This feast was in thanksgiving for God’s mercy in their wandering through the wilderness.

When Israel finally arrived in the promised land, they had the responsibility of making a firstfruit offering to God, along with their regular firstfruit offering, [Exodus 23:16](#).

Three times a year all the men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD, [Exodus 23:17](#). They are not permitted to offer the blood of a sacrifice to God along with anything containing yeast and the fat mustn’t be kept until morning, [Exodus 23:18](#).

They are to bring the best of the firstfruits of their soil to the house of the LORD their God, [Exodus 23:19](#). The command, ‘do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk’, [Exodus 23:19](#), is actually a command to not imitate a common pagan fertility ritual.

GOD'S ANGEL TO PREPARE THE WAY

‘See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion, since my Name is in him. If you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you.’ Exodus 23:20-22

Merrill, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Following the text of the covenant code, Yahweh assures His people of His ongoing commitment. He had not brought them out of Egypt and made a covenant with them only to forget them in the wilderness. He had promised to give them land, so now He speaks of the process by which they would enter the land and the circumstances they would face there, Exodus 23:20-33.’

God says, He is sending an angel ahead of them to guard them along the way and to bring them to the place He has prepared, Exodus 23:20. Who is this angel? This is a Christophany, which suggests that this is a preincarnate appearance of Christ, Genesis 12:7. Remember the word ‘angel’ in Hebrew is ‘malak’, and it simply means messenger.

Haynes Jr, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A study of these passages reveals that the Angel of the Lord appeared in human form, Genesis 18:2 / Genesis 22:1-18 / Hebrews 13:2, and performed normal human functions, Genesis 32:24 / Numbers 22:23 / Numbers 22:31, yet he was an awe-inspiring figure, Genesis 32:30 / Judges 6:22 / Judges 13:22, exhibiting divine attributes and prerogatives including predicting the future, Genesis 16:10-12, forgiving sin, Exodus 23:21, and receiving worship, Exodus 3:5 / Judges 13:9-20.’

The angel whose name was the name of God, Exodus 23:21, was to be obeyed for his presence in Israel was the authority of God among His people. The angel would bring them into Canaan because Moses wouldn’t, and he had the power to withhold forgiveness of sins, Exodus 23:21, which Moses couldn’t do either.

He is that same glorious Being who came to Joshua as the Captain of the hosts of the Lord, and the one who was among the myrtle trees of Zechariah 1:8. God says Israel must listen carefully to what His angel says, but do everything that God says. God will be an enemy to their enemies and will oppose those who oppose them, Exodus 23:22.

‘My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out. Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces. Worship the LORD your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you, and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span. “I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run. I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way. But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. Little by little, I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land. “I will establish your borders from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, and from the desert to the Euphrates River. I will give into your hands the people who live in the land, and you will drive them out before you. Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods. Do not let them live in your land or they will cause you to sin against me, because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you.” Exodus 23:23-33

He will go ahead of the Israelites and bring them into the land of Canaan, and I will wipe them out, Exodus 23:23.

The Canaanites were deeply involved in idolatry; they were gods that had been created by their own imagination.

Israel was to stay away from them in order to protect their own minds.

God tells the Israelites four things concerning these gods.

1. Don't bow down to them or follow them, Exodus 23:24.
2. Drive them out, Exodus 23:24.
3. Make no covenant with them, Exodus 23:24.
4. Destroy them, Exodus 23:24.

If they worship the LORD, then He will bless them with food and water, and He will remove sickness from among them, Exodus 23:25. He also promises that no one will miscarry or be barren in their land, and He will give them a full life span, Exodus 23:26.

God says He will send His terror ahead of them, everyone in Canaan would know what God has done and will do, which brought about great fear among the Canaanites, Exodus 23:27.

This is seen happening with Balak and the Moabites, Numbers 22:3, and this is seen with Rahab, Joshua 2:9 / Joshua 2:11. He will send the hornet ahead of them to drive the nations out of their way, Exodus 23:28.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the hornet.

‘The word is used figuratively for a cause of terror and discouragement. Bees are spoken of in the like sense, Deuteronomy 1:44 / Psalms 118:12.’

Trapp, in his commentary, says the following concerning the hornet.

‘Understand it either literally, as in Joshua 24:12, or figuratively, of the stinging terrors of their self-condemning consciences.’

Notice how the promised land of Canaan was going to be taken over by the Lord's people, ‘little by little’, Exodus 23:29. This wasn't going to happen overnight, it was going to take time because the Israelites needed the time to grow into a vigorous and powerful nation, Exodus 23:30, which was strong enough and experienced enough to handle the problems involved in dispossessing the large groups of Canaanites.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the borders, Exodus 23:31.

‘God's plans for Israel reached into the far future, for the boundaries of Israel as outlined here were not actually reached until four hundred years later in the reigns of David and Solomon, 1 Kings 4:21-24 / 2 Chronicles 9:26.

The ‘river’ spoken of here is the Euphrates, the Sea of the Philistines is the Mediterranean. The Red Sea is the Gulf of Aqaba. Ezion-Geber was at the head of that gulf where Solomon launched his great navy.’ They weren't permitted to make a covenant with those nations or with their gods, Exodus 23:32 / Joshua 9:3-15.

And then we have the final warning, they weren't permitted to allow the people from those nations to live because they will cause them to sin against God and because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to them, Exodus 23:33.

CHAPTER 24

INTRODUCTION

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “Come up to the LORD, you, and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. You are to worship at a distance, but Moses alone is to approach the LORD; the others must not come near. And the people may not come up with him.” When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, “Everything the LORD has said we will do.” Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered

burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD. Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he splashed against the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, “We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey.” Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, “This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.” Exodus 24:1-8

THE COVENANT CONFIRMED

At this point in time, we remember that Moses had already been on the mountain, Exodus 19:3, where he received the book of the covenant that was to be sealed.

Here we see Moses as a type of Christ in that Moses alone was the mediator of the covenant, and he was permitted to approach God, Galatians 3:19. Moses here was to once again return to God on the mountain, but this time he was to take the heads of the families of Israel.

Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy elders were to worship from a distance, Exodus 24:1, while Moses went closer to God, Exodus 24:2 / Acts 10:41. The rest of the Israelites were to stay away from the mountain, Exodus 24:2 / Exodus 19:12-13.

After telling the people all the LORD’s words and laws, they responded in unison, saying, Everything the LORD has said we will do, Exodus 24:3. We should note that this is now the third time Israel has promised God to obey the covenant, Exodus 24:3 / Exodus 19:8 / Exodus 23:22.

After writing down everything the LORD had said, Moses got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel, Exodus 24:4.

Cassuto, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In the ceremony to be performed, the altar will represent the glory of the Lord, whilst the pillars will represent the tribes of Israel; the two contrasting parties will stand facing each other.’

He goes on to send young men, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD, Exodus 24:5. However, it mustn’t be thought that the covenant act here would necessarily have conformed to any one pattern.

These burnt offerings would have been given in reference to sin, whilst the fellowship offering would have been given in reference to recognition of God’s mercy.

Moses then takes half of the blood and puts it in bowls, and the other half he splashes against the altar, Exodus 24:6. He then takes the Book of the Covenant and reads it to the people, and once again they say, We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey, Exodus 24:6.

The book of the covenant, Exodus 24:7, was the words spoken of back in Exodus 20:22-23:33. This time, Moses takes the blood, sprinkles it on the people and says, This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words, Exodus 24:8.

This is the first covenant that God made with Israel. It was consecrated with the blood of animals. When we come to the New Testament, a new and second covenant would be consecrated by the blood of Christ, Hebrews 8:6-9:28 / Hebrews 10:19-22.

Notice that none of the blood was sprinkled on the pillars; it was through the sprinkling of blood twice that established the covenant. This is the blood of the Covenant! Exodus 24:8.

Jesus Himself, on the night in which he was betrayed, instituted the Lord’s Supper, saying, ‘This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many unto the remission of sins,’ Matthew 26:28 / 1 Corinthians 11:25.

Huey, in his commentary, says the following concerning how covenants were made.

1. They ate salt together, [Leviticus 2:13](#) / [Numbers 18:19](#).
2. They ate a sacrificial meal together, [Genesis 31:54](#).
3. They exchanged articles of clothing, [1 Samuel 18:1-4](#).
4. They walked between the divided pieces of slaughtered animals, [Genesis 15:10](#) / [Genesis 15:17](#).

Why was the covenant established in blood?

Coffman, in his commentary, gives us the following.

1. It stressed the serious, even fatal, nature of sin in that only blood, indicating death, could cleanse it.
2. Particularly, it was a type of the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of the whole world.
3. In God's view of a covenant, 'before it could be in force, a death must have occurred,' [Hebrews 9:15-17](#).
4. Not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood, [Hebrews 9:18](#).
5. This also constituted a reminder that death was the penalty for breaking the covenant.
6. It symbolised the unity between God and Israel since the same blood was sprinkled upon both, upon God in a figure, at the altar, and upon the people also, [Exodus 24:7](#).
7. 'The blood symbolises the grace of God in man's redemption.'

'Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky. But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.' Exodus 24:9-11

Here we find that Moses represents the God-ordained leader of the people. Aaron, Nadab and Abihu represent the religious leadership, and the seventy elders were the civil leaders, who were highly respected by the people.

The text tells us that they all saw God, [Exodus 24:9-10](#), but we must remember this is figuratively speaking as God doesn't have any physical appearance, [Exodus 33:20-23](#) / [Isaiah 6](#) / [Ezekiel 1](#) / [John 4:24](#).

Here God reveals Himself in a manner that was discernible by the human eye, but they didn't see the face of God, [Deuteronomy 4:15](#) / [1 John 4:12](#) / [1 Timothy 3:16](#). The blue of the lapis lazuli, [Exodus 24:10](#), may suggest that the elders saw the sea of glass before the throne of God, [Revelation 4:6](#).

Notice that they also ate and drank, [Exodus 24:11](#), which tells us that many of the sacrificial offerings were eaten in fellowship with one another in the presence of God. In other words, the sacrifice was offered to God, but then eaten by those who made the sacrifice.

The NET Bible says the following.

'This is the covenant meal, the peace offering, that they are eating there on the mountain. To eat from the sacrifice meant that they were at peace with God, in covenant with him. Likewise, in the new covenant, believers draw near to God on the basis of sacrifice and eat of the sacrifice because they are at peace with him, and in Christ, they see the Godhead revealed.'

'The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone with the law and commandments I have written for their instruction." Then Moses set out with Joshua his aide, and Moses went up on the mountain of God. He said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we come back to you. Aaron and Hur are with you, and anyone involved in a dispute can go to them." When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days, the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud. To the Israelites, the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.' Exodus 24:12-18

Moses is asked to come up to God on the mountain and stay there, and God will give him the tablets of stone with the law and commandments He had written for their instruction, [Exodus 24:12](#).

We know that the ten commandments were written on tablets of stone, [Exodus 31:18](#) / [Deuteronomy 5:22](#). However, the instructions concerning the tabernacle and the function of the priests were written on the common writing material of the day.

Moses now sets out with Joshua, who was helping him, [Exodus 17:8-16](#), but only Moses goes up on the mountain of God, [Exodus 24:13](#). Moses tells the elders to wait behind until he and Joshua return, and if any disputes occur, then Aaron and Hur, [Exodus 17:10-13](#), can deal with them, [Exodus 24:14](#).

Notice the mention of the cloud again, [Exodus 24:15](#); the cloud represents the very presence of God. Aaron and Hur stayed with the elders, and Moses and Joshua stayed together for six days before God appeared to Moses only, [Exodus 24:16](#).

To the Israelites, God's glory looked like a consuming fire, and although they couldn't see God or Moses, God left them reminders of His glory and presence to help them trust what they could not see, [Exodus 24:17](#).

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The spectacular vision of the glory of God on the mountain ‘like a consuming fire’, [Exodus 24:17](#), should have given the Israelites greater respect for God's revelation than they demonstrated later, [Exodus 32:1-8](#). There were three symbols of God's glory: the cloud, the fire, and the voice.’

Moses then went to meet God, and he stayed with God for forty days and nights, [Exodus 24:18](#) / [Deuteronomy 9:9](#). It was during these forty days and forty nights that he fasted, [Exodus 34:28-35](#). Only three people within the Scriptures have fasted for the same time period: Moses, here, Elijah, [1 Kings 19:7-9](#), and Jesus Himself, [Matthew 4:2](#).

CHAPTER 25

INTRODUCTION

‘The LORD said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give. These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze; blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ram skins dyed red and another type of durable leather; acacia wood; olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. “Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.’ Exodus 25:1-

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OFFERINGS FOR THE TABERNACLE

Moses is to tell the Israelites to bring God an offering, and Moses is to receive the offering for God from everyone whose heart prompts them to give, [Exodus 25:1-2](#). In other words, this was a freewill offering.

We might ask, where did the Israelites get this material from? Well, remember when they left Egypt, God ensured that they didn't leave empty-handed; they plundered Egypt, [Exodus 12:35-36](#) / [Psalm 105:37](#).

The gold, silver and brass that were offered, Exodus 25:3, came from their plunder of the Egyptians, as well as their conquest over the Amalekites, Exodus 35:4-19. The yarn and fine linen were spun from flax, Exodus 25:4 / Exodus 9:31 / Joshua 2:6, and the goat's hair was spun and used for making tents.

The durable leather, Exodus 25:5, would probably have been made from some sea animal. Acacia wood, Exodus 25:5, is sometimes called shittim wood. This would be easily obtainable throughout the region of Sinai.

The pure oil, Exodus 25:6, was beaten from olives that were picked just before ripening, Exodus 27:20. The oil lamps were to be burning every night, which burning probably symbolised that God's presence would never leave Israel, Exodus 30:8 / 1 Samuel 3:3.

No one really knows what onyx stones were, Exodus 25:7. Onyx is the middle gemstone in the fourth and last row of the High Priest's breastplate, Exodus 28:20, and the fifth foundational stone in New Jerusalem, Revelation 21:20. The tabernacle was to be a symbol of God's presence among His people, Exodus 25:8.

Why did God want the tabernacle built?

1. It would be a rallying place where God's Word would be proclaimed.
2. It would serve as a physical reminder of God's presence among the people.
3. It was the place where God recorded His name, the place where He would meet with them and bless them, Exodus 20:24.
4. It was a singularly impressive 'figure' of the ultimate spiritual realities to be achieved in 'the kingdom of God,' the church of Jesus, and therefore a witness at one and the same time to both Israels, the Old, and the New.

The tabernacle had to be built specifically according to the pattern that God would give them, Exodus 25:9 / Hebrews 8:5. In other places, it is referred to as the tent of meeting, Exodus 27:21, the tabernacle of the Lord, Numbers 16:9, and the tabernacle of testimony, Exodus 38:21.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'The significance of all this for persons living in our times is found in the inspired declaration that, 'These are the copy and shadow of the heavenly things', Hebrews 8:5. 'They were a figure for the time then present', Hebrews 9:9, and 'copies of the things in heaven', Hebrews 9:23. In this understanding is the only proper appreciation of these instructions.'

THE ARK

'Have them make an ark of acacia wood—two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. Overlay it with pure gold, both inside and out, and make a gold moulding around it. Cast four gold rings for it and fasten them to its four feet, with two rings on one side and two rings on the other. Then make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. Insert the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry it. The poles are to remain in the rings of this ark; they are not to be removed. Then put in the ark the tablets of the covenant law, which I will give you.' Exodus 25:10-16

The ark was made by Bezalel, Exodus 37:1, and the ark itself was a small box made of acacia wood, and it measured about three and three-quarters feet long, two and one-quarter feet wide and high, Exodus 25:10 / Exodus 37:1. The acacia wood was to be overlaid with gold, Exodus 25:11 / Exodus 37:2.

Four gold rings were fastened to its four feet, with two rings on one side and two rings on the other, Exodus 25:12 / Exodus 37:3. Poles of acacia wood were to be made and overlaid with gold, Exodus 25:13 / Exodus 27:4.

The poles were made in order to carry the ark of the covenant, Exodus 25:14 / Exodus 37:5. Notice the warning concerning the poles, they were to remain in the rings of this ark at all times, Exodus 25:15.

The ark was God's throne in His dwelling place in the Tabernacle. Most people associate the Ark of the Covenant with judgement and wrath, rightly so. The day is soon coming when God will judge the secrets of people's hearts, Romans 2:16, and God's wrath will be revealed, Romans 1:18 / Psalm 94:9.

The Ark of the Covenant is the best-known item in the Tabernacle, renowned for its mysterious powers against the enemies of Israel, 1 Samuel 5-6. The Ark of the Covenant resided in the Holy of Holies, the innermost room of the Tabernacle.

Access was only permitted once per year, on the Day of Atonement. Access was restricted to one person only, the high priest. He had to come into the Holy of Holies with the blood of a goat, on behalf of his own and the people of Israel's sins, Hebrews 9:7. Notice they are to put in the ark the tablets of the covenant law, which God will give them, Exodus 25:16.

INSIDE THE ARK

1. The two stone tablets of the Law, Exodus 25:16 / Exodus 25:21 / Hebrews 9:4.

2. Aaron's rod that budded, Numbers 17:10 / Hebrews 9:4.

3. The golden pot of 'hidden' manna, Exodus 16:33 / Hebrews 9:4.

Together, these three items form the Testimony; the Ark is called the Ark of the Testimony.

THE STONE TABLETS OF THE LAW

The two stone tablets of the Law were to be kept inside the ark, Exodus 25:16 / Exodus 25:21 / Hebrews 9:4. The Ten Commandments on the two stone tablets are the basis for God's covenant with the children of Israel, Exodus 19:5-7. They stipulate what the righteous requirements of the law are, but there is nothing to help the children of Israel to obey the commandments.

Because the children of Israel didn't continue with their side of the covenant agreement, because it was impossible, Romans 8:3, God promised to make a new covenant, Jeremiah 31:32-34. This is the new covenant which Jesus has ratified by His blood, Luke 22:20.

Jesus Christ has kept the law of God, Galatians 4:4, loving the Lord His God with all His heart, and His neighbour as Himself, Luke 10:27. This is obvious from reading the four Gospels.

Delighting to do God's will, Psalm 40:8 / John 4:34 / John 5:30 / John 6:38, Jesus had the law of God, the Ten 'Words' of God, in His heart, just as the Ark of the Covenant kept the stone tablets of the Testimony.

The Word of God, John 1:1-2, had become flesh and tabernacled among us, full of grace and truth, 'reality', John 1:14. Through Jesus' death on the cross, as a perfect offering, we are forgiven for our offences under the law and redeemed from slavery to it.

God undertakes to write His laws into our hearts and inscribe them on our minds, by sending forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, Galatians 4:6 / Hebrews 8:10-12.

Thereafter, an inner working of life takes place, 'Christ who is our life', Colossians 3:4, 'Christ being formed in you', Galatians 4:19, that will result in at least the same testimony of God as the Ten Commandments.

The children of Israel broke the old covenant, and we still do too, because of trying to keep it by self-effort in our flesh. In the new covenant, God undertakes to write His laws into our minds by His Spirit, providing we walk by the Spirit, **Ezekiel 36:25-28 / Romans 8:4**.

John is very economical in his writing, using one or two words to describe vast realities. But his focus is not on understanding so much as truly knowing, experiencing, for example, the Bread of Life, **John 6:35**.

John refers to Jesus as, The ‘Word’ in his Gospel **John 1:1**. The ‘Word of Life’ in his first epistle, **1 John 1:1**. The ‘Word of God’ in **Revelation 19:6**. In each case, John’s underlying thought seems to be the Ark of the Testimony.

AARON’S ROD THAT BUDDDED

Aaron’s rod that budded was also to be kept inside the ark, **Numbers 17:10 / Hebrews 9:4**. A little history is required; to begin with, the account is in **Numbers 16**.

A short while after the Tabernacle had been functioning, one of the priests, ‘Korah’, and some others mounted a challenge to the leadership of Moses and Aaron.

Couched in language that was very spiritual, Korah reasoned Aren’t all the Lord’s people holy? Isn’t He among all of them? Why are Moses and Aaron the only leaders? It’s too much for them to cope with, **Numbers 16:3**.

Korah’s partners were not priests, and their line of reasoning was totally anti-God’s Word, ‘Moses, you’ve brought us away from a land flowing with milk and honey (Egypt) into this desert.

Where is this land flowing with milk and honey that you promised us? Do you think we’re all blind?’ **Numbers 16:13-14**. This was an outright lie. Egypt had meant toil and miserable hardship, bitter tears, and hopelessness, but after a few months of building a beautiful Tabernacle, the memory of that slavery was fading, hence the challenge. Moses instructed everyone to appear before the Lord the next day, and they were to fill bronze incense burners and place them before the Lord, **Numbers 16:17-18**. God was furious and judged Korah and his cronies.

Their censors became used in the covering for the Burnt Offering Altar, as a reminder of God’s wrath from heaven against the ones who had spoken so vehemently against Him and those He had chosen, **Numbers 16:36-39**.

But the incident did not finish there. The whole congregation then started to murmur against Moses and Aaron because they had ‘killed the Lord’s people’, **Numbers 16:31**.

Again, God reacted furiously, and a plague broke out, quenched only when Aaron obeyed Moses and placed his incense burner before the Lord in the Tabernacle, **Numbers 16:46-48**.

The plague had exacted a devastating toll on the people, and God had proved negatively that Moses and Aaron were indeed his choices. However, God wanted to prove positively that Aaron was his choice for the priesthood **Numbers 17:5**. A rod from the head of each of the twelve tribes was marked with the name of the tribe and placed before the Lord, at Ark of the Testimony, **Numbers 17:4**.

When Moses returned the next day, Aaron’s rod had budded with sprouts, yielding blossoms and ripe almonds. God instructed Moses to place Aaron’s rod back before the Testimony, ‘to be kept as a sign against the rebels’ to prevent further murmurings and death, **Numbers 17:10**.

That is the history, and the application comes in **John 11**. Jesus’ friend Lazarus is quite seriously ill. Jesus loved the family: Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. But Jesus did not go to see them straight away; He waited two days, **John 11:6**. This caused a lot of murmuring and reasoning. The first bunch of murmurers and reasoners were the disciples, especially when Jesus (without being told) announces that Lazarus has fallen asleep, **John 11:11 / John 11:14**.

The next bunch of murmurers and reasoners were Martha, Mary and the mourners. Martha can't wait to tell Jesus what she thinks, meeting Him on the road. Mary was less vociferous but still made the same observation as Martha, **John 11:21-32**.

It looks really bad. Jesus has let everybody down, just what the 'press' wanted to 'publish'. It is in this very environment of death, despair, and hopelessness that Jesus announces 'I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live,' **John 11:25**.

Jesus asks Martha if she believes, and she gives a reply that is doctrinally superb: 'She believes Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God who has come into the world.' **John 11:27**.

She avoids answering Jesus' actual question because her theology is already 'at the back of her mind' due to her grief. Some of the others begin to question even whether He is the Messiah. After all, if Jesus can make the blind see, a strong proof He is the Messiah, **Isaiah 42:1 / Isaiah 42:7**, why couldn't He have prevented Lazarus from dying?

Jesus had no intention of preventing Lazarus from dying, and He appears to have had every intention of waiting until he had died, so that people would see the glory of God appear in the Tabernacle, Jesus Christ, and that many would believe in(to) Him, 'into' is the literal Greek, **John 11:40 / John 11:15 / John 11:45**.

Lazarus was not just a piece of wood, cut from an almond tree somewhere, as Aaron's rod had been. Lazarus was a full-scale human being, a dear friend, now, after being dead for four days in Israel, undoubtedly decomposing rapidly, damaged beyond hope.

'Take away the stone', **John 11:39**. 'Father, I thank You that You have heard Me', **John 11:41** (He had already been at the Golden Incense Altar praying) 'Lazarus, come forth', **John 11:43**. 'Take off the grave clothes and let him go!' **John 11:44**. What a sign of the Messiah!

Who could doubt now that Jesus is who He says He is, the Resurrection and the Life? Only those who were masterminding the plan to kill Him, **John 11:47-54**, but even they were under God's sovereign masterful arrangement.

So much of the Tabernacle's history and the temple's history is upsetting and disappointing. But today, thousands of years later, people are still very eager to learn about the tabernacle and the temple.

This has much to do with the Ark of the Covenant, which, for at least part of its history, contained the budding rod that is fulfilled in Jesus, who is the Resurrection and the Life!

Aaron's rod that budded was a sign of God's continued choice of Aaron as a priest, **Numbers 17:5**, but Aaron's priesthood was interrupted by his death. The Lord Jesus Christ, though, has a priesthood that is constituted with an indestructible life, **Hebrews 7:16**. He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, **Hebrews 7:25**.

THE GOLDEN POT OF 'HIDDEN' MANNA

The golden pot of 'hidden' manna was also placed inside the ark, **Exodus 16:33 / Hebrews 9:4**. Manna was the food that came down from God to feed the children of Israel daily in the wilderness for the forty years of their journey to Canaan.

It was given to the children of Israel in such a way that it required them to develop self-discipline. Manna only came in the early morning with the dew, **Exodus 16:13-14**, but the time the sun was up, it would have evaporated, **Exodus 16:21**.

It had to be gathered every day, any residue would breed worms and smell, Exodus 16:20, and they had to gather a double portion on the sixth day because none would fall on the Sabbath, Exodus 16:22-27.

It was called ‘Manna’ because that is Hebrew for ‘what is it’, and it looked like white coriander seed and tasted like wafer biscuits made with honey, Exodus 16:31.

The Lord commanded Moses to fill an omer vessel with manna and keep it for a memorial to future generations of how God fed them in the wilderness, Exodus 16:32-33. This is the Golden Pot of Hidden Manna in the Tabernacle. It is obvious that if manna was kept for longer than a day or two, if it was a Sabbath, then the manna would breed worms and smell. Why then try to keep it as a memorial to future generations? The key is the Golden Pot.

The Golden Pot would last forever. It was round, indicating eternal; it is gold, indicating ‘of God, divine’. The Golden Pot indicates eternal life. Our life needs to be ‘hidden with Christ in God’, Colossians 3:3, and we need to know ‘Christ our life’, eternal life, Colossians 3:4.

The hidden manna was a memorial of how the Lord had sustained His people in an impossible situation. Christ is real and applicable to every person of every age in every circumstance.

When Satan tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread during His forty days of fasting, Jesus answered him by speaking about the Word of God is bread, Matthew 4:4. John 6:25-59 and John 6:47-51, tells us that it is Jesus, who is the Word of God, He is the true bread from the Father in heaven, He is the bread of life who offers everlasting life. So what exactly is the Lord trying to teach them and even us today through this event? He’s teaching them and us that we need to rely on the Lord daily for our daily provisions, Matthew 6:11 / Lamentations 3:22-23.

It’s so important to take our faith one day at a time and enjoy the blessings of today. Why? Because we will receive brand new blessings tomorrow. Every day of our lives, we need to get out of our beds and look for the living bread; we need to read it, digest it, and live by it. God providing through giving us the means to work and all that goes with it is really no less miraculous than the giving of bread from heaven.

THE MERCY SEAT

‘Make an atonement cover of pure gold—two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide. And make two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover. Make one cherub on one end and the second cherub on the other; make the cherubim of one piece with the cover, at the two ends. The cherubim are to have their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover with them. The cherubim are to face each other, looking toward the cover. Place the cover on top of the ark and put in the ark the tablets of the covenant law that I will give you. There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.’ Exodus 25:17-22

An atonement cover or ‘mercy seat’ KJV, of pure gold, was to be made to cover the ark, and it measured about three and three-quarters feet long and two and a quarter feet wide, Exodus 25:17 / Exodus 37:6.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Greek word used to translate ‘mercy seat’ here in the Septuagint (hilasterion), is another form of the word used to describe Jesus Christ as our propitiation in 1 John 2:2 (hilasmos). The mercy seat was for the Israelites, temporarily what Jesus Christ is for all people permanently: the place where God found satisfaction.’

Two cherubim made out of hammered gold would be placed at each end of the cover, Exodus 25:18 / Exodus 37:7-8, and they were to be made of one piece with the cover, Exodus 25:19.

The cherubim are to have their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover with them and they are to face each other, looking toward the cover, Exodus 25:20 / Exodus 37:9. The wings of the two Cherubim possibly touched one another to form a complete covering. The uncertainty should not unduly trouble us, 1 Corinthians 13:12.

The cover was to be placed on top of the ark and the tablets of the covenant law were to be placed within it, Exodus 25:21. Above the cover between the two cherubim is where God will meet with Moses and give him all His commands for the Israelites, Exodus 25:22.

God's presence did not dwell inside the box, but remained over the Ark, in between the two Cherubim. God dwelt 'in unapproachable light', 1 Timothy 6:16 / Psalm 104:2.

The high priest had to shield his eyes, because 'no man shall see Me and live', Exodus 33:20. This was where God met with Moses, Exodus 25:21-22 / Leviticus 16:14-15.

There was a cover on the Ark, known as the Mercy Seat, or Propitiation Cover. It was here that the blood of a goat was sprinkled by the high priest on the Day of Atonement, to appease God's righteous anger, 'propitiate' for the sins of the people of Israel, Exodus 37:1-9.

Romans 3:24-25 tells us that there is redemption in Christ Jesus because God has set Him forth as propitiation, through faith in His blood. Christ has died, and the price is paid. To those who believe in Jesus Christ's death for their sins, there is now mercy, not wrath, Romans 5:8-9.

The glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle on the day it was reared up and anointed, Exodus 40:9 / Exodus 40:18 / Exodus 40:34-35, exactly fourteen days short of one year since the Exodus from Egypt, Exodus 40:2 / Exodus 12:6 / Exodus 12:31.

The two cherubim on the Mercy Seat represented God's glory, Hebrews 9:5. We are not told in great detail exactly what the Ark of the Covenant looked like. Some models show the cherubim kneeling. Other models show the cherubim standing.

THE TABLE

'Make a table of acacia wood—two cubits long, a cubit wide and a cubit and a half high. Overlay it with pure gold and make a gold moulding around it. Also, make around it a rim a handbreadth wide and put a gold moulding on the rim. Make four gold rings for the table and fasten them to the four corners, where the four legs are. The rings are to be close to the rim to hold the poles used in carrying the table. Make the poles of acacia wood, overlay them with gold and carry the table with them. And make its plates and dishes of pure gold, as well as its pitchers and bowls for the pouring out of offerings. Put the bread of the Presence on this table to be before me at all times.' Exodus 25:23-30

The showbread table was made of acacia wood and it measured about three feet long, one and a half feet wide and two and a quarter feet high, Exodus 25:23 / Exodus 27:10.

It was made from acacia wood overlaid with gold, Exodus 25:24 / Exodus 25:37, similar to the Boards for the tabernacle, Exodus 26:15-30, speaking of the two-fold nature of Jesus Christ. He was born of Mary as a genuine human being, yet conceived by the Holy Spirit and called the Son of God, Luke 1:35, truly man overlaid with God. It had gold moulding for a rim which measured around three inches wide, Exodus 25:25 / Exodus 37:10. Four gold rings were to be made for the table, which were to be fastened to the four corners where the four legs were, Exodus 25:26 / Exodus 37:13.

The rings were to be close to the rim in order to hold the poles in place when carrying the table, Exodus 25:27 / Exodus 37:14. The poles were to be made of acacia wood, overlaid with gold and were to be used to carry the table, Exodus 25:28 / Exodus 37:15. Its plates, dishes, pitchers and bowls for the pouring out of offerings were made of pure gold, Exodus 25:29 / Exodus 37:16.

The bread of the Presence was to be in the table before God at all times, Exodus 25:30. The showbread table was placed on the right-hand side of the Holy Place, the north side, a little way from the gold-covered Boards, Exodus 26:15-30. The showbread table had a crown made of gold, unlike the burnt offering altar, Exodus 27:1-8.

Back there in the Outer Court, all was about washing, judgement and death at the bronze-coated Laver and Burnt Offering Altar. Here in the Holy Place, all is about life, food, light, and fragrant incense.

Therefore, ‘we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels, because of the suffering of death,’ in the Outer Court, but at the showbread table, and the golden incense altar, in the Holy Place, we see Jesus ‘crowned with glory and honour’, Hebrews 2:9.

On the showbread table were placed twelve loaves of unleavened bread, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. The loaves were replaced every week freshly on the Sabbath; it was fresh food in the house of God for the priests, Aaron, and his sons, Leviticus 24:5-9.

Peter tells us that those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 1:8, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, 1 Peter 2:3, are not only a spiritual house, but also a holy priesthood, a royal priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 2:5 / 1 Peter 2:9.

As priests, we are ministering to the Lord through faith in Jesus’ blood and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Our food, in addition to some of the offerings, is the fresh bread on the golden showbread table.

Jesus as the Bread of God, ‘who came down from heaven to give LIFE to the world’, John 6:33, crowned with glory and honour. The twelve loaves represent the whole people of God, in God’s house, the church, 1 Timothy 3:15, in fellowship with one another, 1 John 1:7.

The loaves of unleavened bread remind us of the Lord Jesus saying, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger’, John 6:35. This unlimited supply of heavenly food, fresh every week, is to be the portion of the priests in the light from the lampstand, Colossians 1:12.

Every day we need to come to Him, John 6:37, see the Son and believe in Him, John 6:40. He is the Living Bread, that came down from heaven to give us His life, life IN us, John 6:51 / John 6:53.

This life is brought to us first as the Spirit who gives life, John 6:63 and secondly, as the words of eternal life, John 6:68. Today, Jesus Christ can only give His life to us through His word and by His Spirit. The black-and-white word of the scriptures alone is not enough for life, John 5:39-40. We must come to Him in the word AND in the Spirit. The showbread is also called the Bread of the Presence. To eat Christ as the Bread of Life, we, the priests, must be in the presence of God, who is Spirit, John 4:24. The Showbread is for all the priests, in fellowship with one another in God’s presence, Luke 11:5-8.

Based on the parable in Luke 11:5-8, we need the Bread of Life not just for ourselves, as in the daily bread in Luke 11:3, but also for our needy friends, who come to us on their journey.

Jesus makes it clear that people in the world are hungry, but the flesh profits nothing, John 6:35 / John 6:62. Jesus came that He might give life to the world, so that those who believe in Him may have eternal life, John 6:33 / John 6:47.

Therefore, we should ask, seek and knock in prayer, Luke 11:9, until He gives us as much Bread of life as we need for ourselves and our friends, Luke 11:8. Our heavenly Father delights to do this! Luke 11:13.

THE LAMPSTAND

‘Make a lampstand of pure gold. Hammer out its base and shaft, and make its flowerlike cups, buds, and blossoms of one piece with them. Six branches are to extend from the sides of the lampstand—three on one side and three on the

other. Three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms are to be on one branch, three on the next branch, and the same for all six branches extending from the lampstand. And on the lampstand, there are to be four cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms. One bud shall be under the first pair of branches extending from the lampstand, a second bud under the second pair, and a third bud under the third pair—six branches in all. The buds and branches shall all be of one piece with the lampstand, hammered out of pure gold. ‘Then make its seven lamps and set them up on it so that they light the space in front of it. Its wick trimmers and trays are to be of pure gold. A talent of pure gold is to be used for the lampstand and all these accessories. See that you make them according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.’ Exodus 25:31-40

The lampstand was made of solid, pure gold, beaten out of a single piece, Exodus 25:31 / Exodus 37:17. It was placed on the left side of the Holy Place, the south side.

The writer doesn’t give us either the dimensions or the pattern of the Lampstand, but we do know it had branches and that the bowls were to be formed like almonds in blossom, Exodus 25:31 / Exodus 37:17.

The lampstand was therefore like a tree of gold, John 1:4. Six branches were to extend from the sides of the lampstand, three on one side and three on the other, Exodus 25:32 / Exodus 37:18.

Three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms were to be on one branch, three on the next branch, and the same for all six branches extending from the lampstand, Exodus 25:33 / Exodus 37:19.

On the lampstand were four cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms, Exodus 25:34 / Exodus 37:20.

One bud is to be under the first pair of branches extending from the lampstand, a second bud under the second pair, and a third bud under the third pair, six branches in all, Exodus 25:35 / Exodus 37:21.

The buds and branches are to be made from one piece with the lampstand, hammered out of pure gold, Exodus 25:36 / Exodus 37:22. Then make its seven lamps and set them up on it so that they light the space in front of it, Exodus 25:37 / Exodus 27:23, and its wick trimmers and trays are to be of pure gold, Exodus 25:38 / Exodus 27:23.

A talent, that is about seventy-five pounds of pure gold is to be used for the lampstand and all these accessories, Exodus 25:39 / Exodus 37:24. Notice they were to make them according to the pattern shown Moses on the mountain, Exodus 25:40.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the lampstand.

‘It was the only source of light in the sanctuary, with the spiritual meaning that only the Word of God, which the candlestick typified, is the true light of God’s church.’

The lampstand was lit permanently, to give light inside the Holy Place, John 1:9. The priests in the tabernacle were responsible, evening and morning, for topping up the seven lamps with oil and trimming their wicks. Therefore, the lampstand points us to Jesus Christ Himself, the light of the whole world, John 8:12.

We need the Lord’s light, in His light we see light, Psalm 36:9. It was when God commanded His light to shine in our hearts that we began to see how excellent it is to know Jesus Christ, compared to all other things, 2 Corinthians 4:6.

We also began to see how greatly blinded and deceived we had become by the god of this world and by our own lusts, 2 Corinthians 4:4 / Titus 3:3.

We not only need to see His light, but we also need to walk in His light, 1 John 1:5-7 / Ephesians 1:18 / Ephesians 5:5-8. This will involve the Lord shining on many things that do not reflect Him.

We should confess anything that shone in our conscience to our Advocate in heaven, Jesus Christ the Righteous, who gave Himself for our sins, 1 John 1:9 / 1 John 2:1-2.

This kind of inner working is the functioning of the light of life. The priests trimmed the wicks of the lamps in the lampstand and re-filled the bowls with oil, and the light burned brightly again, Revelation 1:12-13.

Once our conscience is clear and we are walking in the light, we are then the light of the world, as Jesus said in Matthew 5:14-16. We can shine for the Lord amid this dark and dirty generation, Philippians 2:15.

This is the experience of the Light in an individual way, but the lampstand has seven lamps; seven is the number of completion. Therefore, the lampstand is composed of multiple lamps, people having similar experiences, and the local church, **Revelation 2:1-7**.

The lampstand was formed by beating a solid lump of gold. First, the central stem was beaten out and then from the central stem, the branches were beaten out, **Exodus 25:31 / Exodus 37:17**.

This shows us Christ and His members in His body, **1 Corinthians 12:12**. When Jesus came, He was the unique Light of the World. Then, Peter, James and John were ‘beaten out’, established in Christ, **2 Corinthians 1:21**.

We know that the three lamps on either side were lit from the lamp in the central stem when the lampstand was set up. This indicates that Christ ‘lit’ Peter, James, John and the other early disciples, and they began to follow Him, the Light of the World.

Then, after His death and resurrection, the Lord Jesus came to them and breathed the Holy Spirit into them, **John 20:22** and poured out the Holy Spirit upon them, **Acts 2:33**.

Peter was on fire. Stephen caught the flame, then Philip, and they came together with many others to be the church in Jerusalem, **Acts 8:1**, the lampstand there, beaten out of one source, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The lampstand is all gold; it is God’s work, **Philippians 2:12-13**. By the time of the apostle John, in the Book of Revelation, there are seven churches in Asia, **Revelation 1-3**, that are still the objects of Christ’s care and attention. There is one church in each of the seven cities, **Revelation 1:20**, and it is still God’s work; the Son of Man, Jesus, is walking in the midst of the seven churches, which are seven golden lampstands. They are not plastic, they are gold. They are answerable not to men, but Jesus, the Son of Man, in His priestly role.

Christ speaks to each church in turn. At the start of the letter to each church, one or more of the characteristics of Christ in John’s vision, in **Revelation 1**, is/are applied directly to the situation of that church.

Whatever the Lord Jesus Christ is, it is for His churches, His lampstands, to experience. At the end of the letter to each church, the Spirit is there, applying what has been said to those who have an ear to hear, **Revelation 2-3**.

The aged apostle John is not there as organisational head; he is in exile because of the word of God and because of the testimony of Jesus, **Revelation 1:9**. Christ is the Director, the Boss. He is tending the lampstands, **Revelation 1:13**. John is a brother and companion in tribulation with those he writes to, **Revelation 1:9**.

Eventually, at the end of the Book of Revelation, the New Jerusalem will be one enormous golden lampstand, not requiring any more trimming. There will be no darkness to combat anymore, just the flowing ‘of the river of water of life, with the tree of life, from the throne of God and the Lamb’, **Revelation 22:1-2**.

This will be the consummate tabernacle of God with men, having the glory of God. He will dwell with us forever, and we will be His people, and He will be our God, **Revelation 21:3**. How we look forward to that day! **Revelation 22:21**.

CHAPTER 26

INTRODUCTION

The tabernacle was a structure built by the children of Israel under the supervision of Moses, around 1450 B.C. The first five books of the Bible were written down by Moses; they are called the Torah, the Hebrew word for ‘law’. Jesus said, ‘He had come not to abolish the law, but to fulfil it,’ **Matthew 5:17**.

John, one of Jesus' disciples, tells us that "the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ," [John 1:17](#). The word 'truth' here is 'alethia' in Greek, meaning 'reality'.

The 'truth' John speaks of is 'Jesus Christ as the Word, who was God and who became flesh and tabernacled among us,' [John 1:1](#) / [John 1:14](#). The Greek word sometimes translated as 'dwelt' here is more literally translated as 'tabernacled'.

Therefore, the tabernacle is a picture, a foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Book of Exodus, when God dictates to Moses the detailed design of the tabernacle, some fourteen hundred and fifty years before the birth of Jesus, He speaks forth a description of just who and what the coming Messiah, the Christ, would be.

In the four Gospels, particularly in John's account, Jesus shows Himself to be the reality of every item in the tabernacle. The real Tabernacle of God with men is therefore the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE MATERIALS AND THE WORKMEN

God had told Moses to warn Pharaoh that if he did not 'Let My people go!', [Exodus 8:1](#). God would send plagues upon Egypt. The final plague would be to slay all the firstborn sons of the Egyptians. Just prior to the final plague striking, God told Moses to tell the children of Israel to ask for and obtain gold, silver, and clothing from the Egyptians, [Exodus 11:1-3](#).

After God Himself had slain all their firstborn sons, the Egyptians were willing to do anything to get rid of the children of Israel, and they gave them whatever they requested, [Exodus 12:36](#). Thus, it seemed they had received some compensation for their slave labour in Egypt.

However, a few months later, as God was revealing the design of the tabernacle to Moses, He also revealed that the source of the materials with which to build it would be this newly acquired wealth among His people, [Exodus 25:1-7](#). God realised this would take a willing heart, [Exodus 25:2](#), but He wanted it to be offered as a free will. The pattern of the tabernacle design had been fully revealed to Moses, the names of the skilful workmen had been made known to him, [Exodus 31:1-6](#), but it remained necessary for the children of Israel to receive the same vision.

Moses spoke to them in [Exodus 35:4-29](#) laying before them all the requirements for materials and encouraging them to have a willing and wise heart, [Exodus 35:5](#) / [Exodus 35:10](#).

The response among the children of Israel was that 'everyone whose heart stirred him up and everyone whose spirit made him willing' brought the required materials to the Lord as a free-will offering, [Exodus 35:21](#). This thought is closely mirrored in the apostle Paul's prayer in the New Testament letter to the Ephesians, [Ephesians 1:17-18](#). It is a matter of revelation in our spirit and seeing His calling wisely and willingly in our hearts that causes us to give all to God for His building. This same thought carries through to the skilful workmen and Bezalel and Aholiab, [Exodus 31:2-6](#).

Without the Spirit revealing to our spirit the pattern and significance of the Tabernacle and making us spiritually wise, we have no way to be built up together as the dwelling place of God in spirit, [Ephesians 2:22](#), that is, the church.

Unless our hearts are enlightened and made wise and willing, we will squander our days in trivial pursuits instead of devoting all to God's purpose and testimony.

There were a few particularly gifted men working on the tabernacle. There were also the many willing-hearted and wise-hearted people, women as well as men, [Exodus 35:22](#) / [Exodus 35:26](#).

It should be that the gifted ones equip the willing and wise ones for the work of service, for the building up of the body of the Anointed One, Christ, Messiah, Ephesians 4:12, the Tabernacle, Exodus 40:9-11.

CHERUBIM EMBROIDERED COVERING

‘Make the tabernacle with ten curtains of finely twisted linen and blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, with cherubim woven into them by a skilled worker. All the curtains are to be the same size—twenty-eight cubits long and four cubits wide. Join five of the curtains together and do the same with the other five. Make loops of blue material along the edge of the end curtain in one set and do the same with the end curtain in the other set. Make fifty loops on one curtain and fifty loops on the end curtain of the other set, with the loops opposite each other. Then make fifty gold clasps and use them to fasten the curtains together so that the tabernacle is a unit.’ Exodus 26:1-6

The covering embroidered with cherubim was the innermost covering over the sanctuary. It was this covering that formed the actual tabernacle, in the specific sense of Exodus 26:1 / Exodus 36:8. The cherubim embroidered covering also formed the ceiling of the tabernacle, looking up from inside the sanctuary.

The cherubim are there, reminding us, perhaps, of two things.

1. The cherubim were placed at the east of Eden ‘to keep the way of the tree of life’, Genesis 3:24.

To ‘keep’ in Hebrew means to observe, keep watch over, preventing Adam and Eve from returning to partake of the tree of life. Here in the Tabernacle, the Cherubim are overseeing what goes on inside the Sanctuary.

2. The cherubim are among those in heaven who bow the knee to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ, Philippians 2:10 / Revelation 5:11-14, so He is truly Head over all things to the church.

The Book of Exodus does not give us the precise pattern of the embroidery, but we are told that the colouring was ‘blue, purple, scarlet and white’ the colour of the fine twined linen’, Exodus 26:1.

These colours are not new to us because we see them at the door to the outer court, Exodus 27:16-17, and again at the door to the sanctuary, Exodus 26:36-37, they also appear in the veil, Exodus 26:31-37, the entrance ‘door’ to the Holy of Holies.

They speak of Christ’s heavenliness, His royalty, His saviourhood, and holiness, as seen in the four Gospels. The reappearance of these colours inside the Sanctuary, embroidered on the ceiling, reminds us that it is the Beloved Son in His fourfold character who is Head over all things to the church, Ephesians 1:22.

John, one of the disciples closest to Jesus, declares, ‘we beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth,’ John 1:17. As we progress closer and closer to the presence of God in the tabernacle, we too need to behold His glory, Colossians 3:1-2, and realise that what we can see is but a small part of the whole. Since much of the embroidery hung over the external walls of the boards, Exodus 26:15-30, what was visible from the inside was only a small part of the whole. They were ten individual curtains to begin with, each measuring thirteen metres by two metres approximately, Exodus 26:2 / Exodus 36:9.

Five curtains were then coupled together with one another, and likewise the other five. Then the two by five metre curtains were looped together, Exodus 26:4-5 / Exodus 36:10-12, using fifty golden clasps to make one enormous embroidery thirteen metres wide and almost nineteen metres long, Exodus 26:6 / Exodus 36:13.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the gold.

‘The meaning is that only the most desirable and costly things that men knew were capable of being used as symbols of such things as the presence of God, the heaven of heavens, the holy Church that in time would appear, the Word of God, and other realities depicted.’

WOVEN GOAT'S HAIR COVERING

“Make curtains of goat hair for the tent over the tabernacle—eleven altogether. All eleven curtains are to be the same size—thirty cubits long and four cubits wide. Join five of the curtains together into one set and the other six into another set. Fold the sixth curtain double at the front of the tent. Make fifty loops along the edge of the end curtain in one set and also along the edge of the end curtain in the other set. Then make fifty bronze clasps and put them in the loops to fasten the tent together as a unit. As for the additional length of the tent curtains, the half curtain that is left over is to hang down at the rear of the tabernacle. The tent curtains will be a cubit longer on both sides; what is left will hang over the sides of the tabernacle so as to cover it. Make for the tent a covering of ram skins dyed red, and over that a covering of the other durable leather.’ Exodus 26:7-14

Here we have a picture of the woven goat’s hair covering the tabernacle. This covering made a ‘tent’ over the tabernacle, [Exodus 26:7](#) / [Exodus 36:14](#). Altogether there were eleven curtains of woven goat’s hair, [Exodus 26:8](#) / [Exodus 36:14-17](#), measuring twenty metres by fourteen metres approximately, [Exodus 26:9](#) / [Exodus 36:21](#), held together by fifty bronze clasps, [Exodus 26:10-13](#) / [Exodus 36:18](#).

Goats were of particular importance on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, the time when the children of Israel came together to be reconciled to God, [Leviticus 16](#).

Two goats were selected by lot, [Leviticus 16:8](#), one for sacrifice and the other to be sent out into the wilderness, [Leviticus 16:9-10](#). The blood of the sacrificed goat would be taken into the Holy of Holies by the High Priest, as required by God to forgive the sins of the children of Israel, [Hebrews 9:22](#).

Then the High Priest would lay his hands on the head of the other goat and confess all the sins of the children of Israel before it was sent out into the wilderness, [Leviticus 16:15-16](#), signifying that God would forget all the sins thus confessed. Here is the origin of the ‘scapegoat’.

The twofold significance of the goats is therefore that God wants to forgive and forget. He desires to remove from His people not only the guilt of sin but also His memory of that sin, so that we may be reconciled to Him.

For God’s righteousness to be satisfied, though, one goat without blemish must die, and the other goat without blemish must have the sins of Israel laid upon it and be removed outside the camp. All this speaks forward to the crucifixion of Jesus, [2 Corinthians 5:21](#) / [1 John 3:5](#).

Since Jesus is the reality of the two goats for our atonement and reconciliation to God, “we implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God”, [2 Corinthians 5:20](#).

The goats signify that the Sinless One has been made sin for us so that God can legally forgive us and no longer remember our sins, as it says in the New Covenant, [Hebrews 8:12](#). The covering of woven goat’s hair signifies that, if we have entered into the tabernacle, we are clothed with Christ as our righteousness, [2 Corinthians 5:21](#).

COVERING OF RAMS’ SKIN DYED RED

Since a ram’s skin is not red naturally, [Exodus 26:14](#) / [Exodus 36:19](#), but had to be dyed to become red, this reminds us once more of the great significance of blood shown throughout the fabrics of the doors and coverings of the tabernacle.

Isaiah prophesied of the Messiah some seven hundred and fifty years before His crucifixion, [Isaiah 53:7](#) / [Isaiah 63:1-5](#). The sheer size of this covering indicates how precious the sacrifice of the Messiah, Hebrew, or Christ, Greek, the covering measured at least.

That is about forty-five feet long and six feet wide, [Exodus 26:8](#). The debt we each owe to God, because of our sins and offences against Him and one another, is colossal, [Matthew 26:28](#).

Jesus paid with His blood the price our sins exacted in God's eyes, so He could purchase us back, redeem us, 1 Peter 1:18-19. However, the emphasis here is not merely on individual redemption.

The covering lies across the boards of the Sanctuary Building, which are fitted and built together. The upright boards standing together signify God's people, Titus 2:13-14.

Likewise, Paul speaks to the mainly Gentile Ephesian believers concerning the 'church of God which He purchased with His own blood', Acts 20:28, writing to them later to confirm, 'Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her', Ephesians 5:25.

This is the goal of redemption, that believers in Messiah, Christ, whether of Jewish or Gentile background, would become one joint Body in Messiah/Christ, joint heirs and partakers of the promise God made to Abraham, in you shall all the families/nations of the earth be blessed, Genesis 12:3 / Ephesians 3:6.

What God intends, and longs for, is one redeemed and purified people that are His, owned by Him, filled with Him and displaying all the virtues of the One who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light, 1 Peter 2:9-10.

Very significantly, it was a ram caught in the thicket that God provided to be sacrificed in place of Isaac, Genesis 22:8 / Genesis 22:13. Similarly, God ordained that rams were sacrificed when Aaron and his sons were consecrated as priests to serve in the tabernacle, Exodus 29:15-35. The ram, therefore, speaks of consecration and obedience to God, Philippians 2:8-11.

OUTER COVERING

The covering was made from either badger or seal/dolphin skin, KJV, Exodus 26:14, although there is some uncertainty as to the correct translation from Hebrew.

But there is no uncertainty as to its function; this covering formed a thick, protective, weatherproof layer over the tabernacle. No amount of baking heat from the sun or wind-driven sandstorms or rain could disturb the treasure contained within the tabernacle, thanks to this covering.

So with Christ, after forty days in the wilderness, the tempter could not make any inroads either at the Lord Jesus' human frailty, Matthew 4:4, or at His perception of the divine order of things, Matthew 4:7 / Matthew 4:10.

However, from the outside, this covering made the tabernacle look ordinary and unattractive, Isaiah 53:1-3. Today there is much temptation to be fashionable, with it, and image-conscious and the rest. Not so with Jesus; what He possesses is real and eternal.

The rough fishermen of Galilee who became His close disciples saw this, 2 Peter 1:16, and 'we beheld His glory' and that Jesus was 'full of grace and truth', John 1:14. Such was their evaluation of the Word Who was made flesh and dwelt, tabernacled, among them.

The casual external viewer would not give the tabernacle much of their time, just this dull outer covering and those boring white curtains. How often do we hear, 'it's dull and boring'? Such people have mostly not even glimpsed the door to the tabernacle's outer court, Exodus 27:16-17.

But to those who do make their way to the door of the outer court, observe its character, and pass through, what they see is the burnt offering altar, Exodus 27:1-8, the laver, Exodus 30:17-21, and then the door to the sanctuary, Exodus 26:36-37, which is covered with this unattractive outer covering.

Such seekers are thus inspired to 'consider Him Who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself' so that they do not 'become weary and discouraged in their souls', Hebrews 12:3.

Such a Christ is the Defender and Protector of the Sanctuary Building, where the upright boards, fitted and built together to be God's dwelling place, signify the church, Ephesians 2:21-22, not the outward appearance of religiosity

and dubious organisation, but the genuine Christ-indwelt people who ‘have this treasure in their earthen vessels’, 2 Corinthians 4:7, and are being built together in genuine oneness with one another. Christ seeks to keep and protect us from the world and its influences with this oneness as His goal, just as He prayed in John 17:11-12.

THE BOARDS AND BARS OF THE SANCTUARY

‘Make upright frames of acacia wood for the tabernacle. Each frame is to be ten cubits long and a cubit and a half wide, with two projections set parallel to each other. Make all the frames of the tabernacle in this way. Make twenty frames for the south side of the tabernacle and make forty silver bases to go under them—two bases for each frame, one under each projection. For the other side, the north side of the tabernacle, make twenty frames and forty silver bases—two under each frame. Make six frames for the far end, that is, the west end of the tabernacle, and make two frames for the corners at the far end. At these two corners, they must be double from the bottom all the way to the top and fitted into a single ring; both shall be like that. So there will be eight frames and sixteen silver bases—two under each frame. “Also make crossbars of acacia wood: five for the frames on one side of the tabernacle, five for those on the other side, and five for the frames on the west, at the far end of the tabernacle. The centre crossbar is to extend from end to end at the middle of the frames. Overlay the frames with gold and make gold rings to hold the crossbars.

Also, overlay the crossbars with gold. “Set up the tabernacle according to the plan shown you on the mountain. “Make a curtain of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen, with cherubim woven into it by a skilled worker. Hang it with gold hooks on four posts of acacia wood overlaid with gold and standing on four silver bases. Hang the curtain from the clasps and place the ark of the covenant law behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. Put the atonement cover on the ark of the covenant law in the Most Holy Place. Place the table outside the curtain on the north side of the tabernacle and put the lampstand opposite it on the south side.’ Exodus 26:15-30

In the wording of Exodus 26:15-30, the boards are mentioned as being made of acacia wood, Exodus 26:15-16.

Because wood grows out of the earth, and because Adam was made by God from something He had already made, i.e. the dust of the earth, wood stands for ‘human’, as in Psalms 1:1-3.

The boards are to be standing upright, Exodus 26:15 / Exodus 36:20. God specifies to Moses the size of each board, that is, about fifteen feet long and two and a quarter feet wide, Exodus 26:16 / Exodus 36:21.

The number of boards, Exodus 26:18 / Exodus 36:23, there were twenty boards on each of the South sides, Exodus 26:18 / Exodus 36:23, North side, Exodus 26:20 / Exodus 36:25, and six boards on the West side of the tabernacle, Exodus 26:22 / Exodus 36:27, plus two boards to strengthen the western wall at its corners, Exodus 26:23 / Exodus 36:24.

They are fixed into silver sockets to stand, Exodus 26:19 / Exodus 26:21 / Exodus 26:25 / Exodus 36:24 / Exodus 36:26 / Exodus 36:30. Silver in the scriptures is used as the purchase, redemption price of a life, twenty silver shekels for Joseph in Genesis 37:28, thirty silver shekels for Jesus in Matthew 26:14-15.

When the wood is robustly standing in the silver sockets, it means that we have a testimony that we belong to God, we concede ‘we are not our own, we have been bought with a price’, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

There were two ‘extra’ boards, strengthening the corners of the western side, Exodus 26:23 / Exodus 36:28. This west-facing wall is called the ‘thigh’ in Hebrew, implying strengthened standing in the body of Christ.

These extra boards strengthened the corners, the weakest part of the structure, in the same way as the pillars at the door of the sanctuary, Exodus 26:36-37, and the veil, Exodus 26:31-37.

The boards each had an individual standing in the two silver sockets, but they were strongly connected together by the bars. There were five bars, four of which passed through rings on the outside of the boards, plus the middle bar, which passed through the centre of each board.

There are two long walls of boards, Exodus 26:24 / Exodus 36:29, one signifying the Jews and the other the Gentiles. Neither could they profit under the law nor could they keep the commandments of God.

The only hope was the promised Messiah, in whose blood all might be brought near again. All the 'boards' stand in His redemption only. Any man in Christ is a new creation because the old things have passed away, 'behold, they have become new', 2 Corinthians 5:17.

The new creation in Messiah of one new man, Ephesians 2:15, is corporate; Jewish believers and Gentile believers are saved by His grace through faith alone, Ephesians 2:8, that nobody may boast.

Through Jesus the Messiah, Christ, we both have access in one Spirit to the Father, Ephesians 2:18. In Him, we are fitted together as the boards in the tabernacle so that God may have His dwelling place in the one Spirit, Ephesians 2:22. God is operating powerfully in us to accomplish this, Ephesians 3:20-21.

When many boards together have the same testimony, we are 'those who have obtained a like precious faith in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ', 2 Peter 1:1.

The boards were held together by five bars, the middle one of which passed through the centre of the boards, Exodus 26:26-27 / Exodus 36:31-32. The boards and their bars were made of acacia wood overlaid with gold, Exodus 26:29 / Exodus 36:34, as were the pillars of the entrance door to the sanctuary, Exodus 26:36-37.

The gold overlay, Exodus 26:29 / Exodus 36:34, points is to Peter's words, 'that you might become partakers of the divine nature', 2 Peter 1:4, and 'glorify God in your body', 1 Corinthians 6:20.

The first mention of gold in the Bible is in Genesis 2:11-12. It was 'in the hills' already, as created by God, and is spoken of as 'good', just as God said of everything He had made in Genesis 1. Because it is precious and was created directly by God, gold stands for 'divine'.

The delay in mentioning the gold overlay gives us an indication that the wood, signifying the 'human' element, has to be worked on and fitted, qualified in order to have the gold, the 'divine' element, as its overlay.

Peter gives us the reason that we humans must have 'escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust' and realise we 'have been given precious and exceeding great promises, that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature', 2 Peter 1:4.

We must be the wooden boards that are standing up in the silver sockets, not lounging around in or harking back to the garlic and onions of Egypt as Israel did, Numbers 11:5-6.

The wood is no longer growing in soil or even in the desert sand. Between the boards and the desert is a significant quantity of silver, two silver sockets, each weighing fifty-seven kilos, 125 pounds, form the base for each board.

There are two interpretations of the five bars, Exodus 26:26 / Exodus 36:31.

1. They refer to the lowliness, meekness, longsuffering and love, plus the uniting bond of peace in Ephesians 4:1-3, that are required for us all to walk worthily of our calling

2. They refer to the five classes of gifted persons the ascended Christ gave to equip the saints for building, apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers, Ephesians 4:11.

Since the bars are made of acacia wood overlaid with gold, the most lovely human virtues plus the divine appointment, it seems to me that both may be correct.

The tragedy of church history, in our own age as much as in previous ages, is that appointed, gifted ones have not shown the worthy virtues sufficiently, either towards one another or towards the people they shepherd and teach.

The virtues come first, in order to keep the oneness of the Spirit, Ephesians 4:3, the gifted ones and their equipping come afterwards, in order that the body of Christ may be built up until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and the full knowledge of the Son of God and maturity in Him, Ephesians 4:12-13.

God's plan of salvation and His purpose in the building are not individualistic in the Book of Exodus. The wood may have come from different acacia trees, but all the boards ended up fashioned and fitly framed together in one structure, which was God's dwelling place, Ephesians 2:21.

Before moving on, it's important to consider the significance of God's dwelling place in the Bible. The first mention of the house of God is when Jacob has his dream at Beth-El, 'house of God', while fleeing from Esau, Genesis 28:10-22.

This is confirmed when Jacob returns to Beth-El, Genesis 35:1-15, God appears to him there, speaks to him there, and the house of God is there, God's dwelling place.

Jacob goes down to Egypt, where Joseph is, a few hundred years pass and following the Exodus from Egypt, around 1450 BC, God appears to Moses at Mount Sinai and dictates to him the design of the tabernacle and gives the 'Ten Words', Exodus 34:28, the Ten Commandments. The tabernacle was to be God's dwelling place, Exodus 25:8-9.

Later on in Israel's history, around 1000 BC, the temple was built in Jerusalem. King David did much of the preparation, and his son, King Solomon, oversaw the building. God then dwelt in the temple on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, Psalms 132:13-14.

The children of Israel numbered many hundreds of thousands in their family Passover meals and exit from Egypt. Yet God brought them out into the wilderness to experience one food source and one water source, with one goal of God's speaking, the one centre for worship, one building, the tabernacle, Exodus 25:8.

The dwelling place of God is the one purpose for which we have been purchased by God with the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. However, due to the repeated sinfulness of Israel and her kings, God's glory departed from the temple, and it was no longer His dwelling place.

In the New Testament, we read that, Jesus Christ is the 'Word (who) became flesh and dwelt (tabernacled) among us', John 1:14. God dwelt in Christ, as the apostle Paul wrote, Colossians 2:9. Furthermore, those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ become a dwelling place of God, Ephesians 3:17 / 1 Corinthians 6:19.

Then, corporately, the believers in Christ are the church, which Paul terms 'the holy temple in the Lord' and 'the dwelling place of God in the Spirit', Ephesians 2:21-22, 'the house of God, the church of the living God', 1 Timothy 3:15.

At the end of the New Testament we read 'behold the tabernacle of God is with men and He shall dwell with them and be His people and God Himself will be with them and be their God', Revelation 21:3, as New Jerusalem comes down to the new earth out of heaven from God,' Revelation 21:2 / Revelation 21:10. Throughout the Bible, God desires a dwelling place and reveals the details of that dwelling place to people who are attuned to Him.

Entering through the door to the sanctuary into the first room, the Holy Place, the gold of the boards is shining all around and the cherubim covering is overhead.

This is why we must be sanctified wholly, our entire spirit, soul and body, to be preserved without blemish as shining boards in the house of God, 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

Here are the furnishings of the tabernacle, the showbread table, Exodus 25:23-30, the lampstand, Exodus 25:31-40, and the golden incense altar, Exodus 30:1-10.

THE VEIL

'Make a curtain of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen, with cherubim woven into it by a skilled worker. Hang it with gold hooks on four posts of acacia wood overlaid with gold and standing on four silver bases. Hang the curtain from the clasps and place the ark of the covenant law behind the curtain. The curtain will separate

the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. Put the atonement cover on the ark of the covenant law in the Most Holy Place. Place the table outside the curtain on the north side of the tabernacle and put the lampstand opposite it on the south side.' Exodus 26:31-35

The veil was made using the four colours blue, purple, scarlet, and white of the fine linen, [Exodus 26:31](#) / [Exodus 36:35](#), which corresponds with the four Gospels.

Unger, in his commentary, says the following.

'Blue signifies Christ's heavenly origin. Purple suggests his royal lineage as David's Son. Scarlet indicates his sacrificial bloodshed for fallen mankind.'

We have seen these four colours previously at the door of the outer court, [Exodus 27:16-17](#), the door to the sanctuary, [Exodus 26:36-37](#), the cherubim embroidered covering, [Exodus 26:1-6](#), which forms the ceiling of the tabernacle and on the ephod the high priest wore, [Exodus 28:5-14](#) / [Exodus 39:2-7](#).

The veil is the final door to pass through to enter into the presence of God in the Holy of Holies, [Exodus 26:32-33](#) / [2 Corinthians 3:14-16](#). Entry was forbidden to all except one, the high priest, and his access was not free; he was permitted entry once only per year, on the Day of Atonement, when he brought the blood of the sacrificed goat to sprinkle on the lid, called the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant.

The atonement cover or mercy seat on the ark of the covenant law was to be kept in the Most Holy Place, [Exodus 26:34](#). The showbread table was to be placed on the outside of the curtain on the north side of the tabernacle and the lampstand opposite it on the south side, [Exodus 26:35](#).

The veil reminds us that we are excluded because 'we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God', [Romans 3:23](#). However, just as the Passover lamb was slain for the redemption of the children of Israel in Egypt, and the goat was slain so that its blood could obtain God's forgiveness for the Israelites on the Day of Atonement, so Jesus 'bore our sins in His own body on the tree', [1 Peter 2:24](#) / [Isaiah 53:6](#).

The effect of the death of Jesus was dramatic: the earth quaked, rocks were split, 'and the veil in the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom,' [Matthew 27:51](#), signifying that God tore it because the veil in the temple was twenty-five metres high. Here in the tabernacle, the veil was just over four and a half metres high.

Some suggest that [Matthew 27:54](#) and [Luke 23:47](#) both record that the centurion at the crucifixion site saw the veil torn in two. This means that this Gentile sinner could also see straight into the Holy of Holies.

This is a picture to show us that it is now possible, on the basis of faith in Jesus' death for our sins, to stand in the presence of God as justified and forgiven people, [Romans 5:1-2](#).

As [Hebrews 10:19-22](#) shows, the way to the Holy of Holies has been opened up for us through the veil of Jesus' flesh being torn on the cross. There is a 'new', literally 'freshly slain' and 'living' way for us to enter.

The Lord Jesus Christ is not just our freshly slain, dead offering, He is also the Living One, [Luke 24:5](#) / [Revelation 1:18](#), risen from the dead and ascended, our great High Priest, with our names on His heart, the Breastplate, and shoulders, the shoulder stones, going into the Holy of Holies, where God's presence is over the Ark of the Covenant! Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'Without any doubt, the Holy of Holies, where the presence of God is represented as being enthroned there, is a type of heaven itself.

1. God was enthroned in both, [Revelation 4:1-2](#).
2. Divine light is in both, [Leviticus 16:2](#) / [Revelation 21:23](#).
3. Both have worshipping cherubim, [Exodus 25:18](#) / [Revelation 4:6-8](#).
4. Both are golden, [Exodus 25:11](#) / [Revelation 21:18](#).
5. Both are represented as perfect 'cubes,' here as 10 X 10 X 10 (cubits), and heaven as a cube of 1,500 miles in width, breadth, and height, [Revelation 21:16-17](#).

6. God's law is in both the tables of the testimony here, the eternal law of all the universe in heaven, [Psalms 119:89](#).
7. The Atonement was made in both, here, by the high priest on the Day of Atonement, and in heaven by Jesus Christ, once and for all,' [Hebrews 9:11-13](#).

THE DOOR TO THE SANCTUARY

'For the entrance to the tent, make a curtain of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen—the work of an embroiderer. Make gold hooks for this curtain and five posts of acacia wood overlaid with gold. And cast five bronze bases for them.' Exodus 26:36-37

The door to the sanctuary is the second of three 'doors'. There was the door to the outer court, [Exodus 27:16-17](#), where people would first enter. Here we are at the door to the sanctuary, where we enter the Holy Place, and soon we will to the veil at the entrance to the Holy of Holies.

The door to the sanctuary is remarkably similar to the door to the outer court, [Exodus 27:16-17](#). It has the same colouring, blue, purple, scarlet and the white of the fine twined linen, [Exodus 26:36](#) / [Exodus 36:37](#). As with that door, the Book of Exodus does not tell us the pattern of the tapestry.

Seeing these colours again reminds us of the Lord Jesus in the four Gospels as the Son of God, the King, the lowly servant who became our ransom, and the lovely, pure humanity of 'the Son of Man who came to seek and to save that which is lost', [Luke 19:10](#).

This door has different dimensions, around about four and a half by four and a half metres, but occupies the same area as the door of the outer court, that door was half the height and twice the width, inviting us with comforting access to know the salvation in Christ at the burnt offering altar, [Exodus 27:1-8](#), and the laver, [Exodus 30:17-21](#). There, everything was just above or just below eye level, as our human sinful condition was addressed by our Saviour God, [Titus 3:3-7](#). Now that 'we who were once far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ', [Ephesians 2:13](#), the door to the sanctuary requires us to take another look at this same Jesus.

This time, we see a higher view of Him as the exalted Christ, as we enter into the house of God, the Sanctuary, which is a picture of the church in God's design. The New Testament Book of Hebrews gives us this view, speaking of Christ 'having made purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high'.

There, He received the Name that is above all other names from God the Father, who declares that all, both men and angels, shall worship the Son, [Hebrews 1:3-6](#) / [Philippians 2:9-11](#).

The same faithful and worthy Christ is further the 'Son over His house, whose house are we if we hold fast', [Hebrews 3:2](#) / [Hebrews 3:6](#). The colours are the same, He is the Son of God, the King, our ransom, our merciful great High Priest; what has changed is the perspective.

It is God's design that we should not cross the threshold of the sanctuary, the house of God, the church, without first gaining a distinct impression of the exalted Christ.

This view is reinforced by the presence in front of the curtain of the five golden pillars that give it support. The pillars were made from acacia wood overlaid with gold; the beauty is gold, and the structure is wood. This speaks of the mystery of Christ's Person; He is both God and man, divine and human, Son of God, and Son of man.

The child born is called the Mighty God, the son given is called the Everlasting Father, [Isaiah 9:6](#). The government of God's kingdom is upon the shoulders of such a Person, [Isaiah 9:6-7](#). He is the Son who is over God's house, [Hebrews 3:6](#).

At the feet of the pillars were sockets of bronze, [Exodus 26:27](#) / [Exodus 36:38](#), again reminding us of God's judgement. The line of thought in the Book of Hebrews continues here, too.

The writer has shown Christ is God the Son in [Hebrews 1](#). Then in [Hebrews 2](#), he quotes from [Psalm 8](#), concerning the exaltation of Jesus Christ, the son of man, 'crowned with glory and honour, set over all the works of Your (God's) hands, You (God) have subjected all things under His feet', [Hebrews 2:7-8](#).

The bronze sockets for the pillars speak to us clearly of total judgement, that 'in putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them', [Hebrews 2:8](#).

Such is the strength and magnitude of Christ's victory on the cross, [Colossians 2:15](#). God 'subjected all things under His (Christ's) feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church', [Ephesians 1:22](#).

This is the view of the sanctuary door as we enter the house of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is King, Son of God, purifier of sins, Son of Man, Lord, Ruler and Head. How wrong it is for anyone other than the Lord Jesus Christ to be called the Head of the church.

Only He is qualified, worthy and able to head up the church. Because all things are subjected under His feet, the gates of Hades cannot prevail against the genuine church, the house of God that the Son is building, [Matthew 16:18](#) / [Hebrews 3:6](#).

CHAPTER 27

INTRODUCTION

'Build an altar of acacia wood, three cubits high; it is to be square, five cubits long and five cubits wide. Make a horn at each of the four corners, so that the horns and the altar are of one piece, and overlay the altar with bronze. Make all its utensils of bronze—its pots to remove the ashes, and its shovels, sprinkling bowls, meat forks and firepans. Make a grating for it, a bronze network, and make a bronze ring at each of the four corners of the network. Put it under the ledge of the altar so that it is halfway up the altar. Make poles of acacia wood for the altar and overlay them with bronze. The poles are to be inserted into the rings so they will be on two sides of the altar when it is carried. Make the altar hollow, out of boards. It is to be made just as you were shown on the mountain.' [Exodus 27:1-8](#)

THE BURNT OFFERING ALTAR

The burnt offering altar was the first item to be seen after entering through the door into the tabernacle's outer court, [Exodus 27:16-17](#). It was an impressive construction, made from acacia wood, and it stood 1.4 metres high and 2.3 metres wide and broad, square, [Exodus 27:1](#) / [Exodus 38:1](#) / [Exodus 20:24](#).

There was a horn at each of the four corners, so that the horns and the altar are of one piece and it was overlayed the altar with bronze, [Exodus 27:2](#) / [Exodus 38:2](#).

Wood is a biblical figure of man, [Psalm 1:1](#) / [Psalm 1:3](#) / [Jeremiah 5:14](#). Acacia wood is a strong, high-quality wood, signifying the best humanity, that of Jesus. The altar was from acacia wood overlaid with bronze.

Bronze in the Bible speaks of God's judgement, particularly His judgement over our rebellious thinking and speaking against Him, as in [Numbers 16:29-40](#) / [Jude 11](#).

Since the wood is overlaid with the bronze, the burnt offering altar reminds us of man under God's judgement for our rebellion against Him. Since the wood is acacia wood, this speaks of Jesus bearing the judgement of God for us on the cross.

All of its utensils were to be made of bronze, the pots, shovels, sprinkling bowls, meat forks and firepans, [Exodus 27:3](#) / [Exodus 38:3](#). A grating was to be made from bronze, it was to be situated halfway up the altar, [Exodus 27:4-5](#) / [Exodus 38:4](#). These gratings were not steps as some suggest.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Such an arrangement would have been, in the eyes of some, a violation of God's requirement concerning ‘no steps’ to his altar, [Exodus 20:26](#).’

The grating was to be made and a bronze ring was made for each of the four corners, [Exodus 27:4](#) / [Exodus 38:5](#).

Poles were to be made of acacia wood for the altar and overlaid them with bronze, [Exodus 27:6](#) / [Exodus 38:6](#).

The poles were to be inserted into the rings so they will be on two sides of the altar when it is carried, [Exodus 27:7](#) / [Exodus 38:7](#). The altar is to be hollow, and made out of boards, [Exodus 27:8](#) / [Exodus 38:7](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These planks were covered over with brass; and that fact, coupled with God's instructions, ‘An altar of earth shalt thou make unto me’, [Exodus 20:25](#), have led to the conclusion that what is called ‘the altar’ here was actually the bronze overlaid box that was filled with earth to provide the actual altar. We see nothing unreasonable in such an assumption.’

The altar was to be made the way Moses was shown on the mountain, [Exodus 27:8](#) / [Exodus 38:7](#). At the burnt offering altar, the priests sacrificed various offerings to God; some offerings were for their own sins and for the sins of the people.

The point of the burnt offering was that, by it, a person might become accepted before God and forgiven, [Leviticus 1:4](#). For the burnt offering, a male animal was sacrificed, a ram, a goat, a bullock or a turtle-dove or a pigeon, [Leviticus 1:3-17](#). The offering had to be without blemish, the very healthiest and best available.

This foreshadows the Lord Jesus who was examined by Pontius Pilate, who declared ‘I find no fault in Him at all’, [John 18:38](#). The blood of the offering was poured out around the base of the altar, foreshadowing the Lord Jesus, whose precious blood flowed out when His side was pierced on the cross by a Roman spear, [John 19:34](#) / [1 Peter 1:19](#).

The whole concept of blood sacrifices is quite disturbing to the 20th-century Western mindset. Some explanations may help to understand God's perspective in the Bible.

In [Ezekiel 18:4](#), God says, ‘all souls are Mine. The soul that sins shall die’. The penalty of sin is death, [Romans 6:23](#). Sin was defined by the law, the ‘Torah’, the first five books of the Bible. The righteous requirement of the law was without pity, [Deuteronomy 19:21](#).

This then is the legal position: we belong to God, He made us, and we are His by right. But we have done our own thing, lived our own life without God, and we have sinned.

We always try to make out that our sinfulness is not so bad. However, in God's eyes, everything matters, every last little thing. Since we have robbed our lives back for ourselves from God to Whom we really belong, we have sinned.

According to the righteous requirement of the law, we should die for our sins. However, there is a provision, ‘the life of the flesh (of a burnt offering or sacrifice) is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul,’ [Leviticus 17:8](#) / [Leviticus 17:11](#).

So, either you must die, or the offering can die in your place, a life for a life. If the offering dies, then, through its life-blood, there is atonement for your soul, at-one-ment, restoration to the God to Whom you belong, Leviticus 1:4.

After its blood was poured out, the burnt offering was entirely consumed by burning, the only products being ashes and aroma. The ashes were removed from the camp to a 'clean place,' Leviticus 6:8-13.

The burning offering was a pleasing, sweet aroma to God, Leviticus 1:9 / Leviticus 1:13 / Leviticus 1:17, to make the person accepted before God and forgiven, Leviticus 1:3-4.

In Ephesians 5:2, Paul shows us clearly that the burnt offering was an exact picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, who 'loved us and gave Himself up for us' on the cross, 'an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma'. Psalms 22 describes graphically and prophetically the utterances of Jesus from the cross as God lays upon Him the sins of the entire world, Psalms 22:1, and the agony of being crucified, Psalms 22:14.

Then follows the heat of the fire of death, Psalms 22:14-15, the burnt offering. In His final gasp, the offering is complete, and Jesus cries, 'It is finished!', John 19:30. 'He has done it!' Psalms 22:31.

The final part of the fulfilment, the carrying of the ashes to a 'clean place', came as Jesus' dead body was taken down from the cross, John 19:41-42. John, an eyewitness to all this, wrote "he who has seen bears testimony, true testimony, so that you also may believe," John 19:35.

When we were at the door of the outer court, we heard the words of Jesus, 'I am the Door; if any man enters through Me, he shall be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture,' John 10:9.

Jesus is not only the door, but He also tells us, 'I am the Good Shepherd,' John 10:11, to help us to enter through the door. Furthermore, 'The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep,' John 10:11, so Jesus is the offering at the burnt offering altar as soon as we get through the door.

This is the good news of the burnt offering altar: whether we are Jew or Gentile, we are all under God's judgement because of our evil thinking, speaking, and doing.

However, the Lord Jesus, 'Who did no sin, neither was there any deceit found in His mouth,' 1 Peter 2:22, became the offering slaughtered in our place. By believing in His death, 'carrying up our sins in His body onto the tree,' 1 Peter 2:24, we can be made acceptable to God, restored to the Shepherd and to His flock, 1 Peter 2:25. Then we can enter into His courts with praise and thanksgiving, Psalms 100:3-4.

A lamb was burnt at the burnt offering altar every morning and every evening, Exodus 29:38-42. Learn to come to this altar every day to confess your sins to God and to remember, 'by offering thanks and praise, Hebrews 13:15, that the Lord Jesus died in your place to forgive you and to cleanse you from all sin by His blood, 1 John 1:7-9 / Hebrews 8:12 / Hebrews 9:14, so that you might live not for yourself but to Him, 2 Corinthians 5:15. The burnt offering altar and the laver form a combined experience of Christ.

THE COURTYARD

'Make a courtyard for the tabernacle. The south side shall be a hundred cubits long and is to have curtains of finely twisted linen, with twenty posts and twenty bronze bases and with silver hooks and bands on the posts. The north side shall also be a hundred cubits long and is to have curtains, with twenty posts and twenty bronze bases and with silver hooks and bands on the posts. "The west end of the courtyard shall be fifty cubits wide and have curtains, with ten posts and ten bases. On the east end, toward the sunrise, the courtyard shall also be fifty cubits wide. Curtains fifteen cubits long are to be on one side of the entrance, with three posts and three bases, and curtains fifteen cubits long are to be on the other side, with three posts and three bases.' Exodus 27:9-15

If you had suddenly come across the children of Israel in the desert wilderness, you would have seen a sprawling camp of over two million people, probably not unlike the refugee camps in Rwanda, though perhaps more orderly.

The tents were probably black and brown, set in contrast with the sandy and rocky colours of the desert. In the centre of their camp, you would see the white linen curtains of the tabernacle's outer court, approximately 46 metres long, 150 feet, 23 metres wide, 75 feet, and 2.3 metres tall, 7.5 feet, [Exodus 27:9-15](#) / [Exodus 38:9-17](#).

Meyer, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The court preserved the Tabernacle from accidental or intentional profanation, and it gave the priests a certain measure of privacy for the prosecution of their duties. Its presence was a perpetual reminder that man should pause and consider, before he rushes into the presence of the Most High, [Ecclesiastes 5:2](#).’

DOOR OF THE OUTER COURT

“For the entrance to the courtyard, provide a curtain twenty cubits long, of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen—the work of an embroiderer—with four posts and four bases. All the posts around the courtyard are to have silver bands and hooks, and bronze bases. The courtyard shall be a hundred cubits long and fifty cubits wide, with curtains of finely twisted linen five cubits high, and with bronze bases. All the other articles used in the service of the tabernacle, whatever their function, including all the tent pegs for it and those for the courtyard, are to be of bronze.’ [Exodus 27:16-19](#)

It was so noticeable against the surrounding rather drab colours of the camp and wilderness. It was impossible to see inside the tabernacle from the camp outside; the tall, white, fine twined linen curtains, [Exodus 27:16](#) / [Exodus 38:18](#), made a separation between the outside world and the beauty that was contained in the tabernacle.

The door of the outer court was a large curtain, made of fine linen, coloured in blue, purple, red, and white, [Exodus 27:16](#) / [Exodus 38:18](#). Each of the colours has significance.

Blue indicates heavenly and godly, ‘Behold your God,’ [Isaiah 40:9](#), pointing to John’s gospel, where doubting Thomas eventually says to Jesus, ‘My Lord and my God,’ [John 20:28](#).

Purple signifies kingship, ‘Behold your King,’ [Zechariah 9:9](#), pointing to Matthew’s Gospel, where Jesus, the descendant of King David, [Matthew 1:1](#), declares after rising from the dead, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth is given to Me,’ [Matthew 28:18](#).

Red signifies blood, ‘Behold My servant,’ [Isaiah 52:13](#) / [Isaiah 53:5](#), pointing to Mark’s Gospel, where Jesus says He ‘came to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many,’ [Mark 10:45](#).

White signifies purity and a right humanity, ‘Behold the man,’ [Zechariah 6:12](#), pointing to Luke’s Gospel, where Pilate says of Jesus ‘Behold, I have found not one fault in this man,’ [Luke 23:4](#) / [Luke 23:14](#).

These four colours are woven together to become the complete door, just as the four gospels combine to give a complete picture of Jesus. Jesus Christ is pure and righteous, kingly and godly, and this is how He, as a man, can be our ransom, the door for us to enter into God’s presence in the tabernacle.

The curtain was supported by wooden pillars that were based in brass sockets, with silver capitals, [Exodus 27:18-19](#) / [Exodus 38:19-20](#), just like the other pillars of the outer court curtain.

In the Bible, white linen signifies righteousness, [Revelation 19:8](#). God, in His nature, is right and just. He, therefore, expects us, His created people, to act rightly and justly; this is what righteousness means. [Psalm 92:15](#) tells us the Lord is upright and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

[Psalm 45:7](#) predicts that the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ, will love righteousness and hate wickedness. Because God is righteous, we find that the Levites, whom God called to be priests to serve Him in the Tabernacle, were instructed to wear fine white linen garments, [Exodus 28:39-43](#).

Likewise, in the New Testament, Revelation 19:6-9 speaks of the 'wife of the Lamb', the bride of Christ, who is seen clothed in fine white linen. The 'wife of the Lamb' is a corporate bride, composed of all those people who have accepted God's saving invitation to be joined to Him at this marriage feast and have prepared themselves, as seen by their garments, they are all dressed in fine white linen, as were the priests of the Tabernacle, Revelation 19:8 informs us that the fine linen is their righteous acts.

By way of contrast, in Isaiah 64:6, we read that all our 'righteousness' is like filthy rags and that our sins have blown us right off course from God's righteousness. Therefore, our sins have separated us from God, Isaiah 59:2.

Just as Adam's sin caused him to be separated from God and the Garden of Eden, Genesis 3:23-24, so we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23. Therefore, the white linen curtains of the Outer Court remind us that we are separated from God, due to our sins, because He is righteous.

The capitals on top of the pillars were made from silver, Exodus 27:17 / Exodus 38:19, symbolising the ransom price God placed on each of the children of Israel, Exodus 30:11-16.

God desires to redeem people, not to condemn them, but to satisfy His righteousness; a price must be paid. When Jesus was betrayed by Judas Iscariot, the price paid was thirty pieces of silver, Matthew 26:15 / Zechariah 11:12-13. Exodus 12:1-13:16 shows the other side of redemption, the way to redeem the life of the firstborn son was by the sacrifice of a lamb at Passover. God sacrificed His only Son, Jesus the Lamb of God, John 1:29, at Calvary, as the final Passover Lamb, 1 Corinthians 5:7, during the Feast of Passover in 33 AD, in order to redeem mankind, that is to buy us back from sin and all its effects, Romans 5:6 / Romans 5:18.

The fine white linen curtains of the outer court were supported by pillars, at least fifty-six of them, Exodus 27:18 / Exodus 38:16. When we see the white curtains of the outer court, we are reminded that our sins have separated us from God, Isaiah 59:2 / Romans 3:23.

When we read the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus, we see His compassion and love for people and we also see His condemnation of hypocrisy and sin, John 8:10-11.

We see in Jesus Christ a man who loves righteousness and hates lawlessness, Hebrews 1:9, the Son of God in whom God the Father delights, Matthew 17:5, the Son who is the bright shining of God's glory and the express image of God's righteousness, Hebrews 1:3.

The pillars were set in base sockets of bronze and capped with silver capitals, Exodus 27:17 / Exodus 38:17. The bronze base sockets, Exodus 27:18 / Exodus 38:19, symbolise God's judgement on those who sin against Him, as seen in Numbers 16:29-39 / Numbers 21:4-9.

In Numbers 21, the children of Israel murmured against God. In a judgement on their sin, God sent serpents into the camp to bite the children of Israel, and many of them died.

As Moses prayed for the people, God told him to make a bronze serpent and to put it on a pole. Anyone who looked at the bronze serpent would not perish. In his Gospel, John shows us that the Lord Jesus Christ is the reality of the bronze serpent lifted up from the earth.

As the crucified Son of Man, He bore God's righteous judgement for us, so that 'whoever believes in Him will not perish forever but be saved from God's judgement and receive eternal life,' John 3:14-17.

Just like the curtains of the outer court, the righteousness of Christ is supported by His judgement of sin and capped by His desire to redeem us, to bring us, the unrighteous ones, back to God, 1 Peter 3:18.

The good news is that although we started off outside the tabernacle, separated from God, there is a way into the outer court, a door, colourful and welcoming, beckoning us to come inside.

Jesus said, 'I am the door; if any man enters through Me he shall be saved', John 10:9, and 'I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to (God) the Father except through Me,' John 14:6.

This claim by Jesus is unique and exclusive, but just look at Jesus' life and His conduct, He was surrounded by all kinds of people with all sorts of histories and conditions and motives, yet Simon Peter, one of His closest disciples, could later say of Him, 'He did no sin, neither was there any deceit found in His mouth,' 1 Peter 2:22.

Peter had seen Jesus in all sorts of situations with all manner of people, from religious leaders to the lowest prostitutes, publicans, and tax collectors, yet he wrote 'we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of that One's majesty,' 2 Peter 1:16.

The door of the outer court is the only way in, inviting and attractive. The door speaks of both the compassion and the kingliness of Jesus, His nature as both God and a genuine man, Son of God and son of man, woven together like a beautiful tapestry of 'the appearing to man of the kindness and love of our Saviour God,' Titus 3:4.

Jesus said, 'I am the door; if any man enters through Me, he shall be saved,' John 10:9. Do take a good look at the door, then enter in through the door. Once you are inside the tabernacle, you will discover so much about what Jesus meant by 'be saved' and how this can come about in your experience, beginning at the burnt offering altar and the laver.

All the other articles used in the service of the tabernacle, whatever their function, including all the tent pegs for it and those for the courtyard, are to be of bronze, Exodus 27:19 / Exodus 38:20.

TABERNACLE SANCTUARY

The structure of the tabernacle sanctuary building was made from wooden Boards overlaid with gold. There were two rooms.

1. The first room, on the east side, right, was called the Holy Place.

The priests would enter the sanctuary via the entrance door curtain on the east side, which was far right, and the room contained the following.

- a. The showbread table was inside at the top.
- b. The lampstand was inside at the bottom.
- c. The golden incense altar was in the middle.
- d. The veil was in the middle, left of centre, and separated the Holy Place from the inner room.

2. The inner room, to the west, left, was called the Holy of Holies, where only one man, the High Priest, once per year was permitted entry; this was where God's presence and glory resided over the Ark of the Covenant.

Almost nothing of the gold-covered boards was ever visible from the outer court, because there were four large coverings over the sanctuary. A thick outer covering, a red covering, a grey covering, and an embroidered covering.

OIL FOR THE LAMPSTAND

'Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning. In the tent of meeting, outside the curtain that shields the ark of the covenant law, Aaron and his sons are to keep the

lamps burning before the LORD from evening till morning. This is to be a lasting ordinance among the Israelites for the generations to come.’ Exodus 27:20-21

The pure oil was beaten from olives that were picked just before ripening, Exodus 27:20.

Gordan, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The requirement for ‘beaten oil’ distinguished it from olive oil made by crushing olives in a stone press. The finer oil was made by gently pressing the olives in a mortar.’

In the tabernacle but just outside the curtain that shields the ark of the covenant law, Aaron and his sons are to keep the lamps burning before the LORD from evening till morning, Exodus 27:20-21 / Leviticus 24:1-2, which probably symbolised that God’s presence would never leave Israel, Leviticus 24:1-3 / Exodus 30:8 / 1 Samuel 3:3.

This is to be a lasting ordinance among the Israelites for the generations to come, Exodus 27:21 / Leviticus 24:3. Go says the lamps on the pure gold lampstand before the LORD must be tended continually, Leviticus 24:4.

CHAPTER 28

INTRODUCTION

‘Have Aaron, your brother, brought to you from among the Israelites, along with his sons Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, so they may serve me as priests. Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron to give him dignity and honour. Tell all the skilled workers to whom I have given wisdom in such matters that they are to make garments for Aaron, for his consecration, so he may serve me as priest. These are the garments they are to make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban, and a sash. They are to make these sacred garments for your brother Aaron and his sons, so they may serve me as priests. Have them use gold, and blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and fine linen.’ Exodus 28:1-5

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

Moses’ brother Aaron, along with his sons Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, were to serve as priests, Exodus 28:1. Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The pairing of the names of Nadab and Abihu and those of Eleazar and Ithamar in Exodus 28:1 is of deep interest. The first pair lost their lives in the very act of their consecration through disrespect for the Word of God, and it was through the latter pair alone that the Aaronic line continued: ‘Eleazar succeeded Aaron as High Priest, Numbers 3:4, later the descendants of Ithamar became High Priests from Eli through Abiathar, 1 Samuel 2:27-28 / 1 Kings 2:26-27.’ At a time still later, the sons of Eleazar again resumed the office from Zadok onward, 1 Chronicles 6:8-15.’ Sacred garments were to be made for Aaron to give him dignity and honour, Exodus 28:2. God had blessed skilled workers with wisdom to make this garment for Aaron for his consecration, in order that Aaron may serve God as priest, Exodus 28:3 / Exodus 39:1.

The garments to be made for Aaron and his sons, so they can serve God as a priests were a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban and a sash, Exodus 28:4. They are to use gold, blue, purple, scarlet yarn, and fine linen, Exodus 28:5 / Exodus 39:1.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The priests had to wear these garments when they served in the tabernacle ritual, but they could not wear them at other times, Exodus 35:19 / Leviticus 16:4 / Leviticus 16:23-24.’

The garments described here were for the high priest, for Aaron and his successor. The purpose of the ornate garments was for two reasons.

1. The garments were a sign to all that God had designated the heritage of Aaron to function as priests throughout the generations of Israel.

The style of their clothing would be a reminder to both the people and Aaron’s sons that they were established as mediators between God and Israel.

2. The ornate beauty of the priests’ garments brought their clothing into conformity with the beauty of the tabernacle.

THE EPHOD

‘Make the ephod of gold, and of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen—the work of skilled hands. It is to have two shoulder pieces attached to two of its corners, so it can be fastened. Its skilfully woven waistband is to be like it—of one piece with the ephod and made with gold, and with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and with finely twisted linen. “Take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel in the order of their birth—six names on one stone and the remaining six on the other. Engrave the names of the sons of Israel on the two stones, the way a gem cutter engraves a seal. Then mount the stones in gold filigree settings and fasten them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod as memorial stones for the sons of Israel. Aaron is to bear the names on his shoulders as a memorial before the LORD. Make gold filigree settings and two braided chains of pure gold, like a rope, and attach the chains to the settings.’ Exodus 28:6-14

The ephod is the apron-like garment worn by the high priest, and it was made in four colours, blue, purple, scarlet and the white of the fine linen, Exodus 28:6-8 / Exodus 39:2-5.

These are the same colours that can be seen at the door to the outer court, Exodus 27:9-15, the door to the sanctuary, Exodus 26:36-37, and in the veil, Exodus 26:31-35; they refer to Christ as He is revealed in the four Gospels.

In the four colours, we see Jesus as He was in His earthly ministry. Jesus has lived as a man on earth, a working man, the carpenter of Nazareth, Mark 6:3. He also knows what is involved when having to rely on others to provide for His living, Luke 8:3.

He knows what it means to be tired out, John 4:6, hungry, Matthew 4:2 / Mark 6:31, thirsty, John 4:7, pressurised, Mark 1:32-34 / Mark 2:2 / Mark 5:22-24, tempted, Luke 4:2 / Hebrews 2:18, bereaved, John 11:35. Desperate in prayer, Luke 22:44 / Hebrews 5:7, disappointed by friends in a time of need, Luke 22:45-46, in pain, Matthew 27:26, mocked and spat on, Matthew 27:29-31, He knows what it is to die, Luke 23:46. Because He has passed through all these experiences, and many others also, the four colours tell us He is able to sympathize with us, Hebrews 4:15.

There is an important additional feature of the ephod, though gold thread, cut from a gold plate, was interwoven with the other colours, Exodus 39:3. Gold is not only precious, but it also implies ‘of God, divine and heavenly’. The gold thread is a beautiful ‘type’ of Christ’s heavenly ministry as the great High Priest for His own.

He is risen from the dead, He has ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 / Hebrews 1:3. There, as a merciful and compassionate High Priest, Jesus always lives and prays for His own to help them in their difficulties, Hebrews 2:17.

Furthermore, because He is risen from the dead and ascended to heaven, He is also ABLE to do something through His interceding for us, **Hebrews 7:25**. He aids us, **Hebrews 2:16**, showing us His mercy and ministering to us the supply of His grace to help in times of need, **Hebrews 4:16**, especially when we face temptation, **Hebrews 2:18**.

THE SHOULDER STONES

On each shoulder piece of the ephod was a precious stone, **Exodus 28:9 / Exodus 39:6**. Six names were written on each of the stones, altogether naming the twelve tribes of Israel, **Exodus 28:10-11 / Exodus 39:6**.

Josephus, in his writings, says the following.

‘The names of Jacob’s six oldest sons were on the stone on the right shoulder, and the names of his six youngest sons were on the stone on the left.’

The names known to the high priest are engraved on the stones, **Exodus 28:11 / Exodus 39:6**. This is no passing whim; they cannot be erased, ‘I give My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand,’ **John 10:28**.

Every time the high priest went before God at the golden incense altar, **Exodus 30:1-10**, the names of all the people of God were upon His shoulders, **Exodus 28:12 / Exodus 36:7**. They are to make gold filigree settings and two braided chains of pure gold, like a rope, and attach the chains to the settings, **Exodus 28:13-14 / Exodus 39:6**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning these stones.

‘The symbolism of these indicated that when the High Priest fulfilled his mission of entering the Holy of Holies, he did so as a representative of all Israel. These memorial stones were a reminder primarily to Israel of this supplication upon their behalf, and also to Aaron in order that he might not forget that his was a mission ON BEHALF OF the whole nation.’

Jesus is the Good Shepherd, **John 10:11**. He knows His sheep, **John 10:14**, and goes after each one that is lost in the wilderness, **Luke 15:4**. Individually, when He finds each sheep that is lost, the Good Shepherd lays them on His shoulder, **Luke 15:5-7**.

The shoulder stones represent the collective good shepherding by the Lord Jesus in millions of lives. He bears them all before God, as today in heaven He is interceding for us, **Romans 8:34 / Hebrews 7:25**. The shoulders speak of His strength. How powerful and prevailing His intercession has been in our lives!

THE BREASTPLATE

‘Fashion a breastpiece for making decisions—the work of skilled hands. Make it like the ephod: of gold, and of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen. It is to be square—a span long and a span wide—and folded double. Then mount four rows of precious stones on it. The first row shall be carnelian, chrysolite and beryl; the second row shall be turquoise, lapis lazuli and emerald; the third row shall be jacinth, agate, and amethyst; the fourth row shall be topaz, onyx, and jasper. Mount them in gold filigree settings. There are to be 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. “For the breastpiece make braided chains of pure gold, like a rope. Make two gold rings for it and fasten them to two corners of the breastpiece. Fasten the two gold chains to the rings at the corners of the breastpiece, and the other ends of the chains to the two settings, attaching them to the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front. Make two gold rings and attach them to the other two corners of the breastpiece on the inside edge next to the ephod. Make two more gold

rings and attach 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. The rings of the breastpiece are to be tied to the rings of the ephod with blue cord, connecting it to the waistband, so that the breastpiece will not swing out from the ephod. “Whenever Aaron enters the Holy Place, he will bear the names of the sons of Israel over his heart on the breastpiece of decision as a continuing memorial before the LORD. Also, put the Urim and the Thummim in the breastpiece, so they may be over Aaron’s heart whenever he enters the presence of the LORD. Thus, Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the LORD.’ Exodus 28:15-30

The breastpiece was for making decisions, Exodus 28:15 and like the ephod, the colours used were gold, blue, purple, scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen, Exodus 28:16 / Exodus 39:8 / Exodus 28:6-8 / Exodus 39:2-5.

The breastplate was square in its proportions, Exodus 28:16 / Exodus 39:9, and the breastplate was folded double to form a pocket, Exodus 28:16 / Exodus 39:9. Four rows of precious stones were to be mounted upon it, Exodus 28:17 / Exodus 39:10.

There were twelve precious stones, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel, Exodus 28:17-20 / Exodus 39:10-13. Each stone had the name of the respective tribe engraved upon it, Exodus 28:21 / Exodus 39:14.

For the breastpiece they are to make braided chains of pure gold, like a rope, Exodus 28:22 / Exodus 39:15. Two gold rings were also to be made for the breastplate and they were to be fastened to two corners of the breastpiece, Exodus 28:23 / Exodus 39:16.

They are to fasten the two gold chains to the rings at the corners of the breastpiece, and the other ends of the chains to the two settings, attaching them to the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front, Exodus 28:24-25 / Exodus 39:17-18. Two gold rings were to be made which were to be attached to the other two corners of the breastpiece on the inside edge next to the ephod, Exodus 28:26 / Exodus 39:19.

Another two gold rings were to be made and they were to be attached to the bottom of the shoulder pieces on the front of the ephod, close to the seam just above the waistband of the ephod, Exodus 28:27 / Exodus 39:20.

In order to stop the breastpiece from swinging out of the ephod, the rings of the breastpiece were to be tied to the rings of the ephod with blue cord, connecting it to the waistband, Exodus 28:28 / Exodus 39:21.

The high priest bears the names on the breastplate ‘over His heart’ when he goes before the Lord ‘as a memorial,’ Exodus 28:29, foreshadowing the eternal love of the Lord Jesus for His sheep, John 13:1. This shows the Good Shepherd knows His sheep so well He calls them each by their own name, John 10:3.

As the high priest goes about the service of the Holy Place, wearing the breastplate with the engraved names, he passes the lampstand and light shines onto the names, the Light of Life, John 8:12.

He approaches the showbread table and the names correspond with one another in a fellowship of nourishment, the Bread of Life, John 6:35, he comes before the golden incense altar and bears the names individually and collectively before God, praying that we may be given eternal life, which means to know the only true God in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, John 17:3.

Here in the Holy Place, the emphasis is on life. Jesus the great High Priest has come so that they, the names, may have life, even eternal life, and have it abundantly, John 10:10. The High Priest must yet bring us into the Holy of Holies for the fullest view and experience of eternal life, though.

For us to enter in and have this life abundantly and eternally, the veil must be removed. It must be rent from top to bottom, by God, Matthew 27:51. Then we have access through Him, the veil, inside One Spirit, typified by both the anointed unique high priest and by the anointed Tabernacle, now made into just one room, unto the Father, Ephesians 2:18.

Jesus, our great High Priest, carries the names of all His redeemed ones on His strong shoulders. Besides that, all the individual names are brought together in groups, separated only by genealogy and by locality of dwelling, like the tribes of Israel.

The collective names are permanent, like each engraved stone of the breastplate, carried on His loving heart. The breastplate is therefore a foreshadowing of the one church expressed as local churches, one in each place, in God's design.

URIM AND THUMMIM

The Urim and the Thummim were to be kept in the breastpiece, so they may be over Aaron's heart whenever he enters the presence of the LORD, and so Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the LORD, **Exodus 28:30**.

The breastplate was folded double to form a pocket **Exodus 28:16 / Exodus 39:9**. Inside the pocket, the Urim and Thummim were kept. Urim means 'lights' and Thummim means 'perfections'. They were probably two jewels. When someone had to make an important decision, the request was made known to the high priest. He would stand before the lampstand, holding the Urim in one hand and the Thummim in the other.

As the light reflected from the Urim and the Thummim onto the stones of the breastplate, this flash of light provided up to twenty-four combinations, two by twelve. Since there are twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet, the flashes of light could produce strings of letters.

As God breathed through the ark, the veil would move, permitting a breeze to flicker the flames in the Lampstand to momentarily alter the direction of the light onto the Urim and Thummim, and thence to the Breastplate. Thus, God was able to communicate directly, but not audibly, to the high priest and answer the enquiry.

The Urim and Thummim were a means of revelation entrusted to the high priest. No description of them is given. This oracular apparently consisted of a material object or objects since it was physically stored in the breastpiece of the high priest, **Exodus 28:30 / Leviticus 8:8**.

Most people today think that the Urim and Thummim were a lottery oracle, but this is by no means certain. Besides being mentioned by their full name, **Exodus 28:30**, and **Leviticus 8:8**, and **Ezra 2:63**, and **Nehemiah 7:65**, in reverse order with possessives, **Deuteronomy 33:8**, the Urim and Thummim could also be referred to by Urim alone, **Numbers 27:21**, and **1 Samuel 28:6**.

Sometimes the mention of the ephod, on which the breastpiece housing the Urim and Thummim were fastened, includes a reference to the Urim and Thummim, **1 Samuel 23:9-12**, and **1 Samuel 30:7-8**. Also, the verb 'inquire of' followed by 'the Lord' or 'God' when no means of revelation is specified refers to a usage of the Urim and Thummim.

The Urim and Thummim were used at critical moments in the history of God's people when special divine guidance was needed. The civil leader was expected to make use of this means for all important matters for which he needed direction.

Although referred to in **Ezra 2:63** and **Nehemiah 7:65**, there is no convincing evidence that the Urim and Thummim were used after the time of David. The reason for the demise of the Urim and Thummim is not explicitly given. Since the Urim and Thummim, in whatever way they functioned, were a physical means of revelation.

It appears that God was taking his people away from the easy certainty inherent in a mechanical means of revelation to the more consistent use of prophecy and the Word alone.

This would require the more difficult application of the norms for true and false prophecy, **Deuteronomy 13:1-4** and **Deuteronomy 18:20-22** and thus necessitate a faithful teaching priesthood, **Deuteronomy 33:10 / Malachi 2:7**.

Although the lot theory has wide support today, there are significant difficulties in identifying the Urim and Thummim. It is questionable whether the key evidence, the Greek text of 1 Samuel 14:41, is really to be preferred over the Hebrew text.

Also, the vocabulary of lot casting is not used, and the answers contain more information than the casting of lots could yield, e.g. 1 Samuel 1:1, and 1 Samuel 5:23-24.

This last point suggests the involvement of prophecy and the divine inspiration of the high priest in giving revelation. It can also be noted that the use of the actual object(s) constituting the Urim and Thummim appears to have been self-authenticating.

Even in extremely difficult circumstances, the guidance of the Urim and Thummim is followed, Judges 20:18-28. It could be theorised that a perfect light that miraculously shone from the gem(s) constituting the Urim and Thummim, which belonged to God, Deuteronomy 33:8, gave the needed authentication to the actual answer spoken by the high priest under divine inspiration.

In this way, the judgment of the Urim, the light, may have been given, Numbers 27:21. Such authentication would not have been out of place in Old Testament times when special signs were provided more often.

Newton, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They were something in Aaron’s breastplate, but what, critics and commentators are by no means agreed. It is most probable that they were only names given to signify the clearness and certainty of Divine answers which were obtained by the High Priest consulting God with his breastplate on, in contradistinction to the obscure, enigmatical, uncertain, and imperfect answers of the heathen oracles.’

THE ROBE

‘Make the robe of the ephod entirely of blue cloth, with an opening for the head in its centre. There shall be a woven edge, like a collar, around this opening, so that it will not tear. Make pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn around the hem of the robe, with gold bells between them. The gold bells and the pomegranates are to alternate around the hem of the robe. Aaron must wear it when he ministers. The sound of the bells will be heard when he enters the Holy Place before the LORD and when he comes out, so that he will not die.’ Exodus 28:31-35

The robe of the ephod was made entirely of blue, Exodus 28:31 / Exodus 39:22. It had an opening for the head in the middle, and in order to stop it from tearing, a woven edge like a collar was to be made, Exodus 28:32 / Exodus 39:23. Fields, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This pullover robe of one piece reminds us of Christ’s seamless robe. John 19:23 seems almost an indirect reference to Christ’s High Priestly office.’

It had a hem, attached to which were pomegranate motifs, in blue, purple, and scarlet, with golden bells alternating in between the pomegranates, Exodus 28:33-34 / Exodus 39:24-26.

Keil and Delitzsch, in their commentary, say the following.

‘The pomegranate was probably a symbol of the spiritually nourishing quality of God’s Word, Proverbs 25:11 / Psalms 19:8-11 / Psalms 119:25 / Psalms 119:43 / Psalms 119:50 / Deuteronomy 8:3 / Proverbs 9:8 / Ecclesiastes 12:9-11 / Ecclesiastes 12:13. The bell was evidently a symbol of the sounding or proclamation of God’s Word through testimony.’

Aaron must wear it when he ministers, and the sound of the bells will be heard when he enters the Holy Place and when he comes out, so that he will not die, Exodus 28:35.

The golden bells were an audible announcement of the high priest's service, a beautiful sound, backed up by beautiful fruits, the pomegranates. This same balance of words and deeds we find in the Lord Jesus, Luke 24:19.

THE TURBAN AND THE CROWN

‘Make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it as on a seal: HOLY TO THE LORD. Fasten a blue cord to it to attach it to the turban; it is to be on the front of the turban. It will be on Aaron's forehead, and he will bear the guilt involved in the sacred gifts the Israelites consecrate, whatever their gifts may be. It will be on Aaron's forehead continually so that they will be acceptable to the LORD. “Weave the tunic of fine linen and make the turban of fine linen. The sash is to be the work of an embroiderer.’ Exodus 28:36-39

Attached to the turban and upon the forehead of the high priest was the crown, a gold plate on which ‘HOLY TO THE LORD’ was engraved, Exodus 28:36 / Exodus 39:30 / Zechariah 14:20.

This seal of God is legitimately there on the forehead of our Lord Jesus Christ, our great High Priest. They were to fasten a blue cord to it to attach it to the turban; it is to be on the front of the turban, Exodus 28:37 / Exodus 39:31.

It will be on Aaron's forehead, and he will bear the guilt involved in the sacred gifts the Israelites consecrate, whatever their gifts may be and it was to be on Aaron's forehead continually so that they will be acceptable to the LORD, Exodus 28:38 / Isaiah 53:6.

The turban was made of white fine linen, Exodus 28:39 / Exodus 39:27, and the sash was to be made of finely twisted linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, the work of an embroiderer, Exodus 28:39 / Exodus 39:29.

Generally, fine white linen signifies righteous deeds, Revelation 19:8. Here, the emphasis is on our mind, the covering of our thought processes, ‘taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,’ 2 Corinthians 10:5, by taking ‘the helmet of salvation,’ Ephesians 6:17.

Our mind is the big problem. When Zechariah saw the vision of Joshua, Zechariah 3:1-5, the Lord began to address the problem of the filthy garments by putting a clean Turban on his head.

Since the Hebrew words for Joshua, ‘Yoshuah’ and salvation, ‘yeshuah’, are so close, we see here the picture of taking up the helmet of salvation, to deal with our filthy thoughts of unrighteousness.

But for us, whom He has also made priests, Revelation 1:5-6, there is a clear indication that we are not just to be outwardly dressed up in Christ; He must transform us, by the renewing of our mind that we may prove the will of God, our sanctification, Romans 12:2 / 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

How we need to be renewed in the spirit of our mind, to put on the new man created in righteousness and true holiness, Ephesians 4:23-24 / Hebrews 3:1 / Hebrews 4:14-16.

ORDINARY PRIEST

‘Make tunics, sashes, and caps for Aaron's sons to give them dignity and honour. After you put these clothes on your brother Aaron and his sons, anoint and ordain them. Consecrate them so they may serve me as priests. “Make linen undergarments as a covering for the body, reaching from the waist to the thigh. Aaron and his sons must wear them whenever they enter the tent of meeting or approach the altar to minister in the Holy Place so that they will not incur guilt and die. “This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants.’ Exodus 28:40-43

The tunics, Exodus 28:39 / Exodus 39:26, were made of white linen, as was the tunic. The belt or sash, Exodus 28:40 / Exodus 39:28, was wound around the tunic and the two ends were tied in front.

It was about three inches wide and quite long. The cap, Exodus 28:40 / Exodus 39:28, was not of the kind that we are used to, but rather a long strip of fabric that was wound around the head.

Tunics, sashes, and caps for Aaron's sons were to be made to give them dignity and honour, Exodus 28:40. When Aaron and his sons put these clothes on, Moses is to anoint and ordain them, they are to be consecrated so they may serve God as priests, Exodus 28:41.

Undergarments were to be made as a covering for the body, reaching from the waist to the thigh, Exodus 28:42 / Exodus 39:27-28. Aaron and his sons must wear them whenever they enter the tent of meeting or approach the altar to minister in the Holy Place, so that they will not incur guilt and die Exodus 28:43.

This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants, Exodus 28:43. No priest, neither ordinary priest nor the High Priest himself, was fit to serve in the tabernacle unless he was wearing the priestly garments.

The lay, or ordinary, priests must wear four garments. The belt was woven with four kinds of threads: blue, purple, scarlet, and fine white linen, Exodus 28:5 / Exodus 39:5.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The clothing described in these verses appears to be the garments the priests, other than the high priest, wore. All the priests ministered barefoot out of reverence for the holiness of God, Exodus 3:5 / Joshua 5:15.’

Cook, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The dress of white linen was the strictly sacerdotal dress common to the whole body of priests, Ezekiel 44:17-18.

The linen suit which the High Priest put on when he went into the Holy of Holies was wholly of white linen, even including the girdle.’

These garments were made from white linen; hence, they were referred to as the ‘garments of white,’ and they were also worn by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement.

This is a picture of the high priest in his ‘holy garments for ministering in the Holy Place,’ Exodus 39:1 / Leviticus 16:4 / Leviticus 16:23. Aaron was the first high priest, and he was Moses’ brother. After Aaron died, subsequent high priests were his descendants, the sons of Aaron.

The high priest was responsible for the tabernacle, its daily offerings, and functions and also its regular feasts, three times in the year, at Passover, at Pentecost and at the Day of Atonement, which was followed by a week of joy in the Feast of Tabernacles, as seen from Leviticus 23.

On the Day of Atonement, it was uniquely the high priest’s responsibility to take the blood of the sacrificed goat into the Holy of Holies on behalf of all God’s people, for the forgiveness of their sins.

This awesome responsibility required a sanctified person, Exodus 29, the high priest, dressed in ‘holy garments’. The uppermost holy garment is apron-like and is called the Ephod. On top of the Ephod, there is the square breastplate, with twelve precious stones. On the shoulders are two additional precious stones.

The blue garment is called the robe, under which the high priest wore a white, fine linen woven tunic. On his head is the white fine linen turban. Round the base of the turban is the crown of gold, saying ‘HOLY TO THE LORD’, Exodus 28:36 / Exodus 39:30.

All of these garments and items have a wonderful significance. Once we understand what these tell us about the heavenly High Priest, Jesus, we will find a deep-seated thankfulness rising up from within our spirit, and an encouragement to draw near to God with a purified heart in full assurance of faith, Hebrews 13:15 / Hebrews 10:22.

CHAPTER 29

INTRODUCTION

‘This is what you are to do to consecrate them, so they may serve me as priests: Take a young bull and two rams without defect. And from the finest wheat flour make round loaves without yeast, thick loaves without yeast and with olive oil mixed in, and thin loaves without yeast and brushed with olive oil. Put them in a basket and present them along with the bull and the two rams. Then bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance to the tent of meeting and wash them with water. Take the garments and dress Aaron with the tunic, the robe of the ephod, the ephod itself and the breastpiece. Fasten the ephod on him by its skilfully woven waistband. Put the turban on his head and attach the sacred emblem to the turban. Take the anointing oil and anoint him by pouring it on his head. Bring his sons and dress them in tunics and fasten caps on them. Then tie sashes on Aaron and his sons. The priesthood is theirs by a lasting ordinance. “Then you shall ordain Aaron and his sons.” Exodus 29:1-9

CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS

In the previous chapter, we read about the priest’s clothing; in this chapter, we read about how the priests consecrated themselves, **Exodus 29:1**. The priests are set apart for the service for which God had chosen them. Moses is to take a young bull and two rams without defect, **Exodus 29:1**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God is addressing Moses in this command, for Moses himself will act as High Priest in the consecration of the Jewish priesthood, despite the fact that Moses was never to hold that office. Moses was indeed a priest after the manner of all priests during the Patriarchal Dispensation of God’s grace. Significantly, on the mountain of transfiguration, it was not Aaron who appeared with Elijah and Christ, but Moses.’

From the finest wheat flour he is to make round loaves without yeast, thick loaves without yeast and with olive oil mixed in, and thin loaves without yeast and brushed with olive oil, **Exodus 29:2**.

Moses is to then put them in a basket and present them along with the bull and the two rams, **Exodus 29:3 / Leviticus 8:2**. He is to bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance to the tent of meeting and wash them with water, **Exodus 29:4 / Leviticus 8:6**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This concerns the ‘washing” of the candidate for the priesthood. Standing, as it does, at the head of the list on the agenda of the consecration ceremonies, it is typical of Christian baptism, the initiatory rite into the Christian religion. Esses, a former Rabbi now a believer in Christ, went so far as to call the ablution here ‘their baptism.’

Moses is to take the garments and dress Aaron with the tunic, the robe of the ephod, the ephod itself and the breastpiece and fasten the ephod on him by its skilfully woven waistband, **Exodus 29:5 / Leviticus 8:7**.

The turban is to be placed on Aaron’s head and the sacred emblem to the turban is to be attached, **Exodus 29:6**.

Moses is to then take the anointing oil and anoint Aaron by pouring it on his head, **Exodus 29:7 / Leviticus 8:12**.

Aaron’s sons were to be dressed in tunics and have their caps fastened on them, then Moses is to tie sashes on Aaron and his sons, **Exodus 29:8-9 / Leviticus 8:13**.

Rawlinson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They do not seem to have been anointed, as Aaron was, by having oil poured upon their heads, but only by having some of it sprinkled upon their garments, **Exodus 29:21 / Leviticus 8:30**.’

God declares that the priesthood is theirs by a lasting ordinance, then Moses shall ordain Aaron and his sons, **Exodus 28:9**. Aaron was appointed as the high priest, and his sons as priests, and they were established as priests for the rest of their lives.

Their successors would also be priests for life. Because Christians make up a royal priesthood, **1 Peter 2:5 / 1 Peter 2:9**, after the pattern established for priests of God, they also are on duty as priests for the rest of their lives. Jesus is now functioning as our high priest, **Hebrews 5:6**, but all Christians function as God's priests to the world.

SIN OFFERING

‘Bring the bull to the front of the tent of meeting, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head. Slaughter it in the LORD's presence at the entrance to the tent of meeting. Take some of the bull's blood and put it on the horns of the altar with your finger and pour out the rest of it at the base of the altar. Then take all the fat on the internal organs, the long lobe of the liver, and both kidneys with the fat on them, and burn them on the altar. But burn the bull's flesh and its hide and its intestines outside the camp. It is a sin offering.’ **Exodus 29:10-14**

Moses is to bring a bull to the front of the tent of meeting, and Aaron and his sons are to lay their hands on its head **Exodus 29:10 / Leviticus 8:14**. By placing their hands on the bull's head, signified that the priests symbolically put their sins on the animal that was to be sacrificed.

The priests are to offer sin offerings for the people, but they first had to sacrifice for their own sins, **Leviticus 4:1-35 / Leviticus 6:24-30 / Hebrews 5:3**. Moses is to slaughter it in the LORD's presence at the entrance to the tent of meeting, **Exodus 29:11 / Leviticus 8:14**.

Field's in his commentary says the following.

‘Killing the bull was an admission that ‘We deserve to die, but God in His grace accepts the death of this creature instead of my death.’

Some of the bull's blood was to be put on the horns of the altar with his finger, and the rest of it was to be poured out at the base of the altar, **Exodus 29:12 / Leviticus 8:15**. All the fat on the internal organs, the long lobe of the liver, and both kidneys with the fat on them, were to be burned the altar, **Exodus 29:13 / Leviticus 8:16**.

The bull's flesh, its hide and its intestines outside the camp, **Exodus 29:14 / Leviticus 8:17**. It is a sin offering, **Exodus 29:14 / Hebrews 13:12-13**. Sin offerings were made in order to illustrate that, in reference to our relationship with God, life had to be taken in order to receive atonement.

Once the blood was placed on the horns of the altar, the fat was burned upon the altar, and the rest of the body parts were burned outside the camp, **Hebrews 13:11-12**.

There is a degree of overlap between the sin offering and the trespass offering. The sin offering is indicated for our general sinful condition before God, **Leviticus 5:13**.

The sin offering is indicated for unintentional sins, **Leviticus 4:1-2 / Leviticus 4:27**, especially by leaders or by the people as a whole, **Leviticus 4:3 / Leviticus 4:13 / Leviticus 4:22**. The sin offering is indicated for individuals among God's people, **Leviticus 4:27**.

The good news of the sin offering is that Christ has fulfilled the sin offering, once for all, **Hebrews 9:26 / 2 Corinthians 5:21 / Romans 8:3**. Based on faith in what Christ has done for us by His death on the cross, we can be released from slavery to our sinful nature and its tendencies. Jesus said, ‘Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. If the Son shall set you free, you shall be free indeed,’ **John 8:34-36**.

BURNT OFFERING

“Take one of the rams, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head. Slaughter it and take the blood and splash it against the sides of the altar. Cut the ram into pieces and wash the internal organs and the legs, putting them with the head and the other pieces. Then burn the entire ram on the altar. It is a burnt offering to the LORD, a pleasing aroma, a food offering presented to the LORD.’ Exodus 29:15-18

Moses is to take one of the rams, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head, Exodus 29:15 / Leviticus 8:18. By placing their hands on the ram’s head, it signified that the priests symbolically put their sins on the animal that was to be sacrificed.

Moses is then to slaughter the ram and take the blood and splash it against the sides of the altar, Exodus 29:16 / Leviticus 8:18. Then he is to cut the ram into pieces and wash the internal organs and the legs, putting them with the head and the other pieces, Exodus 29:17 / Leviticus 8:20-21.

He is to burn the entire ram on the altar, Exodus 29:18. It is a burnt offering to the LORD, a pleasing aroma, a food offering presented to the LORD, Exodus 29:18 / Leviticus 8:21.

Clements, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is evident that the author has thought of God in spiritual terms, and not as though He needed a meal.’

Sin offerings and burnt offerings weren’t eaten by either the priests or the people, Leviticus 4:1 / Leviticus 4:12 / Leviticus 10:17-20. The burnt offering focused on the meaning that the one who gave the offering was surrendering his life to God, whereas the sin offering was made for the sins of the one who had given himself to God. The burnt offering altar, Exodus 27:1-8, was the first item to be seen after entering through the door into the tabernacle’s outer court, Exodus 27:9-19. It was an impressive construction made from acacia wood overlaid with bronze; it stood 1.4 metres high and 2.3 metres wide and broad. It was square-shaped, Exodus 27:1-8.

Wood is a Biblical figure of man, Psalm 1:1-3 / Jeremiah 5:14. Acacia wood is a strong, high-quality wood, signifying the best humanity, that of Jesus. Bronze in the Bible speaks of God’s judgement, particularly His judgement over our rebellious thinking and speaking against Him, Numbers 16:29-40 / Jude 11.

Since the wood is overlaid with the bronze, the Burnt Offering Altar reminds us of man under God’s judgement for our rebellion against Him. Since the wood is acacia wood, this speaks of Jesus bearing the judgement of God for us on the cross.

At the burnt offering altar, the priests sacrificed various offerings to God; some offerings were for their own sins and for the sins of the people. The point of the burnt offering was that, by it, a person might become accepted before God and forgiven. Leviticus 1:4.

For the burnt offering, a male animal was sacrificed, a ram, a goat, a bullock or a turtle-dove or a pigeon, Leviticus 1:3-17. The offering had to be without blemish, the very healthiest and best available.

This foreshadows the Lord Jesus, who was examined by Pontius Pilate, who declared, ‘I find no fault in Him at all,’ John 18:38. The blood of the offering was poured out around the base of the altar, foreshadowing the Lord Jesus, whose precious blood flowed out when His side was pierced on the cross by a Roman spear, John 19:34 / 1 Peter 1:19.

The whole concept of blood sacrifices is quite disturbing to the 20th-century Western mindset. Some explanations may help to understand God’s perspective in the Bible. In Ezekiel 18:4, God says ‘All souls are Mine. The soul that sins shall die’.

The penalty of sin is death, Romans 6:23 ‘For the wages of sin is death’. Sin was defined by the law, the ‘Torah’, the first five books of the Bible. The righteous requirement of the law was without pity, ‘a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth’. Deuteronomy 19:21.

This then is the legal position: we belong to God, He made us, and we are His by right. But we have done our own thing, living our own life without God: we have sinned.

We always try to make out that our sinfulness is not so bad. However, in God's eyes, everything matters, every last little thing. Since we have robbed our lives back for ourselves from God to Whom we really belong, we have sinned.

According to the righteous requirement of the law, we should die for our sins. However, there is a provision, 'the life of the flesh (of a burnt offering or sacrifice) is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul', **Leviticus 17:11**.

So, either you must die, or the offering can die in your place, a life for a life. If the offering dies, then, through its life-blood, there is atonement for your soul, 'at-one-ment', restoration to the God to Whom you belong, **Leviticus 1:4**.

After its blood was poured out, the burnt offering was entirely consumed by burning, the only products being ashes and aroma. The ashes were removed from the camp to a 'clean place', **Leviticus 6:8-13**.

The burning offering was a pleasing, sweet aroma to God, to make the person accepted before God and forgiven, **Leviticus 1:9 / Leviticus 1:13 / Leviticus 1:17 / Leviticus 1:3-4**.

In **Ephesians 5:2**, Paul shows us clearly that the burnt offering was an exact picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, who 'loved us and gave Himself up for us' on the cross, 'an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma'.

Psalm 22 describes graphically and prophetically the utterances of Jesus from the cross as God lays upon Him the sins of the entire world, 'My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?' **Psalm 22:1**, and the agony of being crucified, 'all my bones are out of joint,' **Psalm 22:14**.

Then follows the heat of the fire of death, 'My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws,' **Psalm 22:14-15**, the burnt offering. In His final gasp, the offering is complete, and Jesus cries 'It is finished!' **John 19:30**. 'He has done it!' **Psalm 22:31**.

The final part of the fulfilment, the carrying of the ashes to a 'clean place', came as Jesus' dead body was taken down from the cross, **John 19:41-42**. John, an eye-witness to all this, wrote, 'he who has seen bears testimony, true testimony, so that you also may believe'. **John 19:35**.

When we were at the door of the outer court, we heard the words of Jesus, 'I am the Door; if any man enters through Me, he shall be saved and will go in and out and find pasture'. **John 10:9**.

Jesus is not only the Door, but He also tells us, 'I am the Good Shepherd' **John 10:11**, to help us to enter through the Door. Furthermore, 'The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep' **John 10:11**, so Jesus is the offering at the Burnt Offering Altar as soon as we get through the Door.

This is the good news of the burnt offering altar: whether we are Jew or Gentile, we are all under God's judgement because of our evil thinking, speaking, and doing. However, the Lord Jesus, 'Who did no sin, neither was there any deceit found in His mouth' **1 Peter 2:22**, became the offering slaughtered in our place.

By believing in His death, 'carrying up our sins in His body onto the tree', **1 Peter 2:24**, we can be made acceptable to God, restored to the Shepherd and to His flock, **1 Peter 2:25**. Then we can enter into His courts with praise and thanksgiving, **Psalm 100:3-4**. A lamb was burnt at the burnt offering altar every morning and every evening, **Exodus 29:38-42**.

Learn to come to this altar every day to confess your sins to God and to remember, 'by offering thanks and praise,' **Hebrews 13:15**, that the Lord Jesus died in your place to forgive you and to cleanse you from all sin by His blood, **1 John 1:7-9 / Hebrews 8:12 / Hebrews 9:14**, so that you might live not for yourself but to Him, **2 Corinthians 5:15**. The burnt offering altar and the laver, **Exodus 30:17-21**, form a combined experience of Christ.

'Take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head. Slaughter it, take some of its blood and put it on the lobes of the right ears of Aaron and his sons, on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet. Then splash blood against the sides of the altar. And take some blood from the altar and some of the

anointing oil and sprinkle it on Aaron and his garments and on his sons and their garments. Then he and his sons and their garments will be consecrated.” Exodus 29:19-21

Moses is to take the other ram, Exodus 29:22, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head, Exodus 29:19 / Leviticus 8:22. Moses is to slaughter the ram and take some of its blood and put it on the lobes of the right ears of Aaron and his sons, on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet and then he is to splash blood against the sides of the altar, Exodus 29:20 / Leviticus 8:23.

The blood on the tip of the right ear of the priests dedicated their hearing to God. The hands of the priests were dedicated to the service of God. The priests’ entire walk of life was also dedicated to God. The blood of atonement was mixed with the oil of spiritual healing.

Moses is then to take some blood from the altar, some of the anointing oil and sprinkle it on Aaron and his garments and on his sons and their garments, then Aaron, his sons and their garments will be consecrated, Exodus 29:21 / Leviticus 8:24.

WAVE OFFERING

“Take from this ram the fat, the fat tail, the fat on the internal organs, the long lobe of the liver, both kidneys with the fat on them, and the right thigh. (This is the ram for the ordination.) From the basket of bread made without yeast, which is before the LORD, take one round loaf, one thick loaf with olive oil mixed in, and one thin loaf. Put all these in the hands of Aaron and his sons and have them wave them before the LORD as a wave offering. Then take them from their hands and burn them on the altar along with the burnt offering for a pleasing aroma to the LORD, a food offering presented to the LORD.” After you take the breast of the ram for Aaron’s ordination, wave it before the LORD as a wave offering, and it will be your share. “Consecrate those parts of the ordination ram that belong to Aaron and his sons: the breast that was waved and the thigh that was presented”. Exodus 29:22-27

Moses is to take from the ram the fat, the fat tail, the fat on the internal organs, the long lobe of the liver, both kidneys with the fat on them, and the right thigh because this is the ram for the ordination, Exodus 29:22 / Leviticus 8:25.

From the basket of bread made without yeast, Moses is to take one round loaf, one thick loaf with olive oil mixed in, and one thin loaf, Exodus 29:23 / Leviticus 8:26. Moses is to put all these in the hands of Aaron and his sons and have them wave them before the LORD as a wave offering, Exodus 29:24 / Leviticus 8:27.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There are three names applied to this sacrifice of the second ram: 1. burnt-offering, Exodus 29:25; 2. peace-offering, Leviticus 3:1-17, and 3. wave-offering, Exodus 29:24.’

Moses is then to take the one round loaf, one thick loaf with olive oil mixed in, and one thin loaf, then from their hands and burn them on the altar along with the burnt offering for a pleasing aroma to the LORD, a food offering presented to the LORD, Exodus 29:25 / Leviticus 8:28.

After Moses takes the breast of the ram for Aaron’s ordination, he is to wave it before the LORD as a wave offering, and it will be Moses’ share, Exodus 29:26 / Leviticus 8:29.

Moses is to consecrate those parts of the ordination ram that belong to Aaron and his sons, the breast that was waved and the thigh that was presented, Exodus 29:27.

The wave offering was a symbolic waving of the sacrifice that indicated its dedication to God, though the sacrifice was eaten. Except for the sin offering and burnt offering, sacrifices were to be eaten either by the priests, the one who gave the sacrifice, or both.

The eating of the sacrifice symbolised fellowship between God and the one who made the sacrifice, as well as fellowship between the priest and the one who made the offering.

The wave offering is in reference to the manner in which those portions were handled before God's altar. The breast was waved, passed from right to left and left to right after being elevated in the hands of the worshipper. It was lifted up toward heaven and lowered perhaps several times.

Notice, though, that the meaning of this was the portion that actually belonged to God, hence why they lifted it up, and the lowering of the offering indicates that God is returning it to the priests as a gift.

Other instances of wave offerings include the breast of a peace offering, **Leviticus 7:28-34**, a lamb from the cleansing sacrifice of a healed leper, **Leviticus 14:12**, and two loaves of bread and two lambs of the sacrifice affiliated with the Feast of Weeks, **Leviticus 23:15-21**.

The largest wave offering was of an entire tribe, and because of their loyalty during the episode with the golden calf, **Exodus 32**, God accepted the Levites in the service of His temple in place of the firstborn male of each Israelite family, **Numbers 3:12**.

FELLOWSHIP OFFERING

“This is always to be the perpetual share from the Israelites for Aaron and his sons. It is the contribution the Israelites are to make to the LORD from their fellowship offerings. Aaron's sacred garments will belong to his descendants so that they can be anointed and ordained in them. The son who succeeds him as priest and comes to the tent of meeting to minister in the Holy Place is to wear them seven days. “Take the ram for the ordination and cook the meat in a sacred place. At the entrance to the tent of meeting, Aaron and his sons are to eat the meat of the ram and the bread that is in the basket. They are to eat these offerings by which atonement was made for their ordination and consecration. But no one else may eat them because they are sacred. And if any of the meat of the ordination ram or any bread is left over till morning, burn it up. It must not be eaten, because it is sacred. “Do for Aaron and his sons everything I have commanded you, taking seven days to ordain them. Sacrifice a bull each day as a sin offering to make atonement. Purify the altar by making atonement for it and anoint it to consecrate it. For seven days, make atonement for the altar and consecrate it. Then the altar will be most holy, and whatever touches it will be holy. This is what you are to offer on the altar regularly each day: two lambs a year old. Offer one in the morning and the other at twilight.’ Exodus 29:28-39

God says this is always to be the perpetual share from the Israelites for Aaron and his sons, **Exodus 29:28**. It is the contribution the Israelites are to make to the LORD from their fellowship offerings, **Exodus 29:28**.

Aaron's garments are sacred and will belong to his descendants so that they can be anointed and ordained in them, **Exodus 29:29 / Leviticus 8:30**. The son who succeeds Aaron as priest and comes to the tent of meeting to minister in the Holy Place is to wear them seven days, **Exodus 29:30**.

Moses is now to take the ram for the ordination and cook the meat in a sacred place, **Exodus 29:31 / Leviticus 8:31**. At the entrance to the tent of meeting, Aaron and his sons are to eat the meat of the ram and the bread that is in the basket, **Exodus 29:32 / Leviticus 8:31**.

Aaron and his sons are to eat these offerings by which atonement was made for their ordination and consecration; however, no one else may eat them because they are sacred, **Exodus 29:33 / Leviticus 8:31**.

Unger, in his commentary, says the following.

‘At the root of the Hebrew term for atonement is the idea of ‘covering.’ Mosaic sacrifices covered sin from God's sight in view of Christ's future redemptive work. Thus, the sinner's forgiveness was secured by God's passing over

sin, **Romans 3:25**. Not until Christ died was sin finally ‘put away’, **Hebrews 9:15**, and actual atonement was made between God and man.’

If any of the meat of the ordination ram or any bread is left over till morning, then it must be burned; it must not be eaten, because it is sacred, **Exodus 29:34 / Leviticus 8:32**.

Moses is to do for Aaron and his sons everything that God commanded him, taking seven days to ordain them, **Exodus 29:35 / Leviticus 8:33-35**. Moses is to sacrifice a bull each day as a sin offering to make atonement, purify the altar by making atonement for it, and anoint it to consecrate it, **Exodus 29:36**.

For seven days Moses is to make atonement for the altar and consecrate it, then the altar will be most holy, and whatever touches it will be holy, **Exodus 29:37 / Leviticus 8:33-35**. These lambs were young and innocent; a lamb was to be offered daily in the morning, and the other in the evening, **Exodus 29:38**.

The peace offering is sometimes translated as ‘fellowship offering’, **Leviticus 3:1-17 / Leviticus 7:11-36**. It came about voluntarily, as a desire was expressed to thank God and to seek fellowship ‘communion’ with God.

The blood of the peace offering was sprinkled at the burnt offering altar, **Leviticus 4:7**; the fat and inward parts were removed, and the remainder was roasted, and the fat and inward parts were burned, **Leviticus 4:26**. This was for God’s satisfaction, as a sweet aroma, **Leviticus 3:4**.

Because God had stated clearly what pleased Him, then a person who offered such a peace offering was truly doing what pleased God, and so, that person was having fellowship, ‘communing’ with God.

It was also the case that the flesh of the offering was for the priest and the offeror to consume, to have a meal together, with some unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, similar to the meal offering, **Leviticus 2:1-16 / Leviticus 6:14-23**.

The peace offering was an indication of a good, healthy, loving relationship between the offeror and God and between the offeror and the priests. There was peace with God, and there was peace with fellow citizens.

Paul writes, ‘Christ Himself is our peace’, **Ephesians 2:14** because ‘we who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ’, **Ephesians 2:13 / Romans 5:1**.

Our fellowship with God is restored through faith in the death and shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and sustained through the shared nourishment His life affords us as our portion to feed on.

The Christ who ‘is our peace’ in **Ephesians 2:14** is also the Christ ‘who has made both one’, where ‘both’ refers to the Jews and the Gentiles. To those who believe in Jesus Christ, His death is the place for us to be one. It is the only place where oneness will work.

Everywhere else, there is no peace because there are conflicts about how to do everything! Only as we begin to know ‘the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death’. **Philippians 3:10**, can we ‘be of the same mind in the Lord’? See also **Philippians 4:2 / Philippians 2:5-8**.

Otherwise, we will be just like Euodia and Syntyche, fighting and squabbling, with no peace. Ironically, ‘Euodia’ means ‘sweet aroma’; however, that would be just a name without the true experience of Christ as the peace offering, **Ephesians 2:14**.

DRINK OFFERING

‘With the first lamb, offer a tenth of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with a quarter of a hin of oil from pressed olives, and a quarter of a hin of wine as a drink offering. Sacrifice the other lamb at twilight with the same grain offering and its drink offering as in the morning—a pleasing aroma, a food offering presented to the LORD. “For the generations to come, this burnt offering is to be made regularly at the entrance to the tent of meeting before the

LORD. There I will meet you and speak to you; there also I will meet with the Israelites, and the place will be consecrated by my glory. “So I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. They will know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.”
Exodus 29:40-46

To make a drink offering, one-tenth of an ephah was to be used, which is about seven pints or about three and a half litres; a hin is about a gallon and a half, or a little over five and a half litres, Exodus 29:40.

The drink offering was poured out upon an existing offering, Exodus 29:41 / Genesis 35:14 / Numbers 28:7-10 / Numbers 28:14-15 / Numbers 28:24 / Numbers 28:31.

The grain offering, Exodus 29:41, didn't involve the taking of a life, instead, it was made up of the finest flour, Genesis 4:3 / Genesis 3:10 / Judges 3:15-18, oil, and incense.

For the generations to come, this burnt offering is to be made regularly at the entrance to the tent of meeting, before the LORD, because He will meet the priests and speak to them, Exodus 29:42. Often, a blood sacrifice was accompanied by both a meal offering and a drink offering.

Because the drink offering is ‘poured out’ upon the existing offering, there is a thought of ‘wasting’ or ‘being wasted’, Matthew 26:6-8. In Genesis 35:14, Jacob pours out a drink offering to signify he is giving his life back to God, consecrating himself for the house of God, ‘Beth-El’. Likewise, Aaron and his sons have just been consecrated, giving their lives for the tabernacle service, so that God may have a dwelling place, Exodus 29:43-45.

Notice they will know that He is the LORD their God who brought them out of Egypt, Exodus 29:46, and notice the reminder from God where He declares, ‘I am the Lord their God’, Exodus 29:46 / Exodus 3:14 / Exodus 6:3.

The ceremonial laws that came with Israel's covenant with God were to be a continual reminder to Israel that God was the one who delivered them out of Egypt.

For this to be valid, there is a need, morning and evening, for daily offerings, including a lamb for a burnt offering, a meal offering and a drink offering. Twice daily, there is renewed consecration in the tabernacle by the priests.

This is a picture for us in our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul spoke of himself being ‘poured out as a drink offering’ on the sacrifice and priestly service of the faith of the saints in Philippi. Philippians 2:17, as he contemplated the possibility of soon having his life ended on account of the Gospel.

Although it wasn't possible that the blood of bulls and goats would bring forgiveness of sins, Hebrews 10:1-4, all these sacrifices prepared Israel for the final sacrifice for sin in Jesus Christ.

The fact that the sacrifices were performed daily meant that their entire lives were consecrated to God, Romans 12:1. And in obedience through the sacrifices, God dwelt in them, as He does today through the Holy Spirit.

THE GRAIN OFFERING

The grain offering, Exodus 29:41, looked to the time at creation when God had given to them ‘every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed,’ Genesis 1:29.

This is a picture of the One who became our ‘Bread of Life’, John 6:35, and who was anointed with the ‘oil’ of the Holy Spirit, Acts 10:38. Oil is symbolic of the anointing of God.

Honey was forbidden, and frankincense was used instead. This is because honey would eventually turn sour; yeast was also forbidden, but frankincense received its highest degree of fragrance after it had been burned. It was to be seasoned with salt, the picture of preservation.

The grain offering is also called a food offering, [Leviticus 6:14-23](#) / [Numbers 15:1-10](#). It was a cereal offering and gave the idea of a gift, an offering of thanksgiving. Giving to God those things He has so richly given to us was a gift given in recognition of the dignity and authority of another, [1 Chronicles 29:10](#).

They were to give to God the best of the things that He had given them to sustain life, [Mark 7:11](#) / [Hebrews 5:1-3](#) / [Genesis 32:13](#) / [Genesis 4:45](#) / [2 Samuel 8:2](#).

The basic thrust of the food offering is the consecration of all a person has to God, the fruits of their labour. The food offering would show that there is no real separation between our religious life and our secular life, [Colossians 3:17](#).

The incense was frankincense, which is white and yellow-looking. It was very aromatic but bitter to taste. When it was burned, it produced a sweet-smelling aroma, [Exodus 30:34](#) / [Leviticus 24:7](#) / [Jeremiah 6:20](#) / [Song of Songs 3:6](#).

It was the symbol of a pure and good gift, and also the symbol of prayer, [Exodus 30:8](#) / [Psalm 141:2](#) / [Luke 1:10](#) / [Matthew 2:11](#) / [Luke 1:10](#) / [Revelation 5:8](#) / [Revelation 8:3-4](#).

It was to be ‘a memorial’, when we offer anything to the Lord as a sacrifice, we are remembering our covenant relationship with Him, [Luke 22:19](#) / [1 Corinthians 11:24-25](#). It was the ‘most holy part of the food’ but only for the priests.

CHAPTER 30

INTRODUCTION

‘Make an altar of acacia wood for burning incense. It is to be square, a cubit long and a cubit wide, and two cubits high—its horns of one piece with it. Overlay the top and all the sides and the horns with pure gold and make a gold moulding around it. Make two gold rings for the altar below the moulding—two on each of the opposite sides to hold the poles used to carry it. Make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. Put the altar in front of the curtain that shields the ark of the covenant law—before the atonement cover that is over the tablets of the covenant law—where I will meet with you. ‘Aaron must burn fragrant incense on the altar every morning when he tends the lamps. He must burn incense again when he lights the lamps at twilight, so incense will burn regularly before the LORD for the generations to come. Do not offer on this altar any other incense or any burnt offering or grain offering, and do not pour a drink offering on it. Once a year, Aaron shall make atonement on its horns. This annual atonement must be made with the blood of the atoning sin offering for the generations to come. It is most holy to the LORD.’ [Exodus 30:1-10](#)

THE ALTAR OF INCENSE

The golden incense altar was made of acacia wood for burning incense, [Exodus 30:1](#) / [Exodus 37:25](#). It was square, half a metre by half a metre wide, and one metre high, [Exodus 30:2](#) / [Exodus 37:25](#).

The top, the sides and the horns were overlaid with gold and it had a gold moulding around it, [Exodus 30:3](#) / [Exodus 37:26](#). Two gold rings were to be made for the altar below the moulding, two on each of the opposite sides to hold the poles used to carry it, [Exodus 30:4](#) / [Exodus 37:27](#).

The poles are to be made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold, [Exodus 30:5](#) / [Exodus 37:27](#). It was situated just in front of the veil, the curtain which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, [Exodus 30:6](#).

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Old Testament passages say that the incense altar was inside the holy place with the golden lampstand and the table of showbread, [Exodus 30:6](#) / [Exodus 40:3-5](#) / [Exodus 40:21-27](#).’

Aaron must burn fragrant incense on the altar every morning when he tends the lamps, [Exodus 30:7](#). He is to burn incense again when he lights the lamps at twilight so incense will burn regularly before the LORD for the generations to come, [Exodus 30:8](#).

However, Aaron isn’t permitted to offer on this altar any other incense, burnt offering, grain offering, and he wasn’t permitted to pour a drink offering on it, [Exodus 30:9](#).

Once a year Aaron is to make atonement on its horns and the annual atonement must be made with the blood of the atoning sin offering for the generations to come, it is most holy to the LORD, [Exodus 30:10](#).

Rawlinson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There seems to be sufficient reason for considering the altar of incense as, next to the ark and the mercy-seat, the most sacred object in the furniture of the tabernacle. This precedence indicates the extreme value which God sets upon prayer.’

The burning incense signifies prayer and points us to the prayer of the Lord Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, [John 17](#) / [Mark 14:32-42](#) / [Psalm 141:2](#) / [Revelation 5:8](#).

Similar to the showbread table, [Exodus 25:23-30](#), the golden incense altar had a golden crown around the top of it. This signifies ‘Jesus, crowned with glory and honour’, [Hebrews 2:9](#). However, because the golden incense altar is the place of prayer, the crown and the prayer together give us a hint of a kingly priesthood.

This thought is developed in the Book of Hebrews, the Messiah, ‘Jesus Christ has become a priest according to the order of Melchizedek’, [Psalm 110:1](#) / [Hebrews 7:1-28](#).

He can sympathise with us as our great High Priest, [Hebrews 4:15](#), and He is able to minister His supply of mercy and grace to us as the King of righteousness and King of peace, [Genesis 14:18](#) / [Hebrews 2](#) / [Hebrews 4:16](#) / [Hebrews 7:25](#).

Prayer is very important in the daily life of all believers in the Lord, [Daniel 6:10](#) / [Matthew 6:5-13](#). We should pray without ceasing, [1 Thessalonians 5:17](#), using all kinds of prayers and petitions with thanksgiving, praying at every time in the Spirit, watching and persevering in prayer not just for ourselves but for all our brothers and sisters, [Ephesians 6:18](#).

Prayer is becoming increasingly important, especially as the battle intensifies and utterance of the Gospel becomes harder, [Ephesians 6:19](#). However, when our prayer is genuinely at the Golden Incense Altar, the Lord causes much incense to be added to our prayer. That incense rises back to Him as we pray according to His will, and the results are dramatic, [Revelation 8:3-4](#).

The tabernacle is the house of God, His dwelling place, [Exodus 25:8-9](#), and a foreshadowing of both Christ and the church, [Colossians 2:9](#) / [1 Timothy 3:15](#) / [Ephesians 2:21-22](#). God desires that His house should ‘be a house of prayer for all nations,’ [Isaiah 56:7](#).

For us to pray at the golden incense altar, blood must first be applied, [Exodus 30:10](#) / [Leviticus 4:7](#), the blood of the sin offering, [Exodus 29:10-14](#). Then the incense must be prepared with genuine acknowledgements and experiences of the Son’s Name, His purity, holiness, subjection, faith, and dependence on God the Father, [John 16:23-24](#).

One of the ingredients of the incense was salt, to make our prayer neither sentimental nor formal. We should pray at every time in the Spirit, [Ephesians 6:18](#), in the Son’s Name. This will be a sweet incense to God the Father.

Jesus’ ministry was not just healing and teaching people, it was also a service to God the Father in His living and in praying, [Mark 1:32-35](#). The night before He chose His twelve disciples, Jesus spent the whole night in the ‘prayer of God’, [Luke 6:12](#).

His admonition, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation,’ and His observation regarding praying that ‘the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak,’ Matthew 26:41. So obviously come from One who is qualified to comment, Hebrews 2:14 / Hebrews 2:18.

In His prayer in John 17, Jesus utters such meaningful requests, with such adoration of the Father, acknowledging His own position as a man and that of the Father as Giver of all authority, John 17:2, as Holy Father, John 17:11, as Righteous Father, John 17:25.

This prayer is no ‘last night’ performance, it is rather the continuation of a life of the previous prayer, as indicated by the phrase ‘Father, the hour has now come’, John 17:1.

Here in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus is at the golden incense altar, on the night before the veil, that is His flesh, Hebrews 10:20, will be torn from top to bottom, by God His Father, Matthew 27:46 / Matthew 27:51. Jesus’ prayer is for eternal life for all those the Father has given to Him.

Jesus is like the high priest in the tabernacle, bearing the names of the disciples, and those who will believe through their word, John 17:20, on His heart, the breastplate.

His prayer is that the Father will do the following.

1. Keep the disciples, guarding them all in the Father’s own holy name, in unbroken oneness, as the Father and the Son are one, John 17:6-12.
2. Sanctify them in His word of truth, setting the disciples apart to the Father as Jesus Himself had been set apart to the Father, for their impact in the world with the Gospel, that generations of believers may be one, one in Them, the Father and the Son, John 17:13-21.
3. Send the glory of the Son, John 1:14, and John 17:1, to the believers, that they may be perfected in oneness, so that the world may see the love of the Father for His only begotten Son and also the Father’s love for His many children, John 1:12-13 / John 1:18 / John 3:5-6 / John 17:22-26 / John 20:17.

This is the prayer for eternal life, ‘that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent,’ John 17:3. Jesus said, ‘I come that they may have life and have it abundantly,’ John 10:10.

Eternal life is simply to know the Father and the Son and their oneness, truly, for eternity. This is Jesus’ prayer for eternal life; may it also be ours. Such a fragrance of incense exudes from this deep prayer by the great High Priest for all those in the House of God!

Let us also come to the Golden Incense Altar and thence boldly through the Veil to the throne of grace, the Ark of the Covenant, that we may find the mercy and obtain the grace He has prayed for us in this great time of need! Hebrews 3:6 / Hebrews 4:14-16.

ATONEMENT MONEY

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each one must pay the LORD a ransom for his life at the time he is counted. Then no plague will come on them when you number them. Each one who crosses over to those already counted is to give a half shekel, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs. This half shekel is an offering to the LORD. All who cross over, those twenty years old or more, are to give an offering to the LORD. The rich are not to give more than a half shekel, and the poor are not to give less when you make the offering to the LORD to atone for your lives. Receive the atonement money from the Israelites and use it for the service of the tent of meeting. It will be a memorial for the Israelites before the LORD, making atonement for your lives.” Exodus 30:11-16

God tells Moses, when he takes a census of the Israelites to count them, each one needs to pay the LORD a ransom for his life at the time he is counted, [Exodus 30:11](#). If each one pays, then no plague will come on them when Moses numbers them, [Exodus 30:12](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the meaning behind the plague.

‘That they might not incur punishment for the neglect and contempt of spiritual privileges.’

Coinage wasn’t known in Israel in the times of Moses; hence, the weight of this tax was specified as twenty gerahs, [Exodus 30:13](#). The word ‘gerah’ means a bean, probably a carob bean, from which our word ‘carat’ is derived, and weighing about eleven grams.

The half-shekel tax, [Exodus 30:13](#), continued down through the times of the Lord Jesus Christ, [Matthew 17:24-27](#).

What was required here was a tax for every male of Israel who was twenty years old and older, [Exodus 30:14](#).

Notice, since everyone was to pay the same, the tax equalised everyone, rich and poor, [Exodus 30:15](#). The rich couldn’t claim any advantage over the poor by being able to contribute more.

Everyone had to pay the same, and so, be considered the same in reference to God’s favour. Notice the money was to be given for services for the tabernacle, [Exodus 30:16](#) / [Exodus 25:1-9](#).

Dobson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘For the service of the tent of meeting’, [Exodus 30:16](#), means, ‘For the construction of the Tabernacle, it does not mean that they collected the money for sacrifices or services of worship in the Tabernacle.’

This contribution probably became an annual obligation tax in Israel in the years to come, [2 Chronicles 24:9](#). It was atonement money in the sense that it reminded the giver that in no way could one atone for his own sins, [Exodus 30:16](#).

Since the contribution was only a half shekel, one would rightly conclude that the greatness of his sins couldn’t be bought, no matter how much or how little one gave. Since atonement cannot be bought, no amount of money can pay the price for our sins.

BASIN FOR WASHING

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Make a bronze basin, with its bronze stand, for washing. Place it between the tent of meeting and the altar and put water in it. Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet with water from it.

Whenever they enter the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water so that they will not die. Also, when they approach the altar to minister by presenting a food offering to the LORD, they shall wash their hands and feet so that they will not die. This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants for the generations to come.’ Exodus 30:17-21

The Bible doesn’t record the size or dimensions of the bronze basin.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘[Exodus 38:8](#) reveals the source of the brass (bronze) from which the laver was constructed. The women of Israel, apparently nearly all of them, had brought brass mirrors with them out of Egypt, the highly-polished metal being the only type of mirror known at that time, and they contributed these personal items so highly prized by them for the making of the bronze altar.’

The laver was a large bronze basin containing water for washing purposes, [Exodus 30:17](#). It was to be placed between the tent of meeting and the altar and put water in it, [Exodus 30:18](#). Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet with water from it, [Exodus 30:19](#).

Having entered through the door into the tabernacle's outer court, the priests had to wash their hands and feet at the laver, Exodus 30:19; the same rule applied when they approached the altar to minister by presenting a food offering. However, God warned Moses that if the priests did not wash, they would die, Exodus 30:20-21. This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants for the generations to come, Exodus 30:21.

God warned Moses that if the priests did not wash, they would die. It is therefore a serious requirement that we 'wash' as we come to handle any of the things of the Lord because those who believe in the Lord Jesus are considered priests in the New Testament sense, 1 Peter 2:9 / Revelation 1:5-6.

The New Testament speaks of washing in two ways.

1. Baptism, Acts 22:16 / Acts 16:31-33.

2. The washing of the water in the Word, John 13:8-10 / John 15:8 / Ephesians 5:26.

All of which is according to the pattern in Exodus 29:39, 'offer one in the morning and the other at twilight', at least twice daily, in the morning and evening.

After having believed in the Lord Jesus and experienced that He is the door through which we enter into God's kingdom, we should come to Him every day in a simple and sincere way.

We need to read the Word of God in the Bible so that we can live by Him, Matthew 4:4, and we need to confess our sins to God because He is faithful and righteous to forgive and cleanse us, 1 John 1:7-9.

When God forgives, He forgets, Hebrews 8:12. This is the combined experience of the laver and the burnt offering altar. It is important to read the Bible because the Word of God washes us, our 'hands' and 'feet', especially from the dirtiness of the world around us.

It gives us God's perspective on our human conduct in the world and on the thoughts of our minds and hearts, Genesis 6:5. When Ephesians 5:26 speaks of the washing of the water in the Word, the word for washing is 'laver' in Greek.

As we read His Word, the Lord shines into our hearts and speaks to us, mostly in our conscience. According to God's shining and enlightening, we will need to confess and ask for His forgiveness and cleansing. Only then are we qualified to approach the sanctuary building.

The effect of the washing, 'laver' in the Word, is to cleanse, Psalms 119:9. This results in us taking God's side more and more in our lives. We become set apart to God. 'Holy' or 'sanctified', 'holified' means just that, set apart to God. Such sanctified people are called 'saints' in the New Testament, 1 Corinthians 1:2.

Saints are believers in Christ who have experienced the washing of God's Word in their lives. We may have been greedy persons, swindlers, drunkards, abusers of drugs, thieves, liars, fornicators, homosexuals, involved with pornography, etc, before we came to the door in the curtains of the outer court. But do not be deceived, no one can inherit the kingdom of God like this, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

We are washed at the Laver and set apart to God, sanctified. As a result, we are justified at the burnt offering altar by faith in Jesus' death on the cross as 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,' John 1:29.

The message Jesus preached was 'times up. Change your mind and believe the good news,' Mark 1:15, 'The time is fulfilled. Repent and believe the gospel'. Peter, Andrew, James, John, and the other disciples of Jesus did just that; they changed their minds and began to follow Jesus.

They left their old environment because they had found something so real and true, the reality of the tabernacle, Jesus. They admired the Door, His character, His power, His teaching, He had washed their feet at the Last Supper, and they saw the offering as He died, John 13:4-11.

The disciples became set apart to God amidst a totally hostile environment. But this was not the end; Jesus rose from the dead. He came back to them, not just to tabernacle among them, but dwell in them, as God's dwelling place, the sanctuary.

ANOINTING OIL

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “Take the following fine spices: 500 shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much (that is, 250 shekels) of fragrant cinnamon, 250 shekels of fragrant calamus, 500 shekels of cassia—all according to the sanctuary shekel—and a hin of olive oil. Make these into a sacred anointing oil, a fragrant blend, the work of a perfumer. It will be the sacred anointing oil. Then use it to anoint the tent of meeting, the ark of the covenant law, the table and all its articles, the lampstand and its accessories, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the basin with its stand. You shall consecrate them so they will be most holy, and whatever touches them will be holy. “Anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them so they may serve me as priests. Say to the Israelites, ‘This is to be my sacred anointing oil for the generations to come. Do not pour it on anyone else’s body, and do not make any other oil using the same formula. It is sacred, and you are to consider it sacred. Whoever makes perfume like it and puts it on anyone other than a priest must be cut off from their people.’” Exodus 30:22-33

The text designates that this was to be ‘freely flowing myrrh,’ [Exodus 30:23](#), as contrasted with the myrrh produced by making incisions into the myrrh trees. The kind that appeared by itself was considered best.

The ancients used it, 1. as a perfume, 2. for embalming the dead, and 3. for incense. This gum is produced from a low, thorny, ragged tree that grows in Arabia Felix and Eastern Africa, called by botanists *Balsamodendron Myrrha*.

Cinnamon, [Exodus 30:23](#), is a rare spice, derived from a species of the laurel tree, ‘*Laurus Cinnamomum*’, which grows only on the Malabar coast of India, Ceylon, Borneo, Sumatra, China, and Cochin China. The mention of it here shows that there was commerce between the Far East and the Near East in this early period.

Several aromatic reeds of this fragrant calamus, [Exodus 30:23](#), are known, and it’s impossible to know exactly which one was meant here. Cassia, [Exodus 30:24](#), is a spice which bears a strong resemblance to cinnamon, in fact having the botanical name ‘*Cinnamomum Cassia*’. It’s more pungent than the cinnamon which we know today, and of a coarser texture.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning [Exodus 30:22-24](#).

‘There is some curiosity as to how some 46 1/4 pounds of spices could be pulverized and mixed with about a gallon and a half of olive oil, but the explanation is in [Exodus 30:25](#), where the instructions indicated that all of this was to be done ‘after the art of the perfumer’.’

A perfumer was one who had mastered the art of apothecary, [Exodus 30:25](#). Those who had this skill knew how to make this special oil from the four designated ingredients. The mixture was to be used first to anoint the tabernacle and its furniture in order to set them apart for their intended function.

Once the tabernacle and its furniture were sanctified, [Exodus 30:26-29](#), no one was to touch them except those who were also sanctified. And so, the priests were also anointed with oil in order to be sanctified for their service in the tabernacle, [Exodus 30:30](#). Moses is to tell the Israelites that this is to be God’s sacred anointing oil for the generations to come, [Exodus 30:31](#).

However, there is also a warning, the anointing oil is not to be poured on anyone else’s body and no other oil is to be made by the same formula, it is sacred, and the Israelites are to consider it sacred, [Exodus 30:32](#). Anyone who makes perfume like it and puts it on anyone other than a priest must be cut off from their people, [Exodus 30:33](#).

Cook, in his commentary, says the following.

‘According to Jewish tradition, the essence of the spices was first extracted and then mixed with the oil. The preparation was entrusted to Bezaleel, [Exodus 37:1](#) / [Exodus 37:29](#), and the duty of preserving it fell upon Eleazar the son of Aaron, [Numbers 4:16](#).’

INCENSE

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “Take fragrant spices—gum resin, onycha and galbanum—and pure frankincense, all in equal amounts, and make a fragrant blend of incense, the work of a perfumer. It is to be salted and pure and sacred. Grind some of it to powder and place it in front of the ark of the covenant law in the tent of meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. Do not make any incense with this formula for yourselves; consider it holy to the LORD. Whoever makes incense like it to enjoy its fragrance must be cut off from their people.” Exodus 30:34-38

In the midst of many slayings of animals for sacrifices, the sweet aroma of the perfume aided the senses of the priests who had to work in such an environment.

There are two kinds of gum resin, Exodus 30:34, one of myrrh and one of storax and a fat mixed. The kind mentioned here is supposed to be myrrh. Onycha, Exodus 30:34, is a mollusc which emits a highly aromatic odour when burned. Gathered in the Near East until recently, it’s used as an ingredient in perfume, and as a principal component of incense in India.

Galbanum, Exodus 30:34, is a gum resin with a pleasant odour and a bitter taste. It is imported from Persia. It’s derived from certain umbelliferous plants. Frankincense, Exodus 30:34, is a gum derived from the ordinary fir tree, but the frankincense of the Jews is a substance now called Olibanum, a product of certain trees of the genus *Boswellia*. It grows in Arabia and Somaliland.

The incense, which is to be salted and pure and sacred, Exodus 30:35, was to produce a sweet-smelling aroma for the priest who conducted sacrifices at the tabernacle. Though the aroma of the incense would remind the people of the pleasant atmosphere of God’s presence, it also had a very practical use.

They are to grind some of it to powder and place it in front of the ark of the covenant law in the tent of meeting, where God will meet with them; it shall be most holy to them, Exodus 30:36.

Notice that the Jews were forbidden to make any of these sacred oils or incense for their own use, because it is to be considered holy to the LORD, Exodus 30:37. If anyone did, then they would be ‘cut off’ from God’s people, Exodus 30:38.

These sacred materials were solely for use as God directed and not for the personal use of any person whatsoever, except the ordained priests of the tabernacle.

CHAPTER 31

INTRODUCTION

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills—to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts. Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab, son of Ahisamak, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also I have given ability to all the skilled workers to make everything I have commanded you: the tent of meeting, the ark of the covenant law with the atonement cover on it, and all the other furnishings of the tent—the table and its articles, the pure gold lampstand and all its accessories, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, the basin with its stand—and also the woven garments, both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when they serve as priests, and the anointing oil and fragrant incense for the Holy Place. They are to make them just as I commanded you.” Exodus 31:1-11

BEZALEL AND OHOLIAB

Here we read how God encourages men to do things God won't do when men are more than capable of doing it themselves under God's guidance. It was the duty of the skilled worker to use their judgment as to how to make the materials and determine many of the details.

These two men, Bezalel, whose name means 'in the shadow of God', and Oholiab, whose name means 'the Father is my tent', obviously had some kind of leadership skills, and God was going to use them both to direct the building of the tabernacle according to God's will, [Exodus 35:30-35](#).

Keil, in his commentary, says the following.

'Bezalel was a grandson of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, who is mentioned in [Exodus 17:10](#) / [Exodus 24:14](#), and was called to be the master-builder, to superintend the whole of the building and carry out the artistic work, consequently, he is not only invariably mentioned first, [Exodus 35:30](#) / [Exodus 36:1-2](#), but in the accounts of the execution of the separate portions, he is mentioned alone, [Exodus 32:1](#) / [Exodus 38:22](#).'

God filled Bezalel, [Exodus 31:1-3](#) / [Exodus 35:30](#) / [Exodus 28:3](#), which means he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to carry out the instructions to build the tabernacle.

Bezalel was blessed with the wisdom, [Exodus 31:3](#) / [Exodus 35:31](#) / [Exodus 28:3](#) / [Proverbs 8:12](#), to lead those who were chosen to complete the tasks set before them. His judgments were inspired by God, in order that he lead the workers to comply with the will of God in reference to the construction of the tabernacle.

He was also blessed with understanding, [Exodus 31:3](#) / [Exodus 35:31](#). This was the ability to organise the parts of the tabernacle to be completed in order to organise the workers to accomplish the task of construction.

He was also blessed with the knowledge, [Exodus 31:3-5](#) / [Exodus 35:31-34](#), of what materials to use, as well as how to bring these materials together into the final goal of the constructed tabernacle and its furniture. With his assistant, Oholiab, [Exodus 31:6](#) / [Exodus 35:34](#), Bezalel was to create the beauty of the tabernacle in a way that it would manifest the splendour of God.

Oholiab was filled with skill to do all kinds of work as engravers, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers, [Exodus 35:35](#). From this, we learn that God never calls anyone to do a task of any kind without first giving them the ability to do so, [Acts 6:3-6](#) / [Ephesians 4:11-14](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'The name Oholiab means 'father of tents', he was from the tribe of Dan, and although that tribe doesn't appear to have been famous for such men of artistic talent, it was likewise true that Hiram, the chief artist employed by Solomon for the ornamental work of the temple, was also a Danite, [2 Chronicles 2:14](#). Despite such notable exceptions, The Danites in general were more warlike and rude than artistic, [Genesis 49:17](#) / [Deuteronomy 33:22](#) / [Judges 13:2](#) / [Judges 18:11](#) / [Judges 18:27](#).'

Together they are to make the tent of meeting, [Exodus 26:7-14](#), the ark of the testimony, [Exodus 25:10-16](#), the atonement lid that is on it, [Exodus 25:17-22](#), all the furnishings of the tent, [Exodus 31:7](#). The table with its utensils, [Exodus 25:23-30](#), the pure lampstand with all its utensils, [Exodus 25:31-40](#), the altar of incense, [Exodus 31:8](#) / [Exodus 30:1-10](#).

The altar for the burnt offering with all its utensils, [Exodus 27:1-8](#), the large basin with its base, [Exodus 31:9](#) / [Exodus 30:17-21](#). The woven garments, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons, to minister as priests, [Exodus 31:10](#) / [Exodus 28:1-43](#) / [Leviticus 16:4](#).

Cook, in his commentary, says the following concerning the three types of dress mentioned here.

1. The richly adorned state robes of the High Priest, [Exodus 28:6-29:8](#).

2. The holy garments of white linen worn by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement.

3. The garments of white linen worn by all the priests in their regular ministrations.

They are also to make the anointing oil, [Exodus 30:22-33](#), and sweet incense for the Holy Place, [Exodus 31:11](#) / [Exodus 30:34-38](#). They will make all these things just as God has commanded them, [Exodus 31:11](#).

THE SABBATH

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy. ““Observe the Sabbath because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it is to be put to death; those who do any work on that day must be cut off from their people. For six days work is to be done, but the seventh day is a day of sabbath rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day is to be put to death. The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.”’ Exodus 31:12-17

Moses is to speak to the Israelites and tell them that they must observe God’s Sabbaths, [Exodus 31:12](#) / [Exodus 16:23](#) / [Exodus 20:8](#) / [Exodus 23:12](#). Notice this is plural, [Leviticus 19:3](#) / [Leviticus 19:30](#) / [Leviticus 26:2](#).

Keil and Delitzsch, in their commentary, say the following.

‘My Sabbaths’ by these we are to understand the weekly Sabbaths, not the other sabbatical festivals, since the words which follow apply to the weekly Sabbath alone.’

Notice also the two things which are revealed for the first time here concerning the Sabbath Day.

1. The Sabbath day was a sign of the covenant between God and Israel, [Exodus 31:13](#).

2. The profanation of it was a capital offence to be punished by the execution of all violators! [Exodus 31:14-15](#).

The keeping of the Sabbath was a very serious matter; this is seen in the fact that if anyone violated the sabbath day commands, they received the death penalty. We know that God takes His covenants seriously, and so must we. The Jews were to observe the covenant for generations to come, [Exodus 31:16](#), that is, until the time of the Messiah. This was exactly the proper place for Moses to have included this information because the established worship of God in the services of the tabernacle was about to be inaugurated.

And, as the Sabbath was to be a prominent and vital part of that worship, this placement of the instructions stressed it as being also of equal importance with the tabernacle rituals.

Along with circumcision, [Genesis 17:11-14](#), the Sabbath was given by God as a sign of the covenant between Israel and God, [Exodus 31:17](#). These two signs were distinguishing marks that separated Israel from the nations around them. No other nation adopted the sign of the Sabbath.

As long as the Israelites circumcised their males and kept the Sabbath, they were signalling to God that they would keep the covenant. We now know that when Christ came, this observing of the sabbath day ended, [Galatians 3:26-29](#) / [Colossians 2:16](#). The Sabbath is no longer a sign of a covenant between God and His people.

‘When the LORD finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant law, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.’ Exodus 31:18

Here we read that the tablets were inscribed by the ‘finger of God’, [Daniel 5:5](#) / [Daniel 5:24](#) / [John 8:1-11](#). We’re not to suppose that God has literal fingers; He is Spirit, [John 4:24](#). The point is simply this: the writing was from God, it was God Himself who wrote the commandments.

It’s at this point that Moses finishes his forty days on the mountain. It was for the purpose of receiving these tablets that God had called Moses up into the mountain in the first place, [Exodus 24:12](#), and so this is the fulfilment of the promise of God made to Moses at that time.

After Moses received these stone tablets, they were to be placed in the ark, [Exodus 25:16](#). Although Moses later would break the original tablets of stone in his frustration with Israel, [Exodus 32:19](#), God gave him a set of new tablets on which were written the Ten Commandments, [Exodus 34:4](#) / [Exodus 40:20](#).

CHAPTER 32

INTRODUCTION

‘When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, “Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses, who brought us up out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him.” Aaron answered them, “Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me.” So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, “These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.” When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, “Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD.” So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.’ Exodus 32:1-6

THE GOLDEN CALF

If we learn anything from this chapter, it’s simply this: if people don’t stay focused on God, they will fall into all kinds of ungodly practices. Moses’ forty days on the mountain have come to an end, [Exodus 24:18](#), and the people fell into idolatry. We’re not told how long it took them to build this idol, but it appears that people were yearning for some kind of physical leadership.

They thought Moses had deserted them because he was away so long, [Exodus 32:1](#), and so they turned to Aaron for leadership to build a golden calf, [Exodus 32:1](#). They demanded that Aaron make them ‘gods’, [Exodus 32:1](#); in other words, they wanted some kind of visual expression of their beliefs, [Galatians 3:3](#).

We must remember they’ve been in Egypt surrounded by idolatry, and although they shouldn’t be demanding any gods to be built, [Exodus 20:3](#) / [Deuteronomy 5:6](#) / [Exodus 20:4-6](#) / [Deuteronomy 5:8-10](#), and so, to a degree, we can understand their yearning to worship something physical.

It’s possible that Aaron gave in to their request because he feared the people might have rebelled. It’s clear at this point that Aaron is not a leader because leaders must learn to stand up for God and not give in to the majority.

Notice it is Aaron who tells them to take off the gold earrings that their wives, sons and daughters are wearing, and bring them to him, [Exodus 32:2](#), and they did so, [Exodus 32:3](#).

Earlier, God gave Moses instructions for taking a free-will offering to be used in making a holy place for God, Exodus 25:1-7. Here, Aaron received a collection, an offering of gold to make an idol.

Esses, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As part of the idolatrous practices they had picked up in Egypt, even the sons were wearing ear-rings. Sounds like the 20th century, doesn’t it?’

There must have been a huge amount of gold because Aaron took all the gold jewellery and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, Exodus 32:4. Notice also that he himself fashioned it with a tool, Exodus 32:4.

The reason they built a calf was probably because a calf was representative of a god throughout Egypt, the bull represented strength and fertility. It was common practice in those days to make an idol out of wood, overlaid with gold.

After the idol was made, they say, ‘these are your gods’, Exodus 32:4, which tells us that they have now totally lost their focus on the One true God and started following the gods of their imagination. They have totally ignored the fact that it was God Himself who brought them out of Egypt, Psalms 106:21.

Notice the text says that Aaron built the idol, but he also built an altar to the Lord, Exodus 32:5. We can’t be sure what was going through Aaron’s mind at this point in time; it appears he wants to please the people and please God, Acts 5:29.

Notice also that the hypocrisy continues, after sacrificing and worshipping the One true God, they ‘sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry’, Exodus 32:6.

The word, ‘revelry’ implies sexual activity, that is, they were involved in an orgy, 1 Corinthians 10:7-8. Also, remember there were thousands upon thousands involved in this sinful behaviour.

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, ‘These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.’ “I have seen these people,” the LORD said to Moses, “and they are a stiff-necked people. Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.”’ Exodus 32:7-10

God tells Moses what was happening before he left God’s presence in order to prepare Moses to deal with the spiritual heartache he’s about to witness. We can only imagine what was going through Moses’ mind when God informed him about what was happening down the mountain. He’s been on a spiritual high with God for the last forty days, and now he’s about to plunge into a spiritual low.

God’s people have now become corrupt, Exodus 32:7, and notice God tells Moses, they are ‘your people’ now, ‘whom you brought up out of Egypt’, Exodus 32:7. In other words, they were no longer God’s people; they are Moses’ people, Moses brought them out of Egypt.

God knows exactly what has been going on and what has been said, including the words, These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt, Exodus 32:8.

The word, ‘stiff-necked’, Exodus 32:9, originally referred to an ox that wouldn’t submit to the control of a yoke. The fact that Israel had so quickly turned away from God to follow the gods of their imagination reveals that they were a stiff-necked people. They haven’t learned what it means to submit to the Lord.

God speaks as if He had seen enough, and He made a remarkable offer to Moses: if Moses would only agree, God would consume Israel and start over again with Moses.

The wrath of God was so great that He would start another nation through Moses, Exodus 32:10. Maybe God planned to wait for possibly another several centuries and then call them to a covenant relationship.

God would have done this very thing if Moses hadn't interceded on behalf of Israel. The clear impression here is that if Moses did nothing, then God would have made him into a great nation.

'But Moses sought the favour of the LORD his God. "LORD," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'?"

Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.'" Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.' Exodus 32:11-14

Moses realised that God would rain down judgment on the people, and so, he thus resisted the opportunity to exalt himself by pleading for Israel's case. Obviously, God knew what was going to happen before it happened, but it's clear that God allowed the rebellion to happen in order to reveal the mediatorship of Moses on their behalf.

Moses' prayer of intercession presented three arguments against what God contemplated doing.

1. He appealed for God to remember all that he had already done for Israel, Exodus 32:11.

Moses appealed to God on the basis of grace. He knows that Israel didn't deserve to be brought out of Egypt in the first place. He knows it was all down to the grace of God, and so Moses asks God to keep showing them grace.

2. He pointed out that the Egyptians would accuse God of leading the people out in order to destroy them Exodus 32:12.

Moses appealed to God on the basis of glory. Moses is aware of God's reputation among the nations; he knows that if God wipes them off the face of the earth, this will discredit God, and he knows the Egyptians will think that He is a cruel God. Moses asks God not to let anyone think that way about Him.

3. He pleaded with God to remember the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel regarding their posterity being multiplied and regarding their entry into and possession of the land of Canaan, Exodus 32:13.

Moses appealed to God on the basis of His goodness. He knows that God keeps His promises, and He knows God is a good and faithful God. Moses asks God not to break His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel.

Notice that God 'relented', Exodus 32:14; some translations use the word 'repented'. When people hear the word repent they usually think of it in relation to sin, Ezekiel 33:13-16; however, we know that God doesn't sin and doesn't need to repent of any sin, Numbers 23:19.

The word 'repent' itself means to think differently, and the phrase used here is called an anthropomorphism, which is a human expression used to refer to the action of God in reference to the behaviour of man. The meaning is simply that God changed His direction from destruction to preservation, Jonah 3:10.

'Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back. The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets. When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting, he said to Moses, "There is the sound of war in the camp." Moses replied: "It is not the sound of victory, it is not the sound of defeat; it is the sound of singing that I hear." When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned, and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain.' Exodus 32:15-19

Moses now heads down the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, which were inscribed on both sides, front and back, Exodus 32:15. The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets, Exodus 32:16 / Exodus 31:18.

Remember Joshua remained halfway up the mountain for forty days and forty nights alone while Moses was with God, Exodus 24:13. Joshua hears the noise of the people shouting, and believes it is the sound of war in the

camp, Genesis 32:17. However, Moses knows it's not the sound of victory or defeat, it is the sound of singing that he hears, Exodus 32:18.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Moses does not tell Joshua of the divine communication that had been made to him respecting the apostasy of the people, but only corrects his impression by calling his attention to the kind of noise which they are making.’

When Moses approaches the camp and sees the calf and the dancing, he is furious and, in his anger, he throws the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain, Exodus 32:19. Some commentators believe there is symbolism here in reference to Moses' breaking the two tablets on which the ten commandments were written.

When Israel rebelled by going after other gods, they broke the covenant. In other words, because Moses broke the two tablets, that meant the covenant Israel made with God was also broken, which resulted in justice needing to be carried out.

When we think about Moses' life, he appears to have an anger issue which he struggled with, here he breaks the tablets in anger, earlier he killed an Egyptian in anger, Exodus 2:11-12, and later, in anger, he struck the rock God commanded him to speak to, Numbers 20:10-11, which resulted in him not be allowed to enter the promised land.

‘And he took the calf the people had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it. He said to Aaron, “What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?” “Do not be angry, my lord,” Aaron answered. “You know how prone these people are to evil. They said to me, ‘Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.’ So I told them, ‘Whoever has any gold jewellery, take it off.’ Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!” Exodus 32:20-24

Moses then took the calf and burned it, then he ground it to powder, Exodus 32:20. He then scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it, Exodus 32:20.

There were three reasons why they were made to drink it.

1. To show that this ‘god’ was nothing and could be destroyed easily.
2. To completely destroy the idol.
3. To set forth in a visible manner both their sin and its consequences, Numbers 5:24.

Jones, in his commentary, says the following.

‘So it is with God's judgment of false religion in every age, when people must drink water fouled by their own religious leaders!’

Moses then turns to Aaron and asks, what did these people do to him, that he led them into such great sin? Exodus 32:21. Moses charged him with having brought a great sin upon the people.

When we read Deuteronomy 9:20, we see that Aaron's support of the people's sin made God very angry with him, and if Moses didn't intercede on his behalf, God would have killed him.

Notice that although Aaron quoted the people exactly, Exodus 32:22-24, he blatantly blames the people, and when it came to his own actions. He basically says, he threw everything into the fire and out popped this calf, Exodus 32:24, which we know was a total lie, Exodus 32:35.

He seems to imply that because this calf just ‘miraculously’ came out, then it must have been a miracle. However, when Moses and everyone else saw the human engraving marks on it, Exodus 32:4, this was evidence of his very own workmanship.

‘Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, “Whoever is for the LORD, come to me.” And all the Levites rallied to him. Then he said to them, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbour.’” The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died. Then Moses said, “You have been set apart to the LORD today, for you were against your own sons and brothers, and he has blessed you this day.” Exodus 32:25-29

Moses sees the people running wild, and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies, [Exodus 32:25](#). When Moses asks whoever is for the LORD, come to me, it’s only the Levites who rallied to him, [Exodus 32:26](#). We can see just how serious their sin was in the punishment they received.

Every rebellious Israelite was to be killed, [Exodus 32:27](#). This wasn’t the time for repentance; this was the time when God would get rid of the rebellious among His people, [Judges 17:6](#) / [Proverbs 14:12](#).

The Levites did as Moses commanded; they strapped swords to their sides and ran through the camp killing everyone, [Exodus 32:27-28](#). That day, about three thousand of the people died, [Exodus 32:28](#).

Do you notice anything interesting about the number three thousand?

After Peter preached the first Gospel message on the day of Pentecost, Luke tells us that ‘three thousand souls were added to their number that day,’ [Acts 2:40-41](#). When the Old Testament law was introduced, it immediately brought death, and three thousand souls died on that day. But when the New Testament law was introduced, it brought grace, [John 1:16-17](#), and three thousand souls were saved that day.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There is very much about this incident that we cannot know. How is it that the sons of Levi encountered no resistance? Since only 3,000 men were slain out of all the host of Israel, how was the selection made? Did they cast lots to find the guilty? Were those slain actually slain in the sinful act of violating the Law? None of these are we able to answer. Yet the hand of God was clearly in this episode, else it could never have been resolved at all.’

It’s at this point that Moses tells the Levites that they have been set apart to the LORD, for they were against their own sons and brothers, and God has blessed them, [Exodus 32:29](#).

THE LEVITES

After the children of Israel had left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, God called Moses up to Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments and the pattern of the Tabernacle from God. Whilst Moses was away, a critical problem of idolatry arose among the children of Israel, who remained down on the Plain.

The tribe of Levi showed itself to be definitely on the Lord’s side at that time. Levi was the tribe to which both Moses and Aaron belonged. As a result of their taking sides with the Lord, the tribe of Levi, ‘the Levites’, were selected to take care of the Tabernacle of the Testimony, [Exodus 38:21](#).

As a whole, the Levites became responsible for ‘the service of the work of the Tent of Meeting’, the tabernacle, [Numbers 4:3](#). The Hebrew word translated service also means ‘warfare’. Therefore, their ‘service’ in the tabernacle was a figure of spiritual warfare, as at the golden calf incident, the Levites were on the Lord’s side.

Levi had had three sons, Gershon, Kohath and Merari. The Levites’ work was partitioned according to their families. The family of Gershon were responsible for carrying and setting up the curtains of the outer court, [Exodus 26:7-14](#), the coverings of the tabernacle, [Exodus 26:1-6](#).

The curtain door to the sanctuary, Exodus 26:36-37, the curtain door to the outer court, Exodus 27:16-19, together with all the ropes and fixings required for securing these curtains, Numbers 3:25-26.

The family of Merari were responsible for carrying and setting up the boards, the bars and the pillars and sockets of the outer court, Exodus 26:15-30 / Numbers 3:36-37.

The family of Kohath were responsible for carrying and placing the Ark of the Covenant, Exodus 25:10-16, the veil, Exodus 26:31-35, the golden incense altar, Exodus 30:1-10, the lampstand, Exodus 25:31-40.

The showbread table, Exodus 25:23-30, the laver, Exodus 30:17-21, and the burnt offering altar, Exodus 27:1-8, together with all the utensils these required, Numbers 3:31.

The children of Israel knew when it was time to move on in their journey through the wilderness, because the pillar of cloud, by day or fire, by night, would move as a signal leading them.

The Levites would dismantle the tabernacle, carry it to the destination, determined by the pillar of cloud and fire and then reassemble it at the new location.

When the tabernacle was reared up at a new location, God commanded that the tribes settled around it in a specific order, Numbers 2:1-34. On the East side, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. On the South side, Reuben, Simeon and Gad. On the West side are Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph, and Benjamin. On the North side, Dan, Asher, and Naphtali. The Levites were to encamp all the way around the tabernacle, Numbers 1:53.

‘The next day, Moses said to the people, “You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.” So Moses went back to the LORD and said, “Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written.” The LORD replied to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book. Now go, lead the people to the place I spoke of, and my angel will go before you. However, when the time comes for me to punish, I will punish them for their sin.” And the LORD struck the people with a plague because of what they did with the calf Aaron had made.’ Exodus 32:30-35

Although the breaking of the stone tablets symbolised the breaking of the covenant with the nation, God continued in the covenant that He had made with Abraham, Genesis 12:1-4.

At this time, after Moses had interceded for the nation, they were spared from destruction by God. After telling them they have committed a great sin, Moses went up the mountain again before God to mediate on their behalf for atonement. Exodus 32:30.

Moses worked as a true mediator; he confessed their sin before God, sought God’s forgiveness on behalf of the people, Exodus 32:31, and then offered himself as a sacrifice for the people.

Moses asks God to ‘blot me out of the book you have written’, Exodus 32:32. If God wouldn’t forgive them, then he asked if he could be cut off from fellowship with God for the sake of the nation, Exodus 22:20 / 1 Peter 3:18 / 2 Corinthians 5:21 / Romans 9:1-3.

God’s answer to him was that accountability for sin rested with individuals, Exodus 32:33. God now tells Moses to go and lead the people to the place He spoke of, and His angel will go before you, Exodus 32:34.

Notice God doesn’t say He is going to send ‘an angel’ but My angel to go before Moses, Who is this angel? This is a Christophany, which suggests that this is a preincarnate appearance of Christ, Genesis 12:7. Remember the word ‘angel’ in Hebrew is ‘malak’, and it simply means messenger.

Haynes Jr, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A study of these passages reveals that the Angel of the Lord appeared in human form, Genesis 18:2 / Genesis 22:1-18 / Hebrews 13:2, and performed normal human functions, Genesis 32:24 / Numbers 22:23 / Numbers 22:31, yet he was an awe-inspiring figure, Genesis 32:30 / Judges 6:22 / Judges 13:22, exhibiting divine attributes and prerogatives

including predicting the future, Genesis 16:10-12, forgiving sin, Exodus 23:21, and receiving worship, Exodus 3:5 / Judges 13:9-20.’

God does tell Moses that when the time comes for Him to punish, He will punish them for their sin, Exodus 32:24. Although God’s people deserved death, they received mercy, and their sins were forgiven, but they still had to pay the consequences for their sin, which came in the form of a plague, Exodus 32:35.

CHAPTER 33

INTRODUCTION

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “Leave this place, you, and the people you brought up out of Egypt and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.” Exodus 33:1-3

After Moses pleaded with God not to destroy His people, Exodus 32:30-35, God holds true to His promise He made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob concerning the land, Exodus 33:1.

God is going to send an angel before them to drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, Exodus 33:2 / Exodus 23:20, but He Himself would not go with them.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Consequently, the angel here promised to be their guide was not that angel in whom Jehovah’s name was, and so the people understood it; hence the mourning, which is afterwards mentioned, Exodus 33:4.’

Israel is to go to the land flowing with milk and honey, but God won’t go with them, Exodus 33:3. If He were with them, He knew that He would have to bring down judgment on them because they were a stiff-necked people, Exodus 33:3. For this reason, God stayed at a distance lest He destroy them.

‘When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn, and no one put on any ornaments. For the LORD had said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites, ‘You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you. Now take off your ornaments, and I will decide what to do with you.’” So the Israelites stripped off their ornaments at Mount Horeb.’ Exodus 33:4-6

As a result of God declaring that He wouldn’t go with His people, the Israelites were deeply saddened by this, Exodus 33:4-5 / Micah 1:8. It’s clear they understood that this was a result of their sinful, idolatrous behaviour, Exodus 32:25-29. Their sin separated them once again from God, Isaiah 59:1-2.

God commands them to remove their ornaments, Exodus 33:5, which was a test to see if they really were repentant or not. They were to remove the ornaments that would possibly cover up any sign of remorse.

It appears that they now realise that this wasn’t the time for decorating themselves with clothes, but a time for making their hearts right with God again. And so they removed their ornaments at Mount Horeb, Exodus 33:6.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Though many had parted with their choicest ornaments, yet not all, only a few comparatively, of the wives, daughters, and sons of 600,000 men, could have been thus stripped to make one golden calf, Exodus 32:2-4. The major part still had these ornaments, and they are now commanded to lay them aside.’

THE TENT OF MEETING

‘Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the “tent of meeting.” Anyone inquiring of the LORD would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the LORD spoke with Moses. Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshipped, each at the entrance to their tent. The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua, son of Nun, did not leave the tent.’ Exodus 33:7-11

Moses appears to take extraordinary measures to seek God, and so, he went ahead and made his own tent, a ‘tent of meeting’, Exodus 33:7. It wasn’t a tent or tabernacle in which people assembled, but a structure around which they assembled. Earlier, God told Moses to make a tabernacle of meeting when Moses was on Mount Sinai, Exodus 25-28, but here the tabernacle itself hadn’t been built yet.

We know it wasn’t the tabernacle he built because of the following four facts.

1. There were no sacrifices offered.
2. There was no High Priest, nor even any lesser priests.
3. This tent was outside the polluted camp of Israel, not in the midst of it.
4. When Moses needed someone to watch the tent, he gave the commission to Joshua, not to Aaron, perhaps because Joshua was the only one in Israel who had not danced around the golden calf.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘That distinctive word in the Old Testament, which alone should be rendered ‘tabernacle’ does not even appear in this chapter; and thus there is no excuse for confusing Moses’ Tent with the Mosaic Tabernacle.’

Notice the text was set up ‘outside’ the camp, Exodus 33:7 / Numbers 11:26 / Numbers 12:4. This was done because of Israel’s sin, and so, if the people wanted to call on God, they would have to go outside the camp to do so. In other words, this was to let the people know that God couldn’t dwell where sin was.

Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise and stand at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent, Exodus 33:8. As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the LORD spoke with Moses, Exodus 33:9.

Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshipped, each at the entrance to their tent, Exodus 33:10. It was when Israel murmured, rebelled, or didn’t have any faith that the pillar of cloud, indicating God’s presence, would appear over this tent instead of over the tabernacle.

The phrase ‘face to face’, Exodus 33:11, is obviously figurative, as God doesn’t have a physical face, John 4:24 / 1 John 4:12. What is meant here is that Moses had free and open fellowship with God. Moses hadn’t and couldn’t see the actual face of God the Father in His glory.

Notice that Joshua is referred to as a ‘young man’, Exodus 33:11. Moses, at this period point in time, was past eighty years old, and Joshua might have been around thirty to forty years old.

He succeeded Moses for nearly forty years after the events mentioned here. It’s clear that Moses was setting the example for everyone else, especially Joshua. As Moses’ relationship with God, it appears that Joshua’s relationship with God got stronger, to such an extent that Joshua didn’t depart from the tent, Exodus 33:11.

MOSES AND THE GLORY OF THE LORD

‘Moses said to the LORD, “You have been telling me, ‘Lead these people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, ‘I know you by name, and you have found favour with me.’ If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favour with you. Remember that this nation is your people.” The LORD replied, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” Then Moses said to him, “If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?” And the LORD said to Moses, “I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name.” Exodus 33:12-17

This is now the third time Moses has interceded for Israel, Exodus 33:12 / Exodus 32:11-14 / Exodus 32:30-35.

Moses reminds God that He told Moses to lead the people, but God hasn’t let him know whom He will send with him, Exodus 33:12. God knew Moses by name and God found favour with him, Exodus 33:12.

Moses now asks God if He is pleased with him, then teach him God’s ways so he may know Him and continue to find favour with Him, and then he asks God to remember that Israel is His nation, Exodus 33:13.

It’s here that Moses was reassured by God that He would be with him as he led the people from Mount Sinai. Moses was calling on the grace of God to overlook their sin in order to be with them as a nation.

God previously promised to send an angel with Israel, Exodus 33:2, but after interceding again for his people, God tells Moses He will go with him, Exodus 33:14, which would have filled Moses with the courage to lead his people confidently.

He knew that only the strong presence of the Lord Himself could do that, Exodus 33:15. Moses how will anyone know that God is pleased with him and His people unless God go with them? What else will distinguish Moses and God’s people from all the other people on the face of the earth? Exodus 33:16.

Moses’ confidence in speaking with the Lord and his faith in the Lord are clearly seen here. He knew that nothing the Lord could give them would truly separate them from the nations, Exodus 33:16. As a result of Moses’ confidence and faith, God promised to restore His relationship with Israel, Exodus 33:17.

‘Then Moses said, “Now show me your glory.” And the LORD said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.” Then the LORD said, “There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand, and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.” Exodus 33:18-23

It appears that Moses’ confidence in speaking to God is getting bolder. He no longer wants to walk by faith; he wants to walk by sight, 2 Corinthians 5:7, but God denies his request, John 4:24.

Moses earlier had already seen something of the glory of God, Exodus 16:10 / Exodus 24:16-17, but here he wants to see more, Exodus 33:18. It’s the glory that would pass by Moses and notice that God’s glory lies in His goodness, Exodus 33:19.

When Moses saw the glory of God, He fully understood that God was good. God promised to reveal His name, Exodus 33:19 / Exodus 34:6, that is, His character, to Moses.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Exodus 33:19.

‘Paul’s reference to this passage in Romans 9:15 is instructive. The meaning of this in the present context seems to be God’s disclaimer that God in any sense whatever owed Moses any such favour as that which he had requested. The sovereignty permits him to bestow His favour on whomsoever He will. Moses, of course, had not earned such a favour, nor did he, in any sense, merit it. Yet, in keeping with God’s sovereign will, He gave it to Moses.’

God refused to literally show Moses His face, Exodus 33:20. Notice that God tells Moses He will put Moses ‘in a cleft in the rock,’ Exodus 33:22. God was preparing Moses to see His glory by passing by, by giving Moses a specific place to stand.

Moses had to be protected by the hand of God and the cleft of the rock when the glory of God passed before him, Exodus 33:23. Moses could only see God’s back, not God Himself, Exodus 33:23.

CAN ANYONE SEE GOD’S FACE AND LIVE?

It’s very common for people to read certain passages in Scripture and conclude that they contradict one another. However, those who take the time to look at these Scriptures a little deeper know that the Scriptures nowhere contradict themselves. This is especially true when it comes to the Scriptures, which relate to seeing ‘God’s face’.

Paul tells Timothy that ‘no one can see God’, 1 Timothy 6:16, but then Jesus says, ‘the pure in heart will see God’, Matthew 5:8. Is this a contradiction? There are other Scriptures which appear to imply no one can see God, 1 Timothy 6:15-16 / 1 Timothy 1:17 / 1 John 4:12 / Exodus 33:20 / Deuteronomy 4:12.

However, there are also Scriptures which appear to imply that we can see God, Genesis 32:30 / Job 19:26-27 / Matthew 5:8. The only conclusion we can come to is that there are ways we can see God and there are ways we can’t see God.

WE CAN’T SEE GOD

God told Moses that he couldn’t see ‘His face and live’, Exodus 33:20. Jesus Himself said that ‘no one has ever seen God’, John 1:18 / John 5:37 / John 6:46. Paul tells Timothy that no one has ever seen God or can see God, 1 Timothy 6:15-16.

We must remember that God isn’t physical; He is a spirit, John 4:24. He hasn’t got a face any more than He has legs or arms. The descriptions of God having eyes, arms, and legs, etc, are metaphors which help us understand God in human terms, Deuteronomy 33:27 / Genesis 6:8 / 2 Kings 19:16.

The point is that we can’t see Him with our physical eyes because He is invisible to the physical eye, Colossians 1:15 / 1 Timothy 1:17. There’s also a sense in which we can’t see God because we are simply too sinful, whereas He is just too glorious and holy, Isaiah 6:1-6. This is one reason why we need Christ to act as our Mediator, John 6:45-46 / 1 Timothy 2:5-6 / 1 John 2:1.

WE CAN SEE GOD

When it comes to seeing God, we know that Abraham saw God, Genesis 17:1 / Genesis 18:1. We also know that Moses saw God, Exodus 6:2-3, as did Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and seventy elders of Israel, Exodus 24:9-11. Manoah and his wife, the parents of Samson, saw God, Judges 13:22.

Stephen also saw God, Acts 7:2, although he was about to die physically. We also see God when we look at Jesus, John 1:14 / John 1:18 / John 20:28 / 1 John 3:2. We can also see God in the sense that we see Him in and through the Gospel, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

SEEING GOD'S FACE AND LIVING

There are many examples of people meeting God in the Scriptures, but we must remember that not all of them saw God's 'face', Exodus 3:2 / Exodus 33:22 / Exodus 13:21 / Genesis 20:3 / Genesis 28:11-13 / 1 Kings 3:5.

God told Moses that 'no one can see His face and live', Exodus 33:20, yet we have Abraham, Genesis 18:22-33, and Jacob, Genesis 32:22-30, who lived afterwards and in the New Testament those who saw Jesus, who was God in the flesh, John 1:14 / John 1:18 / John 8:58 / John 14:8-9, lived to tell others about it.

Apart from those times when God physically appeared in human form to people, we must try to understand what the Hebrews meant when they used the term 'seeing God's face'.

The writers understood that this didn't mean that they saw God in physical form; they understood the phrase 'seeing God's face' as a metaphor for being in 'the presence of God'.

Although Peter, James and John got a peek at God's glory on the mountain, Matthew 17:1-9, they didn't see His full glory. The Hebrews understood that no one could see God in the fullness of His glory and live; they understood that sinners couldn't see God in His full glory. Sin and holiness just don't go together; they can't coexist in the same place, Isaiah 59:2.

The 'heart' is the centre of our thinking processes, it is the mind, Biblically speaking, Proverbs 23:7. The 'pure in heart', Matthew 5:8, are those who are free from evil desires and purposes; their thoughts and speech are pure, Matthew 12:24.

This is because they meditate on those things in which there is virtue, Philippians 4:8. Such people experience great joy in seeing God. Of course, they do not see Him physically since He is a Spirit being, John 4:24, but they do see Him through faith in Christ.

Most of the Jews, having their hearts defiled with carnal hopes or self-righteous pride, failed to see God as He revealed Himself in the person of His Son, John 14:6-9 / Matthew 13:14-17. Not only do the 'pure in heart' see God here, but they shall also see Him 'as He is' hereafter, 1 John 3:2-3.

CHAPTER 34

INTRODUCTION

'The LORD said to Moses, "Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. Be ready in the morning and then come up on Mount Sinai. Present yourself to me there on top of the mountain. No one is to come with you or be seen anywhere on the mountain; not even the flocks and herds may graze in front of the mountain." So Moses chiselled out two stone tablets like the first ones and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning, as the LORD had commanded him; and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands.' Exodus 34:1-4

THE NEW STONE TABLETS

Earlier, Moses broke the first set of stone tablets, the ones written with the finger of God, [Exodus 32:19](#), which signified the breaking of the covenant between God and His people. After God's people demonstrated true repentance and returned to God, [Exodus 33:4-6](#), it was time for God to renew the covenant.

You will notice that on this occasion Moses would have to make the tablets, and God would write upon them, [Exodus 34:1](#), whereas on the first occasion God both made the stones and wrote upon them, [Exodus 32:16](#).

Moses is to be ready in the morning and then come up on Mount Sinai to present himself before God on top of the mountain, [Exodus 34:2](#). When God first spoke the Ten Commandments to Israel at Mount Sinai, He commanded them to stay away, [Exodus 19:12-13](#), and here they were still to stay away from Mount Sinai, [Exodus 34:3](#). So Moses did as God commanded and chiselled out two stone tablets, [Exodus 34:4](#).

‘Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.” Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshipped. “Lord,” he said, “if I have found favour in your eyes, then let the Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, forgive our wickedness and our sin, and take us as your inheritance.” Exodus 34:5-9

Notice again the mention of the cloud, [Exodus 34:5](#); this is no doubt the cloud of glory known as the Shekinah. This is the same cloud of glory which covered Mount Sinai, [Exodus 19:16](#).

The same cloud which went with Israel by day, [Exodus 13:21-22](#), and stood at the tent of Moses, [Exodus 33:9-10](#), and the same cloud of glory which will later fill Solomon's temple, [2 Chronicles 7:2](#).

It's the cloud of glory which overshadowed Mary at the conception of Jesus, [Luke 1:35](#), and was present at the transfiguration of Jesus, [Luke 9:34-35](#), and it will be the same cloud of glory which will be present at the return of Jesus, [Revelation 1:7](#).

When we read these verses, we read about the character and nature of God Himself, He is merciful, gracious, patient, abundant in goodness and truth and forgiving, [Exodus 34:6-7](#).

God longs to show mercy to people, but the people must be repentant towards Him, [Hebrews 6:4-6](#). Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, God's prophets quoted these words over and over again: [Numbers 14:18](#) / [Nehemiah 9:17](#) / [Psalm 86:15](#) / [Psalm 103:8](#) / [Psalm 145:8](#) / [Joel 2:15](#) / [Jonah 4:2](#).

Moses bows to the ground, worships, [Exodus 34:8](#), and asks God if he has found favour in His eyes, then let Him go with us, [Exodus 34:9](#). He acknowledges that Israel is a stiff-necked people, but notice he includes himself in asking God for forgiveness, and asks God to take them into His inheritance, [Exodus 34:9](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This yearning struggle after assurance is like the often-repeated utterance of the heart, when it receives a blessing beyond its hopes, ‘can this be real?’

‘Then the LORD said: “I am making a covenant with you. Before all your people, I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the LORD, will do for you. Obey what I command you today. I will drive out before you the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land where you are going, or they will be a snare among you. Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and cut down their Asherah poles. Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. “Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land, for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you, and you will eat their sacrifices. And when you choose some of their daughters as wives for your sons

and those daughters prostitute themselves to their gods, they will lead your sons to do the same. “Do not make any idols.” Exodus 34:10-17

We can't help but notice that God didn't negotiate any terms and conditions with Israel in this covenant; instead, He dictated the terms to the people of Israel through Moses.

What God is doing here is inspiring some awe into the lives of His people, [Exodus 34:10](#) / [2 Samuel 7:23](#) / [Psalms 77:14](#). He would do this by driving out the Canaanites before them and giving them the land that He had promised to Abraham. In other words, God was going to use Israel to demonstrate His glory to all the other nations around through Israel, [Exodus 34:10](#).

For God to drive out before the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, they must be obedient to God, [Exodus 34:11](#). Israel needs to be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land where they are going, or they will be a snare among them, [Exodus 34:12](#).

Israel must be separate from the Canaanites in worship, [Exodus 23:24](#). Israel was to destroy every image and idol that portrayed the false imaginations of the Canaanites, [Exodus 34:13](#).

The images, or pillars, and the groves, the Asherah, [Exodus 34:13](#), were objects of worship of both male and female gods, [2 Kings 21:3](#) / [2 Kings 21:7](#). Israel must not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God, [Exodus 34:14](#) / [Exodus 20:3](#).

The Old Testament Hebrew word for jealous ‘quanno’ and its basic meaning is, quite simply, ‘zeal’ and ‘to be jealous’. In the Old Testament sense, with one or two rare exceptions, it means to be ‘zealous or enthusiastic or passionate’.

Notice also, Israel wasn't to ‘prostitute themselves to their gods,’ [Exodus 34:15-16](#). If anyone marries someone from another faith and who holds different beliefs, all too often they will adopt the faith and beliefs of the person they marry, [Numbers 25:1-3](#). If an Israelite is to marry, they must marry within the faith in order to remain in the faith. Notice again they are commanded not to make any idols, [Exodus 34:17](#) / [Exodus 20:4](#); this would have been fresh in the minds of the Israelites, especially after the golden calf incident, [Exodus 32](#).

We must remember that the sin isn't so much in the making of the idol, but in the belief that motivates one to make the idol. Not only were they to refrain from imagining other gods, but they also weren't to make any image that would bring their imagination into the formation of something that is physical, [Exodus 12:14-20](#) / [Exodus 13:3-13](#) / [Exodus 23:15](#).

Unfortunately, when Israel entered the promised land, they failed to do this, which resulted in them getting involved with idolatry, [2 Kings 21:3](#) / [2 Kings 21:7](#). This sinful behaviour eventually led them to become captives in Assyria and Babylon.

THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

‘Celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread. For seven days, eat bread made without yeast, as I commanded you. Do this at the appointed time in the month of Aviv, for in that month you came out of Egypt. “The first offspring of every womb belongs to me, including all the firstborn males of your livestock, whether from herd or flock. Redeem the firstborn donkey with a lamb, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. Redeem all your firstborn sons. “No one is to appear before me empty-handed. “Six days you shall labour, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during the ploughing season and harvest, you must rest.” Exodus 34:17-21

Passover began on the tenth, and on the fourteenth, they ate the Passover, which is the first day of unleavened bread. Then, for the next seven days, they would eat only unleavened bread, [Exodus 34:17](#) / [Leviticus 23:4-8](#) / [Numbers](#)

28:16-25 / Deuteronomy 16:1-8. For the first Passover, the unleavened bread was a practical necessity; they left Egypt in such a hurry that there was no time to allow for the dough to rise.

Leaven was also a picture of sin and corruption because of the way a little leaven would influence a whole lump of dough, and also because of the way leaven would ‘puff up’ the lump, even as pride and sin make us ‘puffed up.’ Significantly, God called them to walk ‘unleavened’ after their initial deliverance from Egypt; symbolically, they were being called to a pure walk with the Lord.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the leaven.

‘Paul gave the spiritual application of it in 1 Corinthians 5:7, and Jesus mentioned it in Matthew 16:6-12. The only instance in which leaven might not have been intended to convey this meaning is that in the parable of the leaven hidden in three measures of meal, Matthew 13:33, and even there, if the true meaning is the final and total corruption of God’s church by the forces of evil, it would still retain the unfavourable denotation. In our interpretation of that, we found no way to accept the premise of the final corruption of the whole church, Matthew 16:18, and therefore construed a favourable meaning of leaven there.’

Some suggest there was also a health aspect in getting rid of all the leaven, that since they used a piece of dough from the previous batch to make the bread for that day, and did so repeatedly, harmful bacteria could take hold in the dough, so it was good to remove all leaven and start all over at least once a year.

The day following the Passover was to begin a week of feasting, Leviticus 23:6-14. For this entire week, God’s people were to eat unleavened bread. On each day, an offering was to be presented to the Lord.

Once the Israelites were in the land, they would further celebrate this feast by bringing a sheaf of the first fruits of their harvest. It was to be brought before the priest at the tabernacle.

On the first day of the week, he would take the sheaf and wave it before the Lord. Accompanying the sheaf would be the offering of a lamb and a grain offering with a libation of wine. On the first day of the week, the first fruit sheaf, a sacrificed lamb, flour mixed with oil and wine.

This is a picture of the resurrection of Christ. He is our Firstfruits; His resurrection is a promise of our resurrection, which is to follow. Because of that, we have a continuing observance, which is an observance of bread and wine. It remembers the sacrificed Lamb, and it looks forward to the day when the first fruits will be joined by the rest of the harvest.

Here God repeats the laws regarding the firstborn and their dedication to Him, Exodus 34:19-20 / Exodus 13:11-13 / Exodus 22:29-30. Israel was to resist the temptation of violating the Sabbath by ploughing when it rained or harvesting when the crop was ready on a Sabbath, Exodus 34:21. Their desire to think of the things of this world mustn’t move them to violate the principle of the Sabbath.

FESTIVAL OF WEEKS

“Celebrate the Festival of Weeks with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and the Festival of Ingathering at the turn of the year. Three times a year, all your men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD, the God of Israel. I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your territory, and no one will covet your land when you go up three times each year to appear before the LORD your God. “Do not offer the blood of a sacrifice to me along with anything containing yeast, and do not let any of the sacrifice from the Passover Festival remain until morning. “Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God. “Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.”

Exodus 34:22-26

The Festival of Weeks, [Exodus 34:22](#), took place seven full weeks, or the fiftieth day, following the Feast of Firstfruits, and it was also known as Pentecost, meaning fifty. The Feast of Weeks commemorated the first fruits of the wheat harvest, which was basically a celebration of God's provision.

As one of the harvest feasts, God's people were instructed to present grain offerings to the Lord, [Leviticus 23:1-19](#). They were also to offer several one-year-old lambs without blemish, one young bull, and two rams, in addition to other offerings, [Numbers 28:27-29](#). We also see God's care for the poor and the foreigners during this period, [Leviticus 23:22](#).

Because it occurred fifty days following the Feast of First Fruits, the date of the Feast of Weeks varied from late May to early June of each year. As I mentioned, the purpose of this feast was to commemorate the completion of the grain harvest.

Its distinguishing feature was the offering of 'two leavened loaves' made from the new corn of the completed harvest, which, with two lambs, were waved before the Lord as a thank offering.

The day of Pentecost is important for Christians as this is the day the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles, [Acts 2:1-4](#). It was also the day the church was established when Peter preached the first Gospel message. [Acts 2:14-41](#). The only other times the day is mentioned in the New Testament are in [Acts 20:16](#) / [1 Corinthians 16:8](#).

Also, notice God commands that at the three feasts each year, each Israelite man should gather before the Lord, [Exodus 34:23](#) / [Exodus 23:14-17](#). We also note that God will protect their land while they are celebrating, [Exodus 34:24](#).

Israel is not permitted to offer the blood of a sacrifice to God along with anything containing yeast, and they are not permitted to let any of the sacrifice from the Passover Festival remain until morning, [Exodus 34:25](#).

Esses, in his commentary, says the following.

'God ordained that Christ's body (our Passover) would be taken down from the cross before sundown.'

Israel is to bring the best of the firstfruits of the soil to the house of the LORD their God, but they are not permitted to cook a young goat in its mother's milk, [Exodus 34:26](#). This is a command to not imitate the cruel pagan fertility rituals practised among the Canaanites.

THE FEAST OF INGATHERING

Most of us don't pay much attention to the agricultural cycles of nature, but Israel was deeply aware of its own food cycles. The festivals of Judaism followed the agricultural cycle, [Deuteronomy 8:8](#). The first fruits of the harvest were collected in baskets and taken to Jerusalem, [Deuteronomy 26:1-11](#).

At sundown, the Jewish festival of Sukkot will begin, the Feast of Ingathering, also known as the Feast of Tabernacles. By October, the harvest season came to an end when grapes, olives, pomegranates, figs, and dates were gathered.

The feast was officially scheduled for the fifteenth day of the Jewish month of Tishrei, five days after the Day of Atonement, and it lasted for seven days. One more festival day was added, [Leviticus 23:33-36](#). According to the law, all Jews were to live in booths or huts during the celebration.

These were outdoor shelters made from wild branches of olive, myrtle, palm, and other leaf trees, [Nehemiah 8:15](#). A booth or tabernacle was a temporary dwelling.

Since this was the formal end of the harvest year, it was a time of celebration. The people joined parades of pilgrims at the Temple, and as they marched holding the lulav, they sang the Hallel Psalms, Psalms 113-118.

Ceremonies around the Temple were extensive, and celebrations were full. Sacrifice was another way they praised God during this feast. But agriculture was not the only interest at Sukkoth or any of the other festivals. The Passover tells the story of Israel fleeing Egypt. Pentecost reminds them of their coming to Mount Sinai to receive the covenant.

Tabernacles reminded them of the forty years in the wilderness, when they lived in the desert, they worshipped God at His Tabernacle and built shelters for themselves as well, Leviticus 23:42-43.

The Feast of Tabernacles took place at the end of the dry season in Israel. In Israel, the rainy season begins in mid-October and ends in mid-April. In mid-April, the dry season begins, and sometimes there is absolutely no rain for six months straight! The Feast of Tabernacles began at the end of the dry season, and this festival lasted for seven days, plus the added eighth day of rest.

The Feast of Tabernacles is a helpful reminder that thanksgiving is an important part of our daily lives. A thoughtful person knows that the capacities and opportunities we enjoy often should be credited less to ourselves and more to God. Tabernacles says, bring samples of what God has given you to the Temple and with them in hand, wrapped in your personal lulav, thank Him.

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.” Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant—the Ten Commandments.’ Exodus 34:27-

28

The writing of the words was the renewal of the covenant that God had made with Israel, Exodus 34:27. During the forty days that Moses was on the mountain, he wrote the remainder of the words of the covenant, though it was God who wrote the words of the ten commandments on the two stone tablets, Exodus 34:28.

Moses is one of only three people who fasted without eating or drinking for forty days, Exodus 34:28; the other two being Elijah, 1 Kings 19:8, and Jesus, Matthew 4:2.

It’s clear that God was giving Moses the strength to do what he was doing because no one can survive without food or water for forty days and expect to live.

THE RADIANT FACE OF MOSES

‘When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the LORD had given him on Mount Sinai. When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever he entered the LORD’s presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, they saw that his face was radiant.

Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the LORD.’ Exodus 34:29-35

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Deuteronomy 10:1-5 tells us that when Moses came down from Mount Sinai, he made an ark of acacia wood in which to place them. This simple ark was the predecessor of the ark of the covenant described in Exodus 25:10-22. It was altogether a temporary device to serve until the Tabernacle and all of its equipment should be built’.

Because Moses had spent so much with God, his face was radiant, Exodus 34:29 / Matthew 17:2. His face was so radiant that the leaders and the people of Israel noticed it and were afraid to go anywhere near him, Exodus 34:30. Notice that Moses, just like Stephen in the Book of Acts, Acts 6:15, was totally unaware of his radiant face, Numbers 12:3.

While he spoke with the people, his face glowed, but after he spoke, he put a veil on his face, Exodus 34:33. The glowing of Moses' face was visual evidence to the people that He had been with God on the mountain, Luke 9:29-31 / Acts 6:15 / 2 Corinthians 3:7-18.

In the presence of God, Moses removed the veil from his face, but when he was among the people, he put the veil back on his face, Exodus 34:34-35. We would be forgiven for thinking that he only wore a veil so the people wouldn't be afraid to come near him. However, in the New Testament, Paul revealed the real purpose of the veil. In 2 Corinthians 3:12-18, Paul says that though the Mosaic Law's design was to bring men to Christ, that end was veiled to the hard-hearted Judaizing teachers of Paul's day, Galatians 3:24. So Paul said, "Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts, 2 Corinthians 3:15."

Merrill, in his commentary, says the following.

'The physical nature of this phenomenon must remain a mystery, but its theological meaning is crystal clear. Moses, as covenant mediator, was authenticated as such by his resemblance to the God of glory whom he represented. It is precisely for this reason that Moses and Elijah shared the radiance of the transfigured Jesus, Luke 9:31-32.' The Old Covenant had a glory, but it was a fading glory. God didn't want people to see the fading glory of the Old Covenant and lose confidence in Moses. The Jews in Paul's day were still not able to see the glory of God.

Instead of pointing out their sin and driving them to seek forgiveness through Jesus, they placed a voluntary veil of ignorance upon their hearts against Christ. Simply put, they rejected the Lord of glory. They missed the point and purpose of the Mosaic Law altogether, Galatians 3:19.

The veil that kept the end or fulfilment of the Mosaic Law unknown would be removed by those who wanted truth. When a man seeks and knocks, he will surely find, Matthew 7:7. Those who don't want the veil of Moses removed will voluntarily remain ignorant of Jesus and the New Covenant.

CHAPTER 35

INTRODUCTION

'Moses assembled the whole Israelite community and said to them, "These are the things the LORD has commanded you to do: For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day shall be your holy day, a day of sabbath rest to the LORD. Whoever does any work on it is to be put to death. Do not light a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day." Exodus 35:1-3

SABBATH REGULATIONS

This chapter begins with the instructions to build the tabernacle. However, whilst doing so, they mustn't forget to honour the Sabbath, Exodus 35:1-2. In other words, they shouldn't build on the Sabbath in order to honour the day because the consequence of working on this day was death, Exodus 35:2.

The lighting of fires involved a lot of work, Exodus 35:3. It was ordinarily affected by rubbing two sticks together or twisting one round rapidly between the two palms in a depression upon a board. God had told them earlier that lighting fires for cooking purposes wasn't permitted either on the sabbath, Exodus 16:23.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The Jews understand this precept as forbidding the kindling of fire only for the purpose of doing work or dressing victuals; but to give them light and heat, they judge it lawful to light a fire on the Sabbath day, though themselves rarely kindle it – they get Christians to do this work for them.'

THE SABBATH DAY

Back in Exodus 20:8-11, God told them to 'remember the Sabbath day', and in Deuteronomy 5:12-15, God told them to 'observe the Sabbath day'. God understands that life can get very busy, and He knows that the Israelites, just like many people do today, don't take any time out from work and consume themselves with work.

The idea is that the more we work, the more money we'll earn, therefore, the more we can spend on ourselves. It's such a shame that many people don't work for a living, but they live to work.

God is telling the Israelites that six days are more than enough time to do all the things which are necessary for living. In other words, the Sabbath is made for man to rest, Mark 2:23-28.

The meaning of the word 'Sabbath' teaches us the purpose for keeping the day; the word doesn't mean 'seventh', it means 'rest'. The Israelites were to rest from work on this day.

The reason for this rest day is illustrated in God's creation, He rested from His work in creation. God could easily have created the heavens and earth in a shorter or longer time, but to establish an example for man in reference to his work, God set the pattern by the six twenty-four-hour days of creation.

For the Israelites, keeping the Sabbath was also a sign of their covenant with God. The Sabbath and circumcision were the two signs of the covenant, and so when Israel as a nation rested on this day, the other nations around them would see this and know Israel was in a covenant relationship with God. Remember also, it wasn't simply a sign to the nations around them, but mainly a sign to God that Israel was keeping the covenant.

Why did He tell them to keep the Sabbath day holy? It was to remind them of what God had done for them in Egypt and please note that the Sabbath wasn't given as a 'religious day', but as a day where there would be common respect between the citizens of society.

Those who employed people to work for them couldn't force their employees to work on the Sabbath; this is respect, even the animals were not allowed to be put to work. The Sabbath was made for man in order to give him rest, a rest from all the earthly things, so that he had time to think about spiritual things.

God created everything in six days, Genesis 1 / Exodus 20:11. At the end of the sixth day, God looked at everything He had made and said it was 'very good', Genesis 1:31. The next day, day seven, God rested from His work of creating because it was all finished, Genesis 2:2.

God then blessed this day because it was the day that He chose to rest from His work, Genesis 2:3. Why did God rest? Was he tired from all the work of creating? Not at all! The Bible tells us that God doesn't get tired or sleep, Psalms 121:3-4. He rested to establish a pattern for us to follow.

MATERIALS FOR THE TABERNACLE

‘Moses said to the whole Israelite community, “This is what the LORD has commanded: From what you have, take an offering for the LORD. Everyone who is willing is to bring to the LORD an offering of gold, silver, and bronze; blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ram skins dyed red and another type of durable leather; acacia wood; olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece.” Exodus 35:4-9

Moses is to tell the Israelites to bring God an offering, and Moses is to receive the offering for God from everyone whose heart prompts them to give, Exodus 35:4-5 / Exodus 25:1-2. In other words, this was a freewill offering, Exodus 35:29.

We might ask, where did the Israelites get this material from? Well, remember when they left Egypt, God ensured that they didn't leave empty-handed; they plundered Egypt, Exodus 12:35-36 / Psalms 105:37.

The gold, silver and brass that were offered, Exodus 35:5 / Exodus 25:3, came from their plunder of the Egyptians, as well as their conquest over the Amalekites. The yarn and fine linen were spun from flax, Exodus 35:6 / Exodus 25:4 / Exodus 9:31 / Joshua 2:6, and the goat's hair was spun and used for making tents.

The durable leather, Exodus 35:7 / Exodus 25:5, would probably have been made from some sea animal. Acacia wood, Exodus 35:7 / Exodus 25:5, is sometimes called shittim wood. This would be easily obtainable throughout the region of Sinai.

The pure oil, Exodus 35:8 / Exodus 25:6, was beaten from olives that were picked just before ripening, Exodus 27:20. The oil lamps were to be burning every night, which burning probably symbolised that God's presence would never leave Israel, Exodus 30:8 / 1 Samuel 3:3.

No one really knows what onyx stones were, Exodus 35:9 / Exodus 25:7. Onyx is the middle gemstone in the fourth and last row of the High Priest's breastplate, Exodus 28:20, and the fifth foundational stone in New Jerusalem, Revelation 21:20. The tabernacle was to be a symbol of God's presence among His people, Exodus 25:8. Why did God want the tabernacle built?

1. It would be a rallying place where God's Word would be proclaimed.
2. It would serve as a physical reminder of God's presence among the people.
3. It was the place where God recorded His name, the place where He would meet with them and bless them, Exodus 20:24.
4. It was a singularly impressive 'figure' of the ultimate spiritual realities to be achieved in 'the kingdom of God,' the church of Jesus, and therefore a witness at one and the same time to both Israels, the Old, and the New.

The tabernacle had to be built specifically according to the pattern that God would give them, Exodus 25:9 / Hebrews 8:5. In other places, it is referred to as the tent of meeting, Exodus 27:21, the tabernacle of the Lord, Numbers 16:9, and the tabernacle of testimony, Exodus 38:21.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The significance of all this for persons living in our times is found in the inspired declaration that, ‘These are the copy and shadow of the heavenly things’, Hebrews 8:5. ‘They were a figure for the time then present’, Hebrews 9:9,

and ‘copies of the things in heaven’, Hebrews 9:23. In this understanding is the only proper appreciation of these instructions.’

“All who are skilled among you are to come and make everything the LORD has commanded: the tabernacle with its tent and its covering, clasps, frames, crossbars, posts and bases; the ark with its poles and the atonement cover and the curtain that shields it; the table with its poles and all its articles and the bread of the Presence; the lampstand that is for light with its accessories, lamps and oil for the light; the altar of incense with its poles, the anointing oil and the fragrant incense; the curtain for the doorway at the entrance to the tabernacle; the altar of burnt offering with its bronze grating, its poles and all its utensils; the bronze basin with its stand; the curtains of the courtyard with its posts and bases, and the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard; the tent pegs for the tabernacle and for the courtyard, and their ropes; the woven garments worn for ministering in the sanctuary—both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when they serve as priests.” Exodus 35:10-19

All the skilled workers are commanded to come and build the following: Exodus 35:10 / Exodus 39:32.

1. The tabernacle with its tent and its covering, clasps, frames, crossbars, posts and bases, Exodus 25:11 / Exodus 26:15-30 / Exodus 39:33-34.

2. The ark with its poles and the atonement cover and the curtain that shields it, Exodus 35:12 / Exodus 25:10-22 / Exodus 27:16-19 / Exodus 39:35.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is not the same as the covering of Exodus 35:11, which denotes the covering of the tent, Exodus 26:14, the word is used here for the entrance curtains, Exodus 26:36 / Exodus 27:16.’

3. The table with its poles and all its articles and the bread of the Presence, Exodus 35:13 / Exodus 25:23-30 / Exodus 39:36.

4. The lampstand that is for light with its accessories, lamps and oil for the light, Exodus 35:14 / Exodus 25:31-40 / Exodus 39:37.

5. The altar of incense with its poles, the anointing oil, and the fragrant incense; the curtain for the doorway at the entrance to the tabernacle, Exodus 35:15 / Exodus 30:1-10 / Exodus 39:38.

6. The altar of burnt offering with its bronze grating, its poles and all its utensils; the bronze basin with its stand, Exodus 35:16 / Exodus 27:1-8 / Exodus 39:39.

7. The curtains of the courtyard with its posts and bases, and the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard, Exodus 35:17 / Exodus 26:7-15 / Exodus 39:40.

8. The tent pegs for the tabernacle and for the courtyard, and their ropes, Exodus 35:18 / Exodus 39:40.

9. The woven garments worn for ministering in the sanctuary, both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when they serve as priests, Exodus 35:19 / Exodus 39:41.

“Then the whole Israelite community withdrew from Moses’ presence, and everyone who was willing and whose heart moved them came and brought an offering to the LORD for the work on the tent of meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments. All who were willing, men and women alike, came and brought gold jewellery of all kinds: brooches, earrings, rings, and ornaments. They all presented their gold as a wave offering to the LORD. Everyone who had blue, purple, or scarlet yarn or fine linen, or goat hair, ram skins dyed red or the other durable leather brought them. Those presenting an offering of silver or bronze brought it as an offering to the LORD, and everyone who had acacia wood for any part of the work brought it. Every skilled woman spun with her hands and brought what she had spun—blue, purple, or scarlet yarn or fine linen. And all the women who were willing and had the skill spun the goat hair. The leaders brought onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. They also brought spices and olive oil for the light and for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense. All the Israelite men and women who were willing brought to the LORD freewill offerings for all the work the LORD through Moses had commanded them to do.’ Exodus 35:20-29

The whole of the Israelite community withdrew from Moses' presence, and notice that everyone who was willing and whose heart moved them came and brought an offering to the LORD for the work on the tent of meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments, [Exodus 25:20-21](#) / [Exodus 35:5](#) / [Exodus 25:1-2](#).

Once again, we note that all who were willing came and brought gold jewellery of all kinds, [Exodus 35:22](#). Note that they presented their gold as a wave offering to the LORD, [Exodus 35:22](#).

Everyone who had blue, purple, or scarlet yarn or fine linen, or goat hair, ram skins dyed red or the other durable leather brought them, [Exodus 35:23](#) / [Exodus 26:7-14](#).

Those presenting an offering of silver or bronze brought it as an offering to the LORD, and everyone who had acacia wood for any part of the work brought it, [Exodus 35:24](#).

Every skilled woman spun with her hands and brought what she had spun, blue, purple, or scarlet yarn or fine linen, [Exodus 35:25](#). All the women who were willing and had the skill spun the goat hair, [Exodus 35:26](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They had before learned this art, they were wise-hearted; and now they practise it, and God condescends to require and accept their services. In building this house of God, all were ambitious to do something by which they might testify their piety to God and their love for his worship. The spinning practised at this time was simple and required little apparatus. It was the plain distaff or twirling pin, which might be easily made out of any wood they met with in the wilderness.’

The leaders brought onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece, [Exodus 35:27](#) / [Exodus 28:6-30](#). They also brought spices and olive oil for the light and for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, [Exodus 35:28](#) / [Exodus 25:31-40](#) / [Exodus 27:20-21](#). Once again, we are reminded that these were all freewill offerings, [Exodus 35:29](#).

BEZALEL AND OHOLIAB

‘Then Moses said to the Israelites, “See, the LORD has chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills—to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood and to engage in all kinds of artistic crafts. And he has given both him and Oholiab, son of Ahisamak, of the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach others. He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work as engravers, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers—all of them skilled workers and designers.’ [Exodus 35:30-35](#)

Here we read how God encourages men to do things God won't do when men are more than capable of doing it themselves under God's guidance. It was the duty of the skilled worker to use their judgment as to how to make the materials and determine many of the details.

These two men, Bezalel, whose name means ‘in the shadow of God’, and Oholiab, whose name means ‘the Father is my tent’, obviously had some kind of leadership skills, and God was going to use them both to direct the building of the tabernacle according to God's will, [Exodus 35:30-35](#).

Keil, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Bezalel was a grandson of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, who is mentioned in [Exodus 17:10](#) / [Exodus 24:14](#), and was called to be the master-builder, to superintend the whole of the building and carry out the artistic work, consequently, he is not only invariably mentioned first, [Exodus 35:30](#) / [Exodus 36:1-2](#), but in the accounts of the execution of the separate portions, he is mentioned alone, [Exodus 32:1](#) / [Exodus 38:22](#).’

God filled Bezaleel, [Exodus 35:30](#) / [Exodus 31:1-3](#) / [Exodus 28:3](#), which means he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to carry out the instructions to build the tabernacle.

Bezalel was blessed with the wisdom, [Exodus 31:3](#) / [Exodus 35:31](#) / [Exodus 28:3](#) / [Proverbs 8:12](#), to lead those who were chosen to complete the tasks set before them. His judgments were inspired by God, in order that he lead the workers to comply with the will of God in reference to the construction of the tabernacle.

He was also blessed with understanding, [Exodus 35:31](#) / [Exodus 31:3](#). This was the ability to organise the parts of the tabernacle to be completed in order to organise the workers to accomplish the task of construction.

He was also blessed with the knowledge, [Exodus 35:31-34](#) / [Exodus 31:3-5](#), of what materials to use, as well as how to bring these materials together into the final goal of the constructed tabernacle and its furniture.

With his assistant, Oholiab, [Exodus 35:34](#) / [Exodus 31:6](#), Bezalel was to create the beauty of the tabernacle in a way that it would manifest the splendour of God. Oholiab was filled with skill to do all kinds of work as engravers, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers, [Exodus 35:35](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The artificer, literally ‘one who cuts’: a general name for the workman, to which was added the name of the material in which he worked; thus the artificer in wood, or carpenter; the artificer in iron, or smith, etc. [Exodus 35:32-33](#) / [Exodus 31:4-5](#) enumerate the branches of work committed to Bezaleel. What was under the charge of Aholiab is here for the first time clearly distinguished into the work of the skilled weaver, that of the embroiderer, and that of the weaver.’

From all of this, we learn that God never calls anyone to do a task of any kind without first giving them the ability to do so, [Acts 6:3-6](#) / [Ephesians 4:11-14](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The name Oholiab means ‘father of tents’, he was from the tribe of Dan, and although that tribe doesn’t appear to have been famous for such men of artistic talent, it was likewise true that Hiram, the chief artist employed by Solomon for the ornamental work of the temple, was also a Danite, [2 Chronicles 2:14](#). Despite such notable exceptions, The Danites in general were more warlike and rude than artistic, [Genesis 49:17](#) / [Deuteronomy 33:22](#) / [Judges 13:2](#) / [Judges 18:11](#) / [Judges 18:27](#).’

Together they are to make the tent of meeting, [Exodus 26:7-14](#), the ark of the testimony, [Exodus 25:10-16](#), the atonement lid that is on it, [Exodus 25:17-22](#), all the furnishings of the tent, [Exodus 31:7](#). The table with its utensils, [Exodus 25:23-30](#), the pure lampstand with all its utensils, [Exodus 25:31-40](#), the altar of incense, [Exodus 31:8](#) / [Exodus 30:1-10](#).

The altar for the burnt offering with all its utensils, [Exodus 27:1-8](#), the large basin with its base, [Exodus 31:9](#) / [Exodus 30:17-21](#). The woven garments, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons, to minister as priests, [Exodus 31:10](#) / [Exodus 28:1-43](#) / [Leviticus 16:4](#).

Cook, in his commentary, says the following concerning the three types of dress mentioned here.

1. The richly adorned state robes of the High Priest, [Exodus 28:6-29:8](#).
2. The holy garments of white linen worn by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement.
3. The garments of white linen worn by all the priests in their regular ministrations.

They are also to make the anointing oil, [Exodus 30:22-33](#), and sweet incense for the Holy Place, [Exodus 31:11](#) / [Exodus 30:34-38](#). They will make all these things just as God has commanded them, [Exodus 31:11](#).

CHAPTER 36

INTRODUCTION

‘So Bezalel, Oholiab and every skilled person to whom the LORD has given skill and ability to know how to carry out all the work of constructing the sanctuary are to do the work just as the LORD has commanded.’ Then Moses summoned Bezalel and Oholiab and every skilled person to whom the LORD had given ability and who was willing to come and do the work. They received from Moses all the offerings the Israelites had brought to carry out the work of constructing the sanctuary. And the people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning. So all the skilled workers who were doing all the work on the sanctuary left what they were doing and said to Moses, “The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the LORD commanded to be done.” Then Moses gave an order, and they sent this word throughout the camp: “No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary.” And so the people were restrained from bringing more, because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work.’ Exodus 36:1-7

This is a continuation from the previous chapter, and in this chapter, we read about giving in such a way that we don’t often hear about today, and that is, we have enough, [Philippians 4:12-13](#).

All the materials for the building of the tabernacle were committed to Bezaleel and Aholiab. God had blessed Bezaleel and Aholiab with the skills and ability to carry out the work of constructing the tabernacle, [Exodus 36:1](#) / [Exodus 31:1-11](#) / [Exodus 35:30-35](#). God also blessed every skilled person with the abilities to do the work which as needed to be done in the tabernacle, [Exodus 36:2](#).

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘When God had qualified them for the work, then they applied themselves to it.’

The people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning, [Exodus 36:3](#). As a result of the many freewill offering, the skilled workers who were doing all the work on the sanctuary left what they were doing, [Exodus 36:4](#).

Notice that the people brought more than enough material to build the tabernacle, [Exodus 36:5](#). The very fact that people were so willing and generous, is seen in the fact that Moses stopped them from giving any more, [Exodus 36:6](#) / [2 Corinthians 9:7](#).

Notice that their giving didn’t depend on their assembly together to act as one; they came individually because of their commitment to accomplish the will of God, [Exodus 36:6](#) / [1 Chronicles 29:6-9](#) / [Ezra 2:68-70](#) / [Nehemiah 7:70-72](#).

After Moses tells them to stop giving, the people were restrained from bringing more, because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work, [Exodus 36:7](#). I wonder what would happen when leaders of a congregation decided, We have more than enough, we don’t need to take up an offering this week!

THE TABERNACLE

‘All those who were skilled among the workers made the tabernacle with ten curtains of finely twisted linen and blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, with cherubim woven into them by expert hands. All the curtains were the same size—twenty-eight cubits long and four cubits wide. They joined five of the curtains together and did the same with the other five. Then they made loops of blue material along the edge of the end curtain in one set, and the same was done with the end curtain in the other set. They also made fifty loops on one curtain and fifty loops on the end curtain of

the other set, with the loops opposite each other. Then they made fifty gold clasps and used them to fasten the two sets of curtains together so that the tabernacle was a unit.” Exodus 36:8-13

The covering embroidered with cherubim was the innermost covering over the sanctuary. It was this covering that formed the actual tabernacle, in the specific sense of [Exodus 36:8](#) / [Exodus 26:1](#).

The cherubim embroidered covering also formed the ceiling of the tabernacle, looking up from inside the sanctuary. The cherubim are there, reminding us, perhaps, of two things.

1. The cherubim were placed at the east of Eden ‘to keep the way of the tree of life’, [Genesis 3:24](#).

To ‘keep’ in Hebrew means to observe, keep watch over, preventing Adam and Eve from returning to partake of the tree of life. Here in the Tabernacle, the Cherubim are overseeing what goes on inside the Sanctuary.

2. The cherubim are among those in heaven who bow the knee to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ, [Philippians 2:10](#) / [Revelation 5:11-14](#), so He is truly Head over all things to the church.

The Book of Exodus does not give us the precise pattern of the embroidery, but we are told that the colouring was ‘blue, purple, scarlet and white’ the colour of the fine twined linen’, [Exodus 26:1](#).

These colours are not new to us because we see them at the door to the outer court, [Exodus 27:16-17](#), and again at the door to the sanctuary, [Exodus 26:36-37](#), they also appear in the veil, [Exodus 26:31-37](#), the entrance ‘door’ to the Holy of Holies.

They speak of Christ’s heavenliness, His royalty, His saviourhood, and holiness, as seen in the four Gospels. The reappearance of these colours inside the Sanctuary, embroidered on the ceiling, reminds us that it is the Beloved Son in His fourfold character who is Head over all things to the church, [Ephesians 1:22](#).

John, one of the disciples closest to Jesus, declares, ‘we beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth,’ [John 1:17](#). As we progress closer and closer to the presence of God in the tabernacle, we too need to behold His glory, [Colossians 3:1-2](#), and realise that what we can see is but a small part of the whole. Since much of the embroidery hung over the external walls of the boards, [Exodus 26:15-30](#), what was visible from the inside was only a small part of the whole. They were ten individual curtains, to begin with, each measured thirteen metres by two metres approximately, [Exodus 36:9](#) / [Exodus 26:2](#).

Five curtains were then coupled together with one another, and likewise the other five. Then the two by five metre curtains were looped together, [Exodus 36:10-12](#) / [Exodus 26:4-5](#), using fifty golden clasps to make one enormous embroidery thirteen metres wide and almost nineteen metres long, [Exodus 36:13](#) / [Exodus 26:6](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the gold.

‘The meaning is that only the most desirable and costly things that men knew were capable of being used as symbols of such things as the presence of God, the heaven of heavens, the holy Church that in time would appear, the Word of God, and other realities depicted.’

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The several societies of believers are united in one, and, as here, all become one tabernacle; for there is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism, [Ephesians 4:4-5](#).’

WOVEN GOAT’S HAIR COVERING

“They made curtains of goat hair for the tent over the tabernacle—eleven altogether. All eleven curtains were the same size—thirty cubits long and four cubits wide. They joined five of the curtains into one set and the other six into another set. Then they made fifty loops along the edge of the end curtain in one set and also along the edge of the end

curtain in the other set. They made fifty bronze clasps to fasten the tent together as a unit. Then they made for the tent a covering of ram skins dyed red, and over that a covering of the other durable leather.” Exodus 35:14-19

Here we have a picture of the woven goat’s hair covering the tabernacle. This covering made a ‘tent’ over the tabernacle, [Exodus 36:14](#) / [Exodus 26:7](#). Altogether there were eleven curtains of woven goat’s hair, [Exodus 36:14-17](#) / [Exodus 26:8](#), measuring twenty metres by fourteen metres approximately, [Exodus 36:21](#) / [Exodus 26:9](#), held together by fifty bronze clasps, [Exodus 36:18](#) / [Exodus 26:10-13](#).

Goats were of particular importance on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, the time when the children of Israel came together to be reconciled to God, [Leviticus 16](#).

Two goats were selected by lot, [Leviticus 16:8](#), one for sacrifice and the other to be sent out into the wilderness, [Leviticus 16:9-10](#). The blood of the sacrificed goat would be taken into the Holy of Holies by the High Priest, as required by God to forgive the sins of the children of Israel, [Hebrews 9:22](#).

Then the High Priest would lay his hands on the head of the other goat and confess all the sins of the children of Israel before it was sent out into the wilderness, [Leviticus 16:15-16](#), signifying that God would forget all the sins thus confessed. Here is the origin of the ‘scapegoat’.

The twofold significance of the goats is therefore that God wants to forgive and forget. He desires to remove from His people not only the guilt of sin but also His memory of that sin, so that we may be reconciled to Him.

For God’s righteousness to be satisfied, though, one goat without blemish must die, and the other goat without blemish must have the sins of Israel laid upon it and be removed outside the camp.

All this speaks forward to the crucifixion of Jesus, [2 Corinthians 5:21](#) / [1 John 3:5](#). Since Jesus is the reality of the two goats for our atonement and reconciliation to God, “we implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God”, [2 Corinthians 5:20](#).

The goats signify that the Sinless One has been made sin for us so that God can legally forgive us and no longer remember our sins, as it says in the New Covenant, [Hebrews 8:12](#). The covering of woven goat’s hair signifies that, if we have entered into the tabernacle, we are clothed with Christ as our righteousness, [2 Corinthians 5:21](#).

COVERING OF RAMS’ SKIN DYED RED

Since a ram’s skin is not red naturally, [Exodus 36:19](#) / [Exodus 26:14](#), but had to be dyed to become red, this reminds us once more of the great significance of blood shown throughout the fabrics of the doors and coverings of the tabernacle.

Isaiah prophesied of the Messiah some seven hundred and fifty years before His crucifixion, [Isaiah 53:7](#) / [Isaiah 63:1-5](#). The sheer size of this covering indicates how precious the sacrifice of the Messiah, Hebrew, or Christ, Greek, the covering measured at least that, which is about forty-five feet long and six feet wide, [Exodus 26:8](#).

The debt we each owe to God, because of our sins and offences against Him and one another, is colossal, [Matthew 26:28](#). Jesus paid with His blood the price our sins exacted in God’s eyes, so He could purchase us back, redeem us, [1 Peter 1:18-19](#).

However, the emphasis here is not merely on individual redemption. The covering lies across the boards of the sanctuary building, which are fitted and built together. The upright boards standing together signify God’s people, [Titus 2:13-14](#).

Likewise, Paul speaks to the mainly Gentile Ephesian believers concerning the ‘church of God which He purchased with His own blood’, [Acts 20:28](#), writing to them later to confirm, ‘Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her’, [Ephesians 5:25](#).

This is the goal of redemption, that believers in Messiah, Christ, whether of Jewish or Gentile background, would become one joint Body in Messiah/Christ, joint heirs and partakers of the promise God made to Abraham, in you shall all the families/nations of the earth be blessed, [Genesis 12:3](#) / [Ephesians 3:6](#).

What God intends, and longs for, is one redeemed and purified people that are His, owned by Him, filled with Him and displaying all the virtues of the One who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light, [1 Peter 2:9-10](#). Very significantly, it was a ram caught in the thicket that God provided to be sacrificed in place of Isaac, [Genesis 22:8](#) / [Genesis 22:13](#). Similarly, God ordained that rams were sacrificed when Aaron and his sons were consecrated as priests to serve in the tabernacle, [Exodus 29:15-35](#). The ram, therefore, speaks of consecration and obedience to God, [Philippians 2:8-11](#).

OUTER COVERING

The covering was made from either badger or seal/dolphin skin, KJV, [Exodus 36:19](#) / [Exodus 26:14](#), although there is some uncertainty as to the correct translation from Hebrew.

But there is no uncertainty as to its function; this covering formed a thick, protective, weatherproof layer over the tabernacle. No amount of baking heat from the sun or wind-driven sandstorms or rain could disturb the treasure contained within the tabernacle, thanks to this covering.

So with Christ, after forty days in the wilderness, the tempter could not make any inroads either at the Lord Jesus’ human frailty, [Matthew 4:4](#), or at His perception of the divine order of things, [Matthew 4:7](#) / [Matthew 4:10](#).

However, from the outside, this covering made the tabernacle look ordinary and unattractive, [Isaiah 53:1-3](#). Today there is much temptation to be fashionable, with it, and image-conscious and the rest. Not so with Jesus; what He possesses is real and eternal.

The rough fishermen of Galilee who became His close disciples saw this, [2 Peter 1:16](#), and ‘we beheld His glory’ and that Jesus was ‘full of grace and truth’, [John 1:14](#). Such was their evaluation of the Word Who was made flesh and dwelt, tabernacled, among them.

The casual external viewer would not give the tabernacle much of their time, just this dull outer covering and those boring white curtains. How often do we hear, ‘it’s dull and boring’? Such people have mostly not even glimpsed the door to the tabernacle’s outer court, [Exodus 27:16-17](#).

But to those who do make their way to the door of the outer court, observe its character, and pass through, what they see is the burnt offering altar, [Exodus 27:1-8](#), the laver, [Exodus 30:17-21](#), and then the door to the sanctuary, [Exodus 26:36-37](#), which is covered with this unattractive outer covering.

Such seekers are thus inspired to ‘consider Him Who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself’ so that they do not ‘become weary and discouraged in their souls’, [Hebrews 12:3](#).

Such a Christ is the Defender and Protector of the Sanctuary Building, where the upright boards, fitted and built together to be God’s dwelling place, signify the church, [Ephesians 2:21-22](#).

Not the outward appearance of religiosity and dubious organisation, but the genuine Christ-indwelt people who ‘have this treasure in their earthen vessels’, [2 Corinthians 4:7](#), and are being built together in genuine oneness with one another. Christ seeks to keep and protect us from the world and its influences with this oneness as His goal, just as He prayed in [John 17:11-12](#).

THE BOARDS AND BARS OF THE SANCTUARY

“They made upright frames of acacia wood for the tabernacle. Each frame was ten cubits long and a cubit and a half wide, with two projections set parallel to each other. They made all the frames of the tabernacle in this way. They made twenty frames for the south side of the tabernacle and made forty silver bases to go under them—two bases for each frame, one under each projection. For the other side, the north side of the tabernacle, they made twenty frames and forty silver bases—two under each frame. They made six frames for the far end, that is, the west end of the tabernacle, and two frames were made for the corners of the tabernacle at the far end. At these two corners, the frames were double from the bottom all the way to the top and fitted into a single ring; both were made alike. So there were eight frames and sixteen silver bases—two under each frame. They also made crossbars of acacia wood: five for the frames on one side of the tabernacle, five for those on the other side, and five for the frames on the west, at the far end of the tabernacle. They made the centre crossbar so that it extended from end to end at the middle of the frames. They overlaid the frames with gold and made gold rings to hold the crossbars. They also overlaid the crossbars with gold.” Exodus 36:20-34

In the wording of [Exodus 26:15-30](#), the boards are mentioned as being made of acacia wood, [Exodus 26:15-16](#).

Because wood grows out of the earth, and because Adam was made by God from something He had already made, i.e. the dust of the earth, wood stands for ‘human’, as in [Psalm 1:1-3](#).

The boards are to be standing upright, [Exodus 36:20](#) / [Exodus 26:15](#). God specifies to Moses the size of each board, that is, about fifteen feet long and two and a quarter feet wide, [Exodus 36:21](#) / [Exodus 26:16](#).

The number of boards, [Exodus 36:22-23](#) / [Exodus 26:18](#), there were twenty boards on each of the South sides, [Exodus 36:23](#) / [Exodus 26:18](#), North side, [Exodus 36:25](#) / [Exodus 26:20](#), and six boards on the West side of the tabernacle, [Exodus 36:27](#) / [Exodus 26:22](#), plus two boards to strengthen the western wall at its corners, [Exodus 36:24](#) / [Exodus 26:23](#).

They are fixed into silver sockets to stand, [Exodus 36:24](#) / [Exodus 36:26](#) / [Exodus 36:30](#) / [Exodus 26:19](#) / [Exodus 26:21](#) / [Exodus 26:25](#). Silver in the scriptures is used as the purchase, redemption price of a life, twenty silver shekels for Joseph in [Genesis 37:28](#), thirty silver shekels for Jesus in [Matthew 26:14-15](#).

When the wood is robustly standing in the silver sockets, it means that we have a testimony that we belong to God, we concede ‘we are not our own, we have been bought with a price’, [1 Corinthians 6:19-20](#).

There were two ‘extra’ boards, strengthening the corners of the western side, [Exodus 36:28](#) / [Exodus 26:23](#). This west-facing wall is called the ‘thigh’ in Hebrew, implying strengthened standing in the body of Christ.

These extra boards strengthened the corners, the weakest part of the structure, in the same way as the pillars at the door of the sanctuary, [Exodus 26:36-37](#), and the veil, [Exodus 26:31-37](#).

The boards each had an individual standing in the two silver sockets, but they were strongly connected together by the bars. There were five bars, four of which passed through rings on the outside of the boards, plus the middle bar, which passed through the centre of each board.

There are two long walls of boards, [Exodus 36:29](#) / [Exodus 26:24](#), one signifying the Jews and the other the Gentiles. Neither could they profit under the law nor could they keep the commandments of God. The only hope was the promised Messiah, in whose blood all might be brought near again. All the ‘boards’ stand in His redemption only. Any man in Christ is a new creation because the old things have passed away, ‘behold, they have become new’, [2 Corinthians 5:17](#). The new creation in Messiah of one new man, [Ephesians 2:15](#), is corporate; Jewish believers and Gentile believers are saved by His grace through faith alone, [Ephesians 2:8](#), that nobody may boast.

Through Jesus the Messiah, Christ, we both have access in one Spirit to the Father, [Ephesians 2:18](#). In Him, we are fitted together as the boards in the tabernacle so that God may have His dwelling place in the one Spirit, [Ephesians 2:22](#). God is operating powerfully in us to accomplish this, [Ephesians 3:20-21](#).

When many boards together have the same testimony, we are ‘those who have obtained a like precious faith in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ’, 2 Peter 1:1.

The boards were held together by five bars, the middle one of which passed through the centre of the boards, Exodus 26:26-27 / Exodus 36:31-32. The boards and their bars were made of acacia wood overlaid with gold, Exodus 36:34 / Exodus 26:29, as were the pillars of the entrance door to the sanctuary, Exodus 26:36-37.

The gold overlay, Exodus 36:34 / Exodus 26:29, points to Peter’s words, ‘that you might become partakers of the divine nature’, 2 Peter 1:4, and ‘glorify God in your body’, 1 Corinthians 6:20.

The first mention of gold in the Bible is in Genesis 2:11-12. It was ‘in the hills’ already, as created by God, and is spoken of as ‘good’, just as God said of everything He had made in Genesis 1. Because it is precious and was created directly by God, gold stands for ‘divine’.

The delay in mentioning the gold overlay gives us an indication that the wood, signifying the ‘human’ element, has to be worked on and fitted, qualified in order to have the gold, the ‘divine’ element, as its overlay.

Peter gives us the reason that we humans must have ‘escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust’ and realise we ‘have been given precious and exceeding great promises, that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature’, 2 Peter 1:4.

We must be the wooden boards that are standing up in the silver sockets, not lounging around in or harking back to the garlic and onions of Egypt as Israel did, Numbers 11:5-6.

The wood is no longer growing in soil or even in the desert sand. Between the boards and the desert is a significant quantity of silver, two silver sockets, each weighing fifty-seven kilos, 125 pounds, form the base for each board.

There are two interpretations of the five bars, Exodus 36:31 / Exodus 26:26.

1. They refer to the lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and love, plus the uniting bond of peace, in Ephesians 4:1-3, that are required for us all to walk worthily of our calling
2. They refer to the five classes of gifted persons the ascended Christ gave to equip the saints for building, apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers, Ephesians 4:11.

Since the bars are made of acacia wood overlaid with gold, the most lovely human virtues plus the divine appointment, it seems to me that both may be correct.

The tragedy of church history, in our own age as much as in previous ages, is that appointed, gifted ones have not shown the worthy virtues sufficiently, either towards one another or towards the people they shepherd and teach.

The virtues come first, in order to keep the oneness of the Spirit, Ephesians 4:3, the gifted ones and their equipping come afterwards, in order that the body of Christ may be built up until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and the full knowledge of the Son of God and maturity in Him, Ephesians 4:12-13.

God’s plan of salvation and His purpose in the building are not individualistic in the Book of Exodus. The wood may have come from different acacia trees, but all the boards ended up fashioned and fitly framed together in one structure, which was God’s dwelling place, Ephesians 2:21.

Before moving on, it’s important to consider the significance of God’s dwelling place in the Bible. The first mention of the house of God is when Jacob has his dream at Beth-El, ‘house of God’, while fleeing from Esau, Genesis 28:10-22.

This is confirmed when Jacob returns to Beth-El, Genesis 35:1-15, God appears to him there, speaks to him there, and the house of God is there, God’s dwelling place.

Jacob goes down to Egypt, where Joseph is, a few hundred years pass and following the Exodus from Egypt, around 1450 BC, God appears to Moses at Mount Sinai and dictates to him the design of the tabernacle and gives the ‘Ten Words’, Exodus 34:28, the Ten Commandments. The tabernacle was to be God’s dwelling place, Exodus 25:8-9.

Later on in Israel's history, around 1000 BC, the temple was built in Jerusalem. King David did much of the preparation, and his son, King Solomon, oversaw the building. God then dwelt in the temple on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, [Psalm 132:13-14](#).

The children of Israel numbered many hundreds of thousands in their family Passover meals and exit from Egypt. Yet God brought them out into the wilderness to experience one food source and one water source, with one goal of God's speaking, the one centre for worship, one building, the tabernacle, [Exodus 25:8](#).

The dwelling place of God is the one purpose for which we have been purchased by God with the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. However, due to the repeated sinfulness of Israel and her kings, God's glory departed from the temple, and it was no longer His dwelling place.

In the New Testament, we read that, Jesus Christ is the 'Word (who) became flesh and dwelt (tabernacled) among us', [John 1:14](#). God dwelt in Christ, as the apostle Paul wrote, [Colossians 2:9](#).

Furthermore, those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ become a dwelling place of God, [Ephesians 3:17](#) / [1 Corinthians 6:19](#). Then, corporately, the believers in Christ are the church, which Paul terms 'the holy temple in the Lord' and 'the dwelling place of God in the Spirit', [Ephesians 2:21-22](#), 'the house of God, the church of the living God', [1 Timothy 3:15](#).

At the end of the New Testament we read 'behold the tabernacle of God is with men and He shall dwell with them and be His people and God Himself will be with them and be their God', [Revelation 21:3](#), as New Jerusalem comes down to the new earth out of heaven from God,' [Revelation 21:2](#) / [Revelation 21:10](#). Throughout the Bible, God desires a dwelling place and reveals the details of that dwelling place to people who are attuned to Him.

Entering through the door to the sanctuary into the first room, the Holy Place, the gold of the boards is shining all around and the cherubim covering is overhead.

This is why we must be sanctified wholly, our entire spirit, soul, and body, to be preserved without blemish as shining boards in the house of God, [1 Thessalonians 5:23](#).

Here are the furnishings of the tabernacle, the showbread table, [Exodus 25:23-30](#); the lampstand, [Exodus 25:31-40](#), and the golden incense altar, [Exodus 30:1-10](#).

THE VEIL

"They made the curtain of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen, with cherubim woven into it by a skilled worker. They made four posts of acacia wood for it and overlaid them with gold. They made gold hooks for them and cast their four silver bases.' Exodus 36:35-36

The veil was made using the four colours blue, purple, scarlet, and white of the fine linen, [Exodus 36:35](#) / [Exodus 26:31](#), which corresponds with the four Gospels.

Unger, in his commentary, says the following.

'Blue signifies Christ's heavenly origin. Purple suggests his royal lineage as David's Son. Scarlet indicates his sacrificial bloodshed for fallen mankind.'

We have seen these four colours previously at the door of the outer court, [Exodus 27:16-17](#), the door to the sanctuary, [Exodus 26:36-37](#), the cherubim embroidered covering, [Exodus 26:1-6](#), which forms the ceiling of the tabernacle and on the ephod the high priest wore, [Exodus 28:5-14](#) / [Exodus 39:2-7](#).

The veil is the final door to pass through to enter into the presence of God in the Holy of Holies, [Exodus 26:32-33](#) / [2 Corinthians 3:14-16](#). Entry was forbidden to all except one, the high priest, and his access was not free; he was

permitted entry once only per year, on the Day of Atonement, when he brought the blood of the sacrificed goat to sprinkle on the lid, called the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant.

The atonement cover or mercy seat on the ark of the covenant law was to be kept in the Most Holy Place, Exodus 26:34. The showbread table was to be placed on the outside of the curtain on the north side of the tabernacle, and the lampstand was to be placed opposite it on the south side, Exodus 26:35.

The veil reminds us that we are excluded because ‘we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God’, Romans 3:23. However, just as the Passover lamb was slain for the redemption of the children of Israel in Egypt, and the goat was slain so that its blood could obtain God’s forgiveness for the Israelites on the Day of Atonement, so Jesus ‘bore our sins in His own body on the tree’, 1 Peter 2:24 / Isaiah 53:6.

The effect of the death of Jesus was dramatic: the earth quaked, rocks were split, ‘and the veil in the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom,’ Matthew 27:51, signifying that God tore it because the veil in the temple was twenty-five metres high. Here in the tabernacle, the veil was just over four and a half metres high.

Some suggest that Matthew 27:54 and Luke 23:47 both record that the centurion at the crucifixion site saw the veil torn in two. This means that this Gentile sinner could also see straight into the Holy of Holies.

This is a picture to show us that it is now possible, on the basis of faith in Jesus’ death for our sins, to stand in the presence of God as justified and forgiven people, Romans 5:1-2.

As Hebrews 10:19-22 shows, the way to the Holy of Holies has been opened up for us through the veil of Jesus’ flesh being torn on the cross. There is a ‘new’, literally ‘freshly slain’ and ‘living’ way for us to enter.

The Lord Jesus Christ is not just our freshly slain, dead offering, He is also the Living One, Luke 24:5 / Revelation 1:18, risen from the dead and ascended, our great High Priest, with our names on His heart, the Breastplate, and shoulders, the shoulder stones, going into the Holy of Holies, where God’s presence is over the Ark of the Covenant! Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Without any doubt, the Holy of Holies, where the presence of God is represented as being enthroned there, is a type of heaven itself.

1. God was enthroned in both, Revelation 4:1-2.
2. Divine light is in both, Leviticus 16:2 / Revelation 21:23.
3. Both have worshipping cherubim, Exodus 25:18 / Revelation 4:6-8.
4. Both are golden, Exodus 25:11 / Revelation 21:18.
5. Both are represented as perfect ‘cubes,’ here as 10 X 10 X 10 (cubits), and heaven as a cube of 1,500 miles in width, breadth, and height, Revelation 21:16-17.
6. God’s law is in both the tables of the testimony here, the eternal law of all the universe in heaven, Psalms 119:89.
7. The Atonement was made in both, here, by the high priest on the Day of Atonement, and in heaven by Jesus Christ, once and for all,’ Hebrews 9:11-13.

THE DOOR TO THE SANCTUARY

‘For the entrance to the tent, they made a curtain of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen—the work of an embroiderer; and they made five posts with hooks for them. They overlaid the tops of the posts and their bands with gold and made their five bases of bronze.’ Exodus 36:37-38

The door to the sanctuary is the second of three ‘doors’. There was the door to the outer court, Exodus 27:16-17, where people would first enter. Here we are at the door to the sanctuary, where we enter the Holy Place, and soon we will to the veil at the entrance to the Holy of Holies.

The door to the sanctuary is remarkably similar to the door to the outer court, [Exodus 27:16-17](#). It has the same colouring, blue, purple, scarlet and the white of the fine twined linen, [Exodus 36:37](#) / [Exodus 26:36](#). As with that door, the Book of Exodus does not tell us the pattern of the tapestry.

Seeing these colours again reminds us of the Lord Jesus in the four Gospels as the Son of God, the King, the lowly servant who became our ransom, and the lovely, pure humanity of ‘the Son of Man who came to seek and to save that which is lost’, [Luke 19:10](#).

This door has different dimensions, around about four and a half by four and a half metres, but occupies the same area as the door of the outer court. That door was half the height and twice the width, inviting us with comforting access to know the salvation in Christ at the burnt offering altar, [Exodus 27:1-8](#), and the laver, [Exodus 30:17-21](#).

There, everything was just above or just below eye level, as our human sinful condition was addressed by our Saviour God, [Titus 3:3-7](#). Now that ‘we who were once far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ’, [Ephesians 2:13](#), the door to the sanctuary requires us to take another look at this same Jesus.

This time, we see a higher view of Him as the exalted Christ, as we enter into the house of God, the Sanctuary, which is a picture of the church in God’s design. The New Testament Book of Hebrews gives us this view, speaking of Christ ‘having made purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high’.

There, He received the Name that is above all other names from God the Father, who declares that all, both men and angels, shall worship the Son, [Hebrews 1:3-6](#) / [Philippians 2:9-11](#).

The same faithful and worthy Christ is further the ‘Son over His house, whose house are we if we hold fast’, [Hebrews 3:2](#) / [Hebrews 3:6](#). The colours are the same, He is the Son of God, the King, our ransom, our merciful great High Priest; what has changed is the perspective.

It is God’s design that we should not cross the threshold of the sanctuary, the house of God, the church, without first gaining a distinct impression of the exalted Christ.

This view is reinforced by the presence in front of the curtain of the five golden pillars that give it support. The pillars were made from acacia wood overlaid with gold; the beauty is gold, and the structure is wood.

This speaks of the mystery of Christ’s Person; He is both God and man, divine and human, Son of God, and Son of man. The child born is called the Mighty God, the son given is called the Everlasting Father, [Isaiah 9:6](#). The government of God’s kingdom is upon the shoulders of such a Person, [Isaiah 9:6-7](#). He is the Son who is over God’s house, [Hebrews 3:6](#).

At the feet of the pillars were sockets of bronze, [Exodus 36:38](#) / [Exodus 26:27](#), again reminding us of God’s judgement. The line of thought in the Book of Hebrews continues here, too.

The writer has shown Christ is God the Son in [Hebrews 1](#). Then in [Hebrews 2](#), he quotes from [Psalm 8](#), concerning the exaltation of Jesus Christ, the son of man, ‘crowned with glory and honour, set over all the works of Your (God’s) hands, You (God) have subjected all things under His feet’, [Hebrews 2:7-8](#).

The bronze sockets for the pillars speak to us clearly of total judgement, that ‘in putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them’, [Hebrews 2:8](#).

Such is the strength and magnitude of Christ’s victory on the cross, [Colossians 2:15](#). God ‘subjected all things under His (Christ’s) feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church’, [Ephesians 1:22](#).

This is the view of the sanctuary door as we enter the house of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is King, Son of God, purifier of sins, Son of Man, Lord, Ruler and Head. How wrong it is for anyone other than the Lord Jesus Christ to be called the Head of the church.

Only He is qualified, worthy and able to head up the church. Because all things are subjected under His feet, the gates of Hades cannot prevail against the genuine church, the house of God that the Son is building, Matthew 16:18 / Hebrews 3:6.

CHAPTER 37

INTRODUCTION

‘Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood—two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. He overlaid it with pure gold, both inside and out, and made a gold moulding around it. He cast four gold rings for it and fastened them to its four feet, with two rings on one side and two rings on the other. Then he made poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold. And he inserted the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry it.

He made the atonement cover of pure gold—two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide. Then he made two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover. He made one cherub on one end and the second cherub on the other; at the two ends, he made them of one piece with the cover. The cherubim had their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover with them. The cherubim faced each other, looking toward the cover.’ Exodus 37:1-9

THE ARK

The reason why Bezaleel is mentioned here as the one who would build the ark is simply to let us know that God inspired him to do so, Exodus 36:1. The ark was made by Bezalel, Exodus 37:1, and the ark itself was a small box made of acacia wood, and it measured about three and three quarters feet long and two and one quarter feet wide and high, Exodus 37:1 / Exodus 25:10.

The acacia wood was to be overlaid with gold, Exodus 37:2 / Exodus 25:11. Four gold rings were fastened to its four feet, with two rings on one side and two rings on the other, Exodus 37:3 / Exodus 25:12. Poles of acacia wood were to be made and overlaid with gold, Exodus 27:4 / Exodus 25:13.

The poles were made in order to carry the ark of the covenant, Exodus 37:5 / Exodus 25:14. Notice the warning concerning the poles, they were to remain in the rings of this ark at all times, Exodus 25:15.

The ark was God’s throne in His dwelling place in the tabernacle. Most people associate the Ark of the Covenant with judgement and wrath, rightly so. The day is soon coming when God will judge the secrets of people’s hearts, Romans 2:16, and God’s wrath will be revealed, Romans 1:18 / Psalm 94:9.

The Ark of the Covenant is the best-known item in the Tabernacle, renowned for its mysterious powers against the enemies of Israel, 1 Samuel 5-6. The Ark of the Covenant resided in the Holy of Holies, the innermost room of the Tabernacle.

Access was only permitted once per year, on the Day of Atonement. Access was restricted to one person only, the high priest. He had to come into the Holy of Holies with the blood of a goat, on behalf of his own and the people of Israel’s sins, Hebrews 9:7.

THE MERCY SEAT

An atonement cover or ‘mercy seat’ KJV, of pure gold, was to be made to cover the ark, and it measured about three and three-quarters feet long and two and a quarter feet wide, Exodus 37:6 / Exodus 25:17.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Greek word used to translate ‘mercy seat’ here in the Septuagint (hilasterion) is another form of the word used to describe Jesus Christ as our propitiation in 1 John 2:2 (hilasmos). The mercy seat was for the Israelites, temporarily what Jesus Christ is for all people permanently: the place where God found satisfaction.’

Two cherubim made out of hammered gold would be placed at each end of the cover, Exodus 37:7-8 / Exodus 25:18, and they were to be made of one piece with the cover, Exodus 25:19.

The cherubim are to have their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover with them and they are to face each other, looking toward the cover, Exodus 37:9 / Exodus 25:20. The wings of the two Cherubim possibly touched one another to form a complete covering. The uncertainty should not unduly trouble us, 1 Corinthians 13:12.

The cover was to be placed on top of the ark, and the tablets of the covenant law were to be placed within it, Exodus 25:21. Above the cover, between the two cherubim, is where God will meet with Moses and give him all His commands for the Israelites, Exodus 25:22.

God’s presence did not dwell inside the box, but remained over the Ark, in between the two Cherubim. God dwelt ‘in unapproachable light’, 1 Timothy 6:16 / Psalm 104:2.

The high priest had to shield his eyes, because ‘no man shall see Me and live’, Exodus 33:20. This was where God met with Moses, Exodus 25:21-22 / Leviticus 16:14-15.

There was a cover on the Ark, known as the Mercy Seat, or Propitiation Cover. It was here that the blood of a goat was sprinkled by the high priest on the Day of Atonement, to appease God’s righteous anger, ‘propitiate’ for the sins of the people of Israel, Exodus 37:1-9.

Romans 3:24-25 tells us that there is redemption in Christ Jesus because God has set Him forth as propitiation, through faith in His blood. Christ has died, and the price is paid. To those who believe in Jesus Christ’s death for their sins, there is now mercy, not wrath, Romans 5:8-9.

The glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle on the day it was reared up and anointed, Exodus 40:9 / Exodus 40:18 / Exodus 40:34-35, exactly fourteen days short of one year since the Exodus from Egypt, Exodus 40:2 / Exodus 12:6 / Exodus 12:31.

The two cherubim on the Mercy Seat represented God’s glory, Hebrews 9:5. We are not told in great detail exactly what the Ark of the Covenant looked like. Some models show the cherubim kneeling. Other models show the cherubim standing.

INSIDE THE ARK

1. The two stone tablets of the Law, Exodus 25:16 / Exodus 25:21 / Hebrews 9:4.

2. Aaron’s rod that budded, Numbers 17:10 / Hebrews 9:4.

3. The golden pot of ‘hidden’ manna, Exodus 16:33 / Hebrews 9:4.

Together, these three items form the Testimony; the Ark is called the Ark of the Testimony.

THE TABLE

‘They made the table of acacia wood—two cubits long, a cubit wide and a cubit and a half high. Then they overlaid it with pure gold and made a gold moulding around it. They also made around it a rim a handbreadth wide and put a gold moulding on the rim. They cast four gold rings for the table and fastened them to the four corners, where the four legs were. The rings were put close to the rim to hold the poles used in carrying the table. The poles for carrying the table were made of acacia wood and were overlaid with gold. And they made from pure gold the articles for the table—its plates and dishes and bowls and its pitchers for the pouring out of drink offerings.’ Exodus 37:10-16

The showbread table was made of acacia wood and it measured about three feet long, one and a half feet wide and two and a quarter feet high, Exodus 25:23 / Exodus 27:10.

It was made from acacia wood overlaid with gold, Exodus 25:24 / Exodus 25:37:11, similar to the Boards for the tabernacle, Exodus 26:15-30, speaking of the two-fold nature of Jesus Christ. He was born of Mary as a genuine human being, yet conceived by the Holy Spirit and called the Son of God, Luke 1:35, truly man overlaid with God. It had gold moulding for a rim which measured around three inches wide, Exodus 37:10 / Exodus 25:25. Four gold rings were to be made for the table, which were to be fastened to the four corners where the four legs were, Exodus 37:13 / Exodus 25:26.

The rings were to be close to the rim in order to hold the poles in place when carrying the table, Exodus 37:14 / Exodus 25:27. The poles were to be made of acacia wood, overlaid with gold and were to be used to carry the table, Exodus 37:15 / Exodus 25:28.

Its plates, dishes, pitchers and bowls for the pouring out of offerings were made of pure gold, Exodus 37:16 / Exodus 25:29. The bread of the Presence was to be in the table before God at all times, Exodus 25:30.

The showbread table was placed on the right-hand side of the Holy Place, the north side, a little way from the gold-covered Boards, Exodus 26:15-30. The showbread table had a crown made of gold, unlike the burnt offering altar, Exodus 27:1-8.

Back there in the Outer Court, all was about washing, judgement and death at the bronze-coated Laver and Burnt Offering Altar. Here in the Holy Place, all is about life, food, light, and fragrant incense.

Therefore ‘we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels, because of the suffering of death’ in the Outer Court, but at the showbread table, and the golden incense altar, in the Holy Place, we see Jesus ‘crowned with glory and honour’, Hebrews 2:9.

On the showbread table were placed twelve loaves of unleavened bread, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. The loaves were replaced every week freshly on the Sabbath; it was fresh food in the house of God for the priests, Aaron, and his sons, Leviticus 24:5-9.

Peter tells us that those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 1:8, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, 1 Peter 2:3, are not only a spiritual house, but also a holy priesthood, a royal priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 2:5 / 1 Peter 2:9.

As priests, we are ministering to the Lord through faith in Jesus’ blood and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Our food, in addition to some of the offerings, is the fresh bread on the golden showbread table.

Jesus as the Bread of God ‘who came down from heaven to give LIFE to the world,’ John 6:33, crowned with glory and honour. The twelve loaves represent the whole people of God, in God’s house, the church, 1 Timothy 3:15, in fellowship with one another, 1 John 1:7.

The loaves of unleavened bread remind us of the Lord Jesus saying, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger’, **John 6:35**. This unlimited supply of heavenly food, fresh every week, is to be the portion of the priests in the light from the lampstand, **Colossians 1:12**.

Every day we need to come to Him, **John 6:37**, see the Son and believe in Him, **John 6:40**. He is the Living Bread, that came down from heaven to give us His life, life IN us, **John 6:51 / John 6:53**.

This life is brought to us first as the Spirit who gives life, **John 6:63**, and secondly, as the words of eternal life, **John 6:68**. Today, Jesus Christ can only give His life to us through His word and by His Spirit. The black-and-white word of the scriptures alone is not enough for life, **John 5:39-40**. We must come to Him in the word AND in the Spirit. The showbread is also called the Bread of the Presence. To eat Christ as the Bread of Life, we, the priests, must be in the presence of God, who is Spirit, **John 4:24**. The Showbread is for all the priests, in fellowship with one another in God’s presence, **Luke 11:5-8**.

Based on the parable in **Luke 11:5-8**, we need the Bread of Life not just for ourselves, as in the daily bread in **Luke 11:3**, but also for our needy friends, who come to us on their journey. Jesus makes it clear that people in the world are hungry, but the flesh profits nothing, **John 6:35 / John 6:62**.

Jesus came that He might give life to the world, so that those who believe in Him may have eternal life, **John 6:33 / John 6:47**. Therefore, we should ask, seek, and knock in prayer, **Luke 11:9**, until He gives us as much Bread of life as we need for ourselves and our friends, **Luke 11:8**. Our heavenly Father delights to do this! **Luke 11:13**.

THE LAMPSTAND

‘They made the lampstand of pure gold. They hammered out its base and shaft, and made its flowerlike cups, buds, and blossoms of one piece with them. Six branches extended from the sides of the lampstand—three on one side and three on the other. Three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms were on one branch, three on the next branch and the same for all six branches extending from the lampstand. And on the lampstand were four cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms. One bud was under the first pair of branches extending from the lampstand, a second bud under the second pair, and a third bud under the third pair—six branches in all. The buds and the branches were all of one piece with the lampstand, hammered out of pure gold. They made its seven lamps, as well as its wick trimmers and trays, of pure gold. They made the lampstand and all its accessories from one talent of pure gold.’ **Exodus 37:17-24**

The lampstand was made of solid, pure gold, beaten out of a single piece, **Exodus 37:17 / Exodus 25:31**. It was placed on the left side of the Holy Place, the south side.

The writer doesn’t give us either the dimensions or the pattern of the Lampstand, but we do know it had branches and that the bowls were to be formed like almonds in blossom, **Exodus 37:17 / Exodus 25:31**. The lampstand was therefore like a tree of gold, **John 1:4**.

Six branches were to extend from the sides of the lampstand, three on one side and three on the other, **Exodus 37:18 / Exodus 25:32**. Three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms were to be on one branch, three on the next branch, and the same for all six branches extending from the lampstand, **Exodus 37:19 / Exodus 25:33**.

On the lampstand were four cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms, **Exodus 37:20 / Exodus 25:34**. One bud is to be under the first pair of branches extending from the lampstand, a second bud under the second pair, and a third bud under the third pair, six branches in all, **Exodus 37:21 / Exodus 25:35**.

The buds and branches are to be made from one piece with the lampstand, hammered out of pure gold, **Exodus 37:22 / Exodus 25:36**. Then make its seven lamps and set them up on it so that they light the space in front of

it, Exodus 25:37 / Exodus 27:23, and its wick trimmers and trays are to be of pure gold, Exodus 25:38 / Exodus 27:23.

A talent, that is about seventy-five pounds of pure gold is to be used for the lampstand and all these accessories, Exodus 37:24 / Exodus 25:39. They were to make them according to the pattern shown Moses on the mountain, Exodus 25:40.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the lampstand.

‘It was the only source of light in the sanctuary, with the spiritual meaning that only the Word of God, which the candlestick typified, is the true light of God’s church.’

The lampstand was lit permanently, to give light inside the Holy Place, John 1:9. The priests in the tabernacle were responsible, evening and morning, for topping up the seven lamps with oil and trimming their wicks. Therefore, the lampstand points us to Jesus Christ Himself, the light of the whole world, John 8:12.

We need the Lord’s light, in His light we see light, Psalm 36:9. It was when God commanded His light to shine in our hearts that we began to see how excellent it is to know Jesus Christ, compared to all other things, 2 Corinthians 4:6. We also began to see how greatly blinded and deceived we had become by the god of this world and by our own lusts, 2 Corinthians 4:4 / Titus 3:3.

We not only need to see His light, but we also need to walk in His light, 1 John 1:5-7 / Ephesians 1:18 / Ephesians 5:5-8. This will involve the Lord shining on many things that do not reflect Him.

We should confess anything that shone in our conscience to our Advocate in heaven, Jesus Christ the Righteous, who gave Himself for our sins, 1 John 1:9 / 1 John 2:1-2.

This kind of inner working is the functioning of the light of life. The priests trimmed the wicks of the lamps in the lampstand and re-filled the bowls with oil, and the light burned brightly again, Revelation 1:12-13.

Once our conscience is clear and we are walking in the light, we are then the light of the world, as Jesus said in Matthew 5:14-16. We can shine for the Lord amid this dark and dirty generation, Philippians 2:15.

This is the experience of the Light in an individual way, but the lampstand has seven lamps; seven is the number of completion. Therefore, the lampstand is composed of multiple lamps, people having similar experiences, and the local church, Revelation 2:1-7.

The lampstand was formed by beating a solid lump of gold. First, the central stem was beaten out and then from the central stem, the branches were beaten out, Exodus 25:31 / Exodus 37:17.

This shows us Christ and His members in His body, 1 Corinthians 12:12. When Jesus came, He was the unique Light of the World. Then, Peter, James and John were ‘beaten out’, established in Christ, 2 Corinthians 1:21.

We know that the three lamps on either side were lit from the lamp in the central stem when the lampstand was set up. This indicates that Christ ‘lit’ Peter, James, John and the other early disciples, and they began to follow Him, the Light of the World.

Then, after His death and resurrection, the Lord Jesus came to them and breathed the Holy Spirit into them, John 20:22 and poured out the Holy Spirit upon them, Acts 2:33.

Peter was on fire. Stephen caught the flame, then Philip, and they came together with many others to be the church in Jerusalem, Acts 8:1, the lampstand there, beaten out of one source, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The lampstand is all gold; it is God’s work, Philippians 2:12-13. By the time of the apostle John, in the Book of Revelation, there are seven churches in Asia, Revelation 1-3, that are still the objects of Christ’s care and attention. There is one church in each of the seven cities, Revelation 1:20, and it is still God’s work; the Son of Man, Jesus, is walking in the midst of the seven churches, which are seven golden lampstands. They are not plastic, they are gold. They are answerable not to men, but Jesus, the Son of Man, in His priestly role.

Christ speaks to each church in turn. At the start of the letter to each church, one or more of the characteristics of Christ in John's vision, in **Revelation 1**, is/are applied directly to the situation of that church.

Whatever the Lord Jesus Christ is, it is for His churches, His lampstands, to experience. At the end of the letter to each church, the Spirit is there, applying what has been said to those who have an ear to hear, **Revelation 2-3**.

The aged apostle John is not there as organisational head; he is in exile because of the word of God and because of the testimony of Jesus, **Revelation 1:9**. Christ is the Director, the Boss. He is tending the lampstands, **Revelation 1:13**. John is a brother and companion in tribulation with those he writes to, **Revelation 1:9**.

Eventually, at the end of the Book of Revelation, the New Jerusalem will be one enormous golden lampstand, not requiring any more trimming. There will be no darkness to combat anymore, just the flowing 'of the river of water of life, with the tree of life, from the throne of God and the Lamb', **Revelation 22:1-2**.

This will be the consummate tabernacle of God with men, having the glory of God. He will dwell with us forever, and we will be His people, and He will be our God, **Revelation 21:3**. How we look forward to that day! **Revelation 22:21**.

OIL FOR THE LAMPSTAND

The pure oil was beaten from olives that were picked just before ripening, **Exodus 27:20**.

Gordan, in his commentary, says the following.

'The requirement for 'beaten oil' distinguished it from olive oil made by crushing olives in a stone press. The finer oil was made by gently pressing the olives in a mortar.'

In the tabernacle but just outside the curtain that shields the ark of the covenant law, Aaron and his sons are to keep the lamps burning before the LORD from evening till morning, **Exodus 27:20-21 / Leviticus 24:1-2**, which probably symbolized that God's presence would never leave Israel, **Leviticus 24:1-3 / Exodus 30:8 / 1 Samuel 3:3**.

This is to be a lasting ordinance among the Israelites for the generations to come, **Exodus 27:21 / Leviticus 24:3**. Go says the lamps on the pure gold lampstand before the LORD must be tended continually, **Leviticus 24:4**.

THE ALTAR OF INCENSE

'They made the altar of incense out of acacia wood. It was square, a cubit long and a cubit wide and two cubits high—its horns of one piece with it. They overlaid the top and all the sides and the horns with pure gold and made a gold moulding around it. They made two gold rings below the moulding—two on each of the opposite sides—to hold the poles used to carry it. They made the poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold. They also made the sacred anointing oil and the pure, fragrant incense—the work of a perfumer.' **Exodus 37:25-29**

The golden incense altar was made of acacia wood for burning incense, **Exodus 37:25 / Exodus 30:1**. It was square, half a metre by half a metre wide, and one metre high, **Exodus 37:25 / Exodus 30:2**.

The top, the sides and the horns were overlaid with gold and it had a gold moulding around it, **Exodus 37:26 / Exodus 30:3**. Two gold rings were to be made for the altar below the moulding, two on each of the opposite sides to hold the poles used to carry it, **Exodus 37:27 / Exodus 30:4**. The poles are to be made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold, **Exodus 37:27 / Exodus 30:5**.

They also made the sacred anointing oil, Exodus 30:22-33, and the pure, fragrant incense, the work of a perfumer, Exodus 37:29. The pure oil, Exodus 25:6, was beaten from olives that were picked just before ripening, Exodus 27:20.

The oil lamps were to be burning every night, which burning probably symbolized that God's presence would never leave Israel, Exodus 30:8 / 1 Samuel 3:3. It was situated just in front of the veil, the curtain which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, Exodus 30:6.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'Old Testament passages say that the incense altar was inside the holy place with the golden lampstand and the table of showbread, Exodus 30:6 / Exodus 40:3-5 / Exodus 40:21-27.'

Aaron must burn fragrant incense on the altar every morning when he tends the lamps, Exodus 30:7. He is to burn incense again when he lights the lamps at twilight so incense will burn regularly before the LORD for the generations to come, Exodus 30:8.

However, Aaron isn't permitted to offer on this altar any other incense, burnt offering, grain offering, and he wasn't permitted to pour a drink offering on it, Exodus 30:9.

Once a year Aaron is to make atonement on its horns and the annual atonement must be made with the blood of the atoning sin offering for the generations to come, it is most holy to the LORD, Exodus 30:10.

Rawlinson, in his commentary, says the following.

'There seems to be sufficient reason for considering the altar of incense as, next to the ark and the mercy-seat, the most sacred object in the furniture of the tabernacle. This precedence indicates the extreme value which God sets upon prayer.'

The burning incense signifies prayer and points us to the prayer of the Lord Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, John 17 / Mark 14:32-42 / Psalm 141:2 / Revelation 5:8.

Similar to the showbread table, Exodus 25:23-30, the golden incense altar had a golden crown around the top of it. This signifies 'Jesus, crowned with glory and honour', Hebrews 2:9. However, because the golden incense altar is the place of prayer, the crown and the prayer together give us a hint of a kingly priesthood.

This thought is developed in the Book of Hebrews, the Messiah, 'Jesus Christ has become a priest according to the order of Melchizedek', Psalm 110:1 / Hebrews 7:1-28.

He can sympathise with us as our great High Priest, Hebrews 4:15, and He is able to minister His supply of mercy and grace to us as the King of righteousness and King of peace, Genesis 14:18 / Hebrews 2 / Hebrews 4:16 / Hebrews 7:25.

Prayer is very important in the daily life of all believers in the Lord, Daniel 6:10 / Matthew 6:5-13. We should pray without ceasing, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, using all kinds of prayers and petitions with thanksgiving, praying at every time in the Spirit, watching and persevering in prayer not just for ourselves but for all our brothers and sisters, Ephesians 6:18.

Prayer is becoming increasingly important, especially as the battle intensifies and utterance of the Gospel becomes harder, Ephesians 6:19. However, when our prayer is genuinely at the Golden Incense Altar, the Lord causes much incense to be added to our prayer. That incense rises back to Him as we pray according to His will, and the results are dramatic, Revelation 8:3-4.

The tabernacle is the house of God, His dwelling place, Exodus 25:8-9, and a foreshadowing of both Christ and the church, Colossians 2:9 / 1 Timothy 3:15 / Ephesians 2:21-22. God desires that His house should 'be a house of prayer for all nations,' Isaiah 56:7.

For us to pray at the golden incense altar, blood must first be applied, Exodus 30:10 / Leviticus 4:7, the blood of the sin offering, Exodus 29:10-14. Then the incense must be prepared with genuine acknowledgements and experiences of the Son's Name, His purity, holiness, subjection, faith, and dependence on God the Father, John 16:23-24.

One of the ingredients of the incense was salt, to make our prayer neither sentimental nor formal. We should pray at every time in the Spirit, Ephesians 6:18, in the Son's Name. This will be a sweet incense to God the Father.

Jesus' ministry was not just healing and teaching people, it was also a service to God the Father in His living and in praying, Mark 1:32-35. The night before He chose His twelve disciples, Jesus spent the whole night in the 'prayer of God', Luke 6:12.

His admonition, 'Pray that you may not enter into temptation,' and His observation regarding praying that 'the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak,' Matthew 26:41. So obviously come from One who is qualified to comment, Hebrews 2:14 / Hebrews 2:18.

In His prayer in John 17, Jesus utters such meaningful requests, with such adoration of the Father, acknowledging His own position as a man and that of the Father as Giver of all authority, John 17:2, as Holy Father, John 17:11, as Righteous Father, John 17:25.

This prayer is no 'last night' performance, it is rather the continuation of a life of the previous prayer, as indicated by the phrase 'Father, the hour has now come', John 17:1.

Here in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus is at the golden incense altar, on the night before the veil, that is His flesh, Hebrews 10:20, will be torn from top to bottom, by God His Father, Matthew 27:46 / Matthew 27:51. Jesus' prayer is for eternal life for all those the Father has given to Him.

Jesus is like the high priest in the tabernacle, bearing the names of the disciples, and those who will believe through their word, John 17:20, on His heart, the breastplate.

His prayer is that the Father will do the following.

1. Keep the disciples, guarding them all in the Father's own holy name, in unbroken oneness, as the Father and the Son are one, John 17:6-12.
2. Sanctify them in His word of truth, setting the disciples apart to the Father as Jesus Himself had been set apart to the Father, for their impact in the world with the Gospel, that generations of believers may be one, one in Them, the Father and the Son, John 17:13-21.
3. Send the glory of the Son, John 1:14, and John 17:1, to the believers, that they may be perfected in oneness, so that the world may see the love of the Father for His only begotten Son and also the Father's love for His many children, John 1:12-13 / John 1:18 / John 3:5-6 / John 17:22-26 / John 20:17.

This is the prayer for eternal life, 'that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent' John 17:3. Jesus said, 'I come that they may have life and have it abundantly' John 10:10.

Eternal life is simply to know the Father and the Son and their oneness, truly, for eternity. This is Jesus' prayer for eternal life; may it also be ours. Such a fragrance of incense exudes from this deep prayer by the great High Priest for all those in the House of God!

Let us also come to the Golden Incense Altar and thence boldly through the Veil to the throne of grace, the Ark of the Covenant, that we may find the mercy and obtain the grace He has prayed for us in this great time of need! Hebrews 3:6 / Hebrews 4:14-16.

CHAPTER 38

INTRODUCTION

‘They built the altar of burnt offering of acacia wood, three cubits high; it was square, five cubits long and five cubits wide. They made a horn at each of the four corners, so that the horns and the altar were of one piece, and they overlaid the altar with bronze. They made all its utensils of bronze—its pots, shovels, sprinkling bowls, meat forks and firepans. They made a grating for the altar, a bronze network, to be under its ledge, halfway up the altar. They cast bronze rings to hold the poles for the four corners of the bronze grating. They made the poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with bronze. They inserted the poles into the rings so they would be on the sides of the altar for carrying it. They made it hollow, out of boards.’ Exodus 38:1-7

THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING

The altar was made according to the command and pattern in Exodus 27:1-8. The burnt offering altar was the first item to be seen after entering through the door into the tabernacle’s outer court, Exodus 27:16-17.

It was an impressive construction, made from acacia wood, and it stood 1.4 metres high and 2.3 metres wide and broad, square, Exodus 38:1 / Exodus 27:1 / Exodus 20:24.

There was a horn at each of the four corners, so that the horns and the altar are of one piece and it was overlaid the altar with bronze, Exodus 38:2 / Exodus 27:2. Wood is a biblical figure of man, Psalm 1:1 / Psalm 1:3 / Jeremiah 5:14. Acacia wood is a strong, high-quality wood, signifying the best humanity, that of Jesus.

The altar was from acacia wood overlaid with bronze. Bronze in the Bible speaks of God’s judgement, particularly His judgement over our rebellious thinking and speaking against Him, as in Numbers 16:29-40 / Jude 11.

Since the wood is overlaid with the bronze, the burnt offering altar reminds us of man under God’s judgement for our rebellion against Him. Since the wood is acacia wood, this speaks of Jesus bearing the judgement of God for us on the cross.

All of its utensils were to be made of bronze, the pots, shovels, sprinkling bowls, meat forks and firepans, Exodus 38:3 / Exodus 27:3. A grating was to be made from bronze, it was to be situated halfway up the altar, Exodus 38:4 / Exodus 27:4-5. These gratings were not steps as some suggest.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Such an arrangement would have been, in the eyes of some, a violation of God’s requirement concerning ‘no steps’ to his altar, Exodus 20:26.’

The grating was to be made and a bronze ring was made for each of the four corners, Exodus 38:5 / Exodus 27:4.

Poles were to be made of acacia wood for the altar and overlaid them with bronze, Exodus 38:6 / Exodus 27:6.

The poles were to be inserted into the rings so they will be on two sides of the altar when it is carried, Exodus 38:7 / Exodus 27:7. The altar is to be hollow, and made out of boards, Exodus 38:7 / Exodus 27:8.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These planks were covered over with brass; and that fact, coupled with God’s instructions, ‘An altar of earth shalt thou make unto me’, Exodus 20:25, have led to the conclusion that what is called ‘the altar’ here was actually the bronze overlaid box that was filled with earth to provide the actual altar. We see nothing unreasonable in such an assumption.’

The altar was to be made the way Moses was shown on the mountain, Exodus 27:8. At the burnt offering altar, the priests sacrificed various offerings to God; some offerings were for their own sins and for the sins of the people.

The point of the burnt offering was that, by it, a person might become accepted before God and forgiven, **Leviticus 1:4**. For the burnt offering, a male animal was sacrificed, a ram, a goat, a bullock or a turtle-dove or a pigeon, **Leviticus 1:3-17**. The offering had to be without blemish, the very healthiest and best available. This foreshadows the Lord Jesus who was examined by Pontius Pilate, who declared ‘I find no fault in Him at all’, **John 18:38**. The blood of the offering was poured out around the base of the altar, foreshadowing the Lord Jesus, whose precious blood flowed out when His side was pierced on the cross by a Roman spear, **John 19:34** / **1 Peter 1:19**.

The whole concept of blood sacrifices is quite disturbing to the 20th-century Western mindset. Some explanations may help to understand God’s perspective in the Bible. In **Ezekiel 18:4**, God says, ‘all souls are Mine. The soul that sins shall die’.

The penalty of sin is death, **Romans 6:23**. Sin was defined by the law, the ‘Torah’, the first five books of the Bible. The righteous requirement of the law was without pity, **Deuteronomy 19:21**.

This then is the legal position: we belong to God, He made us, and we are His by right. But we have done our own thing, lived our own life without God, and we have sinned.

We always try to make out that our sinfulness is not so bad. However, in God’s eyes, everything matters, every last little thing. Since we have robbed our lives back for ourselves from God to Whom we really belong, we have sinned.

According to the righteous requirement of the law, we should die for our sins. However, there is a provision, ‘the life of the flesh (of a burnt offering or sacrifice) is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul,’ **Leviticus 17:8** / **Leviticus 17:11**.

So, either you must die, or the offering can die in your place, a life for a life. If the offering dies, then, through its life-blood, there is atonement for your soul, at-one-ment, restoration to the God to Whom you belong, **Leviticus 1:4**.

After its blood was poured out, the burnt offering was entirely consumed by burning, the only products being ashes and aroma. The ashes were removed from the camp to a ‘clean place,’ **Leviticus 6:8-13**.

The burning offering was a pleasing, sweet aroma to God, **Leviticus 1:9** / **Leviticus 1:13** / **Leviticus 1:17**, to make the person accepted before God and forgiven, **Leviticus 1:3-4**.

In **Ephesians 5:2**, Paul shows us clearly that the burnt offering was an exact picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, who ‘loved us and gave Himself up for us’ on the cross, ‘an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma’. **Psalms 22** describes graphically and prophetically the utterances of Jesus from the cross as God lays upon Him the sins of the entire world, **Psalms 22:1**, and the agony of being crucified, **Psalms 22:14**.

Then follows the heat of the fire of death, **Psalms 22:14-15**, the burnt offering. In His final gasp, the offering is complete, and Jesus cries, ‘It is finished!’, **John 19:30**. ‘He has done it!’ **Psalms 22:31**.

The final part of the fulfilment, the carrying of the ashes to a ‘clean place’, came as Jesus’ dead body was taken down from the cross, **John 19:41-42**. John, an eyewitness to all this, wrote, “he who has seen bears testimony, true testimony, so that you also may believe,” **John 19:35**.

When we were at the door of the outer court, we heard the words of Jesus, ‘I am the Door; if any man enters through Me, he shall be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture,’ **John 10:9**.

Jesus is not only the door, but He also tells us, ‘I am the Good Shepherd,’ **John 10:11**, to help us to enter through the door. Furthermore, ‘The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep,’ **John 10:11**, so Jesus is the offering at the burnt offering altar as soon as we get through the door.

This is the good news of the burnt offering altar: whether we are Jew or Gentile, we are all under God’s judgement because of our evil thinking, speaking, and doing. However, the Lord Jesus, ‘Who did no sin, neither was there any deceit found in His mouth,’ **1 Peter 2:22**, became the offering slaughtered in our place.

By believing in His death, ‘carrying up our sins in His body onto the tree,’ 1 Peter 2:24, we can be made acceptable to God, restored to the Shepherd and to His flock, 1 Peter 2:25. Then we can enter into His courts with praise and thanksgiving, Psalm 100:3-4.

A lamb was burnt at the burnt offering altar every morning and every evening, Exodus 29:38-42. Learn to come to this altar every day to confess your sins to God and to remember, ‘by offering thanks and praise, Hebrews 13:15, that the Lord Jesus died in your place to forgive you and to cleanse you from all sin by His blood, 1 John 1:7-9 / Hebrews 8:12 / Hebrews 9:14, so that you might live not for yourself but to Him, 2 Corinthians 5:15. The burnt offering altar and the laver form a combined experience of Christ.

THE BASIN FOR WASHING

‘They made the bronze basin and its bronze stand from the mirrors of the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting.’ Exodus 38:8

The Bible doesn’t record the size or dimensions of the bronze basin.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Exodus 38:8 reveals the source of the brass (bronze) from which the laver was constructed. The women of Israel, apparently nearly all of them, had brought brass mirrors with them out of Egypt, the highly-polished metal being the only type of mirror known at that time, and they contributed these personal items so highly prized by them for the making of the bronze altar.’

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘What the employment of these women was at the door of the tabernacle, is not easily known. Some think they assembled there for purposes of devotion. Others, that they kept watch there during the night; and this is the most probable opinion, for they appear to have been in the same employment as those who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation in the days of Samuel, who were abused by the sons of the high priest Eli, 1 Samuel 2:22.’

The laver was a large bronze basin containing water for washing purposes, Exodus 30:17. It was to be placed between the tent of meeting and the altar and put water in it, Exodus 30:18. Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet with water from it, Exodus 30:19.

Having entered through the door into the tabernacle’s outer court, the priests had to wash their hands and feet at the laver, Exodus 30:19; the same rule applied when they approached the altar to minister by presenting a food offering. However, God warned Moses that if the priests did not wash, they would die, Exodus 30:20-21.

This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants for the generations to come, Exodus 30:21. God warned Moses that if the priests did not wash, they would die.

It is therefore a serious requirement that we ‘wash’ as we come to handle any of the things of the Lord because those who believe in the Lord Jesus are considered priests in the New Testament sense, 1 Peter 2:9 / Revelation 1:5-6.

The New Testament speaks of washing in two ways.

1. Baptism, Acts 22:16 / Acts 16:31-33.

2. The washing of the water in the Word, John 13:8-10 / John 15:8 / Ephesians 5:26.

All of which is according to the pattern in Exodus 29:39, ‘offer one in the morning and the other at twilight’, at least twice daily, in the morning and evening.

After having believed in the Lord Jesus and experienced that He is the door through which we enter into God's kingdom, we should come to Him every day in a simple and sincere way.

We need to read the Word of God in the Bible so that we can live by Him, **Matthew 4:4**, and we need to confess our sins to God because He is faithful and righteous to forgive and cleanse us, **1 John 1:7-9**. When God forgives, He forgets, **Hebrews 8:12**.

This is the combined experience of the laver and the burnt offering altar. It is important to read the Bible because the Word of God washes us, our 'hands' and 'feet', especially from the dirtiness of the world around us.

It gives us God's perspective on our human conduct in the world and on the thoughts of our minds and hearts, **Genesis 6:5**. When **Ephesians 5:26** speaks of the washing of the water in the Word, the word for washing is 'laver' in Greek.

As we read His Word, the Lord shines into our hearts and speaks to us, mostly in our conscience. According to God's shining and enlightening, we will need to confess and ask for His forgiveness and cleansing. Only then are we qualified to approach the sanctuary building.

The effect of the washing, 'laver' in the Word, is to cleanse, **Psalms 119:9**. This results in us taking God's side more and more in our lives. We become set apart to God. 'Holy' or 'sanctified', 'holified' means just that, set apart to God. Such sanctified people are called 'saints' in the New Testament, **1 Corinthians 1:2**. Saints are believers in Christ who have experienced the washing of God's Word in their lives.

We may have been greedy persons, swindlers, drunkards, abusers of drugs, thieves, liars, fornicators, homosexuals, involved with pornography, etc, before we came to the door in the curtains of the outer court. But do not be deceived, no one can inherit the kingdom of God like this, **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**.

We are washed at the Laver and set apart to God, sanctified. As a result, we are justified at the burnt offering altar by faith in Jesus' death on the cross as 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,' **John 1:29**.

The message Jesus preached was 'times up. Change your mind and believe the good news,' **Mark 1:15**, 'The time is fulfilled. Repent and believe the gospel'. Peter, Andrew, James, John, and the other disciples of Jesus did just that; they changed their minds and began to follow Jesus.

They left their old environment because they had found something so real and true, the reality of the tabernacle, Jesus. They admired the Door, His character, His power, His teaching, He had washed their feet at the Last Supper, and they saw the offering as He died, **John 13:4-11**.

The disciples became set apart to God amidst a totally hostile environment. But this was not the end; Jesus rose from the dead. He came back to them, not just to tabernacle among them, but dwell in them, as God's dwelling place, the sanctuary.

THE COURTYARD

'Next, they made the courtyard. The south side was a hundred cubits long and had curtains of finely twisted linen, with twenty posts and twenty bronze bases, and with silver hooks and bands on the posts. The north side was also a hundred cubits long and had twenty posts and twenty bronze bases, with silver hooks and bands on the posts. The west end was fifty cubits wide and had curtains, with ten posts and ten bases, with silver hooks and bands on the posts. The east end, toward the sunrise, was also fifty cubits wide. Curtains fifteen cubits long were on one side of the entrance, with three posts and three bases, and curtains fifteen cubits long were on the other side of the entrance to the courtyard, with three posts and three bases. All the curtains around the courtyard were of finely twisted linen. The bases for the posts were bronze. The hooks and bands on the posts were silver, and their tops were overlaid with silver; so all the posts of the courtyard had silver bands. The curtain for the entrance to the courtyard was made of

blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen—the work of an embroiderer. It was twenty cubits long and, like the curtains of the courtyard, five cubits high, with four posts and four bronze bases. Their hooks and bands were silver, and their tops were overlaid with silver. All the tent pegs of the tabernacle and of the surrounding courtyard were bronze.’ Exodus 38:9-20

If you had suddenly come across the children of Israel in the desert wilderness, you would have seen a sprawling camp of over two million people, probably not unlike the refugee camps in Rwanda, though perhaps more orderly.

The tents were probably black and brown, set in contrast with the sandy and rocky colours of the desert. In the centre of their camp, you would see the white linen curtains of the tabernacle’s outer court, approximately 46 metres long, 150 feet, 23 metres wide, 75 feet, and 2.3 metres tall, 7.5 feet, Exodus 39:9-15 / Exodus 27:9-15 / Exodus 38:9-17. Meyer, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The court preserved the Tabernacle from accidental or intentional profanation, and it gave the priests a certain measure of privacy for the prosecution of their duties. Its presence was a perpetual reminder that man should pause and consider, before he rushes into the presence of the Most High, Ecclesiastes 5:2.’

DOOR OF THE OUTER COURT

It was so noticeable against the surrounding rather drab colours of the camp and wilderness. It was impossible to see inside the tabernacle from the camp outside; the tall, white, fine twined linen curtains, Exodus 38:18 / Exodus 27:16, made a separation between the outside world and the beauty that was contained in the tabernacle.

The door of the outer court was a large curtain, made of fine linen, coloured in blue, purple, red, and white, Exodus 38:18 / Exodus 27:16. Each of the colours has significance.

Blue indicates heavenly and godly, ‘Behold your God,’ Isaiah 40:9, pointing to John’s gospel, where doubting Thomas eventually says to Jesus, ‘My Lord and my God,’ John 20:28.

Purple signifies kingship, ‘Behold your King,’ Zechariah 9:9, pointing to Matthew’s Gospel, where Jesus, the descendant of King David, Matthew 1:1, declares after rising from the dead, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth is given to Me,’ Matthew 28:18.

Red signifies blood, ‘Behold My servant,’ Isaiah 52:13 / Isaiah 53:5, pointing to Mark’s Gospel, where Jesus says He ‘came to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many,’ Mark 10:45.

White signifies purity and a right humanity, ‘Behold the man,’ Zechariah 6:12, pointing to Luke’s Gospel, where Pilate says of Jesus ‘Behold, I have found not one fault in this man,’ Luke 23:4 / Luke 23:14.

These four colours are woven together to become the complete door, just as the four gospels combine to give a complete picture of Jesus. Jesus Christ is pure and righteous, kingly and godly, and this is how He, as a man, can be our ransom, the door for us to enter into God’s presence in the tabernacle.

The curtain was supported by wooden pillars that were based in brass sockets, with silver capitals, Exodus 38:19-20 / Exodus 27:18-19, just like the other pillars of the outer court curtain. In the Bible, white linen signifies righteousness, Revelation 19:8.

God, in His nature, is right and just. He, therefore, expects us, His created people, to act rightly and justly; this is what righteousness means. Psalm 92:15 tells us the Lord is upright and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

Psalm 45:7 predicts that the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ, will love righteousness and hate wickedness. Because God is righteous, we find that the Levites, whom God called to be priests to serve Him in the Tabernacle, were instructed to wear fine white linen garments, Exodus 28:39-43.

Likewise, in the New Testament, **Revelation 19:6-9** speaks of the ‘wife of the Lamb’, the bride of Christ, who is seen clothed in fine white linen. The ‘wife of the Lamb’ is a corporate bride, composed of all those people who have accepted God’s saving invitation to be joined to Him at this marriage feast and have prepared themselves, as seen by their garments, they are all dressed in fine white linen, as were the priests of the Tabernacle.

Revelation 19:8 informs us that the fine linen is their righteous acts. By way of contrast, in **Isaiah 64:6**, we read that all our ‘righteousness’ are like filthy rags and that our sins have blown us right off course from God’s righteousness. Therefore, our sins have separated us from God, **Isaiah 59:2**.

Just as Adam’s sin caused him to be separated from God and the Garden of Eden, **Genesis 3:23-24**, so we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **Romans 3:23**. Therefore, the white linen curtains of the Outer Court remind us that we are separated from God, due to our sins, because He is righteous.

The capitals on top of the pillars were made from silver, **Exodus 38:19 / Exodus 27:17**, symbolising the ransom price God placed on each of the children of Israel, **Exodus 30:11-16**.

God desires to redeem people, not to condemn them, but to satisfy His righteousness; a price must be paid. When Jesus was betrayed by Judas Iscariot, the price paid was thirty pieces of silver, **Matthew 26:15 / Zechariah 11:12-13**. **Exodus 12:1-13:16** shows the other side of redemption, the way to redeem the life of the firstborn son was by the sacrifice of a lamb at Passover. God sacrificed His only Son, Jesus the Lamb of God, **John 1:29**, at Calvary, as the final Passover Lamb, **1 Corinthians 5:7**, during the Feast of Passover in 33 AD, in order to redeem mankind, that is to buy us back from sin and all its effects, **Romans 5:6 / Romans 5:18**.

The fine white linen curtains of the outer court were supported by pillars, at least fifty-six of them, **Exodus 38:16 / Exodus 27:18**. When we see the white curtains of the outer court, we are reminded that our sins have separated us from God, **Isaiah 59:2 / Romans 3:23**.

When we read the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus, we see His compassion and love for people and we also see His condemnation of hypocrisy and sin, **John 8:10-11**.

We see in Jesus Christ a man who loves righteousness and hates lawlessness, **Hebrews 1:9**, the Son of God in whom God the Father delights, **Matthew 17:5**, the Son who is the bright shining of God’s glory and the express image of God’s righteousness, **Hebrews 1:3**.

The pillars were set in base sockets of bronze and capped with silver capitals, **Exodus 38:17 / Exodus 27:17**. The bronze base sockets, **Exodus 38:19 / Exodus 27:18**, symbolise God’s judgement on those who sin against Him, as seen in **Numbers 16:29-39 / Numbers 21:4-9**.

In **Numbers 21**, the children of Israel murmured against God. In a judgement on their sin, God sent serpents into the camp to bite the children of Israel, and many of them died.

As Moses prayed for the people, God told him to make a bronze serpent and to put it on a pole. Anyone who looked at the bronze serpent would not perish. In his Gospel, John shows us that the Lord Jesus Christ is the reality of the bronze serpent lifted up from the earth.

As the crucified Son of Man, He bore God’s righteous judgement for us, so that ‘whoever believes in Him will not perish forever but be saved from God’s judgement and receive eternal life,’ **John 3:14-17**.

Just like the curtains of the outer court, the righteousness of Christ is supported by His judgement of sin and capped by His desire to redeem us, to bring us, the unrighteous ones, back to God, **1 Peter 3:18**.

The good news is that although we started off outside the tabernacle, separated from God, there is a way into the outer court, a door, colourful and welcoming, beckoning us to come inside.

Jesus said, ‘I am the door; if any man enters through Me he shall be saved’, **John 10:9**, and ‘I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to (God) the Father except through Me,’ **John 14:6**.

This claim by Jesus is unique and exclusive, but just look at Jesus' life and His conduct, He was surrounded by all kinds of people with all sorts of histories and conditions and motives, yet Simon Peter, one of His closest disciples, could later say of Him, 'He did no sin, neither was there any deceit found in His mouth,' **1 Peter 2:22**.

Peter had seen Jesus in all sorts of situations with all manner of people, from religious leaders to the lowest prostitutes, publicans, and tax collectors, yet he wrote 'we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of that One's majesty,' **2 Peter 1:16**.

The door of the outer court is the only way in, inviting and attractive. The door speaks of both the compassion and the kingliness of Jesus, His nature as both God and a genuine man, Son of God and son of man, woven together like a beautiful tapestry of 'the appearing to man of the kindness and love of our Saviour God,' **Titus 3:4**.

Jesus said, 'I am the door; if any man enters through Me, he shall be saved,' **John 10:9**. Do take a good look at the door, then enter in through the door. Once you are inside the tabernacle, you will discover so much about what Jesus meant by 'be saved' and how this can come about in your experience, beginning at the burnt offering altar and the laver.

All the other articles used in the service of the tabernacle, whatever their function, including all the tent pegs for it and those for the courtyard, are to be of bronze, **Exodus 38:20 / Exodus 27:19**.

THE MATERIALS USED

'These are the amounts of the materials used for the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the covenant law, which were recorded at Moses' command by the Levites under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron, the priest. (Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made everything the LORD commanded Moses; with him was Oholiab son of Ahisamak, of the tribe of Dan—an engraver and designer, and an embroiderer in blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine linen.) The total amount of the gold from the wave offering used for all the work on the sanctuary was 29 talents and 730 shekels, according to the sanctuary shekel. The silver obtained from those of the community who were counted in the census was 100 talents and 1,775 shekels, according to the sanctuary shekel—one beka per person, that is, half a shekel, according to the sanctuary shekel, from everyone who had crossed over to those counted, twenty years old or more, a total of 603,550 men. The 100 talents of silver were used to cast the bases for the sanctuary and for the curtain—100 bases from the 100 talents, one talent for each base. They used the 1,775 shekels to make the hooks for the posts, to overlay the tops of the posts, and to make their bands. The bronze from the wave offering was 70 talents and 2,400 shekels. They used it to make the bases for the entrance to the tent of meeting, the bronze altar with its bronze grating and all its utensils, the bases for the surrounding courtyard and those for its entrance and all the tent pegs for the tabernacle and those for the surrounding courtyard.' **Exodus 38:21-31**

It was Ithamar the priest who oversaw the Levites who had the responsibility of managing all these resources, **Exodus 38:21**, and make no mistake about it, this was a huge task which they managed really well.

BEZALEL AND OHOLIAB

Here we are reminded about how God encourages men to do things God won't do when men are more than capable of doing it themselves under God's guidance. It was the duty of the skilled worker to use their judgment as to how to make the materials and determine many of the details.

These two men, Bezalel, whose name means ‘in the shadow of God’, and Oholiab, whose name means ‘the Father is my tent’, obviously had some kind of leadership skills, and God was going to use them both to direct the building of the tabernacle according to God’s will, Exodus 38:22 / Exodus 35:30-35.

Keil, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Bezalel was a grandson of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, who is mentioned in Exodus 17:10 / Exodus 24:14, and was called to be the master-builder, to superintend the whole of the building and carry out the artistic work, consequently, he is not only invariably mentioned first, Exodus 35:30 / Exodus 36:1-2, but in the accounts of the execution of the separate portions, he is mentioned alone, Exodus 32:1 / Exodus 38:22.’

God filled Bezaleel, Exodus 28:3 / Exodus 31:1-3 / Exodus 35:30, which means he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to carry out the instructions to build the tabernacle.

Bezalel was blessed with the wisdom, Exodus 28:3 / Exodus 31:3 / Exodus 35:31 / Proverbs 8:12, to lead those who were chosen to complete the tasks set before them. His judgments were inspired by God, in order that he lead the workers to comply with the will of God in reference to the construction of the tabernacle.

He was also blessed with understanding, Exodus 31:3 / Exodus 35:31. This was the ability to organise the parts of the tabernacle to be completed in order to organise the workers to accomplish the task of construction.

He was also blessed with the knowledge, Exodus 31:3-5 / Exodus 35:31-34, of what materials to use, as well as how to bring these materials together into the final goal of the constructed tabernacle and its furniture. With his assistant, Oholiab, Exodus 31:6 / Exodus 35:34, Bezalel was to create the beauty of the tabernacle in a way that it would manifest the splendour of God.

Oholiab was filled with skill to do all kinds of work as engravers, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers, Exodus 35:35. From this, we learn that God never calls anyone to do a task of any kind without first giving them the ability to do so, Acts 6:3-6 / Ephesians 4:11-14.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The name Oholiab means ‘father of tents’, he was from the tribe of Dan, and although that tribe doesn’t appear to have been famous for such men of artistic talent, it was likewise true that Hiram, the chief artist employed by Solomon for the ornamental work of the temple, was also a Danite, 2 Chronicles 2:14. Despite such notable exceptions, The Danites in general were more warlike and rude than artistic, Genesis 49:17 / Deuteronomy 33:22 / Judges 13:2 / Judges 18:11 / Judges 18:27.’

The amount of gold mentioned here was huge; twenty-nine talents is an estimated seventy pounds, Exodus 38:24, which means that an estimated 2,030 pounds of gold were used in the tabernacle. That’s equivalent to £60645.95, in today’s money.

The amount of silver mentioned here is also huge, Exodus 38:25-28. The silver seems to have amounted to about four times the weight of the gold, but its value was very much less. This would be equivalent to £74350.70 in today’s money.

We may wonder where the Israelites managed to get all this silver from, but Exodus 30:13-16 describes how the Israelites were to give silver as part of a census, a count of the nation.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the beka, Exodus 38:26.

‘Literally, ‘a half’: the words ‘half a shekel,’ etc., appear to be inserted only for emphasis, to enforce the accuracy to be observed in the payment, Exodus 30:13.’

The amount of bronze mentioned here is also staggering, Exodus 38:29, which isn’t surprising when we consider all the items which were made from bronze. The bronze of the offering had been brought by the people in answer to the invitation of Moses, Exodus 35:24 / Exodus 38:30 / Exodus 38:31.

The sockets were made of bronze, Exodus 38:30 / Exodus 36:38, and the altar and grate were made of bronze, Exodus 36:1 / Exodus 36:4. The vessels are also made of bronze, Exodus 38:31 / Exodus 36:3. The sockets of the court were made of bronze, Exodus 36:31 / Exodus 36:14 / Exodus 36:15 / Exodus 36:17 / Exodus 36:19. And finally, the pins of the tabernacle and the court were made of bronze, Exodus 36:20. We don't need to wonder where the Israelites got all this wealth; God said they wouldn't leave Egypt empty-handed. The Israelites obtained all of the material from Egypt, Exodus 12:36. Since the Israelites freely received much of these precious metals from the Egyptians, they, in turn, freely gave the same to Moses for the construction of the tabernacle.

We must remember that all the precious metals would have been considered to be their own individually, but they were willing to give them to the collective possession of the entire nation. When individuals give to a collective effort, they demonstrate their eagerness to be as one, 2 Corinthians 8:4.

CHAPTER 39

INTRODUCTION

‘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.’ Exodus 39:1

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

As we go through this chapter, you will notice the phrase, ‘the Lord commanded Moses’ six times, Exodus 39:1 / Exodus 39:5 / Exodus 39:7 / Exodus 39:21 / Exodus 39:26 / Exodus 39:31. Moses’ brother Aaron, along with his sons Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, were to serve as priests, Exodus 28:1.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The pairing of the names of Nadab and Abihu and those of Eleazar and Ithamar in Exodus 28:1 is of deep interest. The first pair lost their lives in the very act of their consecration through disrespect for the Word of God, and it was through the latter pair alone that the Aaronic line continued: ‘Eleazar succeeded Aaron as High Priest, Numbers 3:4, later the descendants of Ithamar became High Priests from Eli through Abiathar, 1 Samuel 2:27-28 / 1 Kings 2:26-27.’ At a time still later, the sons of Eleazar again resumed the office from Zadok onward, 1 Chronicles 6:8-15.’ Sacred garments were to be made for Aaron to give him dignity and honour, Exodus 28:2. God had blessed skilled workers with wisdom to make this garment for Aaron for his consecration, in order that Aaron may serve God as priest, Exodus 39:1 / Exodus 28:3.

The garments to be made for Aaron and his sons, so they can serve God as priests, were a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban and a sash, Exodus 28:4. They are to use gold, blue, purple, scarlet yarn, and fine linen, Exodus 39:1 / Exodus 28:5.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The priests had to wear these garments when they served in the tabernacle ritual, but they could not wear them at other times, Exodus 35:19 / Leviticus 16:4 / Leviticus 16:23-24.’

The garments described here were for the high priest, for Aaron and his successor. The purpose of the ornate garments was for two reasons.

1. The garments were a sign to all that God had designated the heritage of Aaron to function as priests throughout the generations of Israel.

The style of their clothing would be a reminder to both the people and Aaron’s sons that they were established as mediators between God and Israel.

2. The ornate beauty of the priests’ garments brought their clothing into conformity with the beauty of the tabernacle.

THE EPHOD

‘They made the ephod of gold, and of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen. 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. They made shoulder pieces for the ephod, which were attached to two of its corners, so it could be fastened. Its skilfully 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. They mounted the onyx stones in gold filigree settings and engraved them like a seal with the names of the sons of Israel. Then they fastened them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod as memorial stones for the sons of Israel, as the LORD commanded Moses.’
Exodus 39:2-7

The ephod is the apron-like garment worn by the high priest, and it was made in four colours, blue, purple, scarlet and the white of the fine linen, Exodus 39:2-5 / Exodus 28:6-8.

These are the same colours that can be seen at the door to the outer court, Exodus 27:9-15, the door to the sanctuary, Exodus 26:36-37, and in the veil, Exodus 26:31-35, they refer to Christ as He is revealed in the four Gospels.

In the four colours, we see Jesus as He was in His earthly ministry. Jesus has lived as a man on earth, a working man, the carpenter of Nazareth, Mark 6:3. He also knows what is involved when having to rely on others to provide for His living, Luke 8:3.

He knows what it means to be tired out, John 4:6, hungry, Matthew 4:2 / Mark 6:31, thirsty, John 4:7, pressurised, Mark 1:32-34 / Mark 2:2 / Mark 5:22-24, tempted, Luke 4:2 / Hebrews 2:18, bereaved, John 11:35. Desperate in prayer, Luke 22:44 / Hebrews 5:7, disappointed by friends in a time of need, Luke 22:45-46, in pain, Matthew 27:26, mocked and spat on, Matthew 27:29-31, He knows what it is to die, Luke 23:46. Because He has passed through all these experiences, and many others also, the four colours tell us He is able to sympathize with us, Hebrews 4:15.

There is an important additional feature of the ephod, though gold thread, cut from a gold plate, was interwoven with the other colours, Exodus 39:3. Gold is not only precious, but it also implies ‘of God, divine and heavenly’. The gold thread is a beautiful ‘type’ of Christ’s heavenly ministry as the great High Priest for His own.

He is risen from the dead, He has ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 / Hebrews 1:3. There, as a merciful and compassionate High Priest, Jesus always lives and prays for His own to help them in their difficulties, Hebrews 2:17.

Furthermore, because He is risen from the dead and ascended to heaven, He is also ABLE to do something through His interceding for us, **Hebrews 7:25**. He aids us, **Hebrews 2:16**, showing us His mercy and ministering to us the supply of His grace to help in times of need, **Hebrews 4:16**, especially when we face temptation, **Hebrews 2:18**.

THE SHOULDER STONES

On each shoulder piece of the ephod was a precious stone, **Exodus 39:6 / Exodus 28:9**. Six names were written on each of the stones, altogether naming the twelve tribes of Israel, **Exodus 39:6 / Exodus 28:10-11**.

Josephus, in his writings, says the following.

‘The names of Jacob’s six oldest sons were on the stone on the right shoulder, and the names of his six youngest sons were on the stone on the left.’

The names known to the high priest are engraved on the stones, **Exodus 39:6 / Exodus 28:11**. This is no passing whim; they cannot be erased. ‘I give My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand,’ **John 10:28**.

Every time the high priest went before God at the golden incense altar, **Exodus 30:1-10**, the names of all the people of God were upon His shoulders, **Exodus 36:7 / Exodus 28:12**. They are to make gold filigree settings and two braided chains of pure gold, like a rope, and attach the chains to the settings, **Exodus 39:6 / Exodus 28:13-14**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning these stones.

‘The symbolism of these indicated that when the High Priest fulfilled his mission of entering the Holy of Holies, he did so as a representative of all Israel. These memorial stones were a reminder primarily to Israel of this supplication upon their behalf, and also to Aaron in order that he might not forget that his was a mission ON BEHALF OF the whole nation.’

Jesus is the Good Shepherd, **John 10:11**. He knows His sheep, **John 10:14**, and goes after each one that is lost in the wilderness, **Luke 15:4**. Individually, when He finds each sheep that is lost, the Good Shepherd lays them on His shoulder, **Luke 15:5-7**.

The shoulder stones represent the collective good shepherding by the Lord Jesus in millions of lives. He bears them all before God, as today in heaven, He is interceding for us, **Romans 8:34 / Hebrews 7:25**. The shoulders speak of His strength. How powerful and prevailing His intercession has been in our lives!

THE BREASTPIECE

‘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. It was square—a span long and a span wide—and folded double. Then they mounted four rows of precious stones on it. The first row was carnelian, chrysolite and beryl; the second row was turquoise, lapis lazuli and emerald; the third row was jacinth, agate, and amethyst; the fourth row was topaz, onyx, and jasper. They were mounted in gold filigree settings. 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. For the breastpiece they made braided chains of pure gold, like a rope. They made two gold filigree settings and two gold rings and fastened the rings to two of the corners of the breastpiece. They fastened the two gold chains to the rings at the corners of the breastpiece, and the other ends of the chains to the two settings, attaching them to the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front. They made two gold rings and attached them to the other two corners of the breastpiece on the inside edge

next to the ephod. 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. 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.’ Exodus 39:7-21

The breastpiece was for making decisions, Exodus 28:15, and like the ephod, the colours used were gold, blue, purple, scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen, Exodus 39:2-5 / Exodus 39:8 / Exodus 28:16 / Exodus 28:6-8.

The breastplate was square in its proportions, Exodus 28:16 / Exodus 39:9, and the breastplate was folded double to form a pocket, Exodus 39:9 / Exodus 28:16. Four rows of precious stones were to be mounted upon it, Exodus 39:10 / Exodus 28:17.

There were twelve precious stones, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel, Exodus 39:10-13 / Exodus 28:17-20 /. Each stone had the name of the respective tribe engraved upon it, Exodus 39:14 / Exodus 28:21. For the breastpiece they are to make braided chains of pure gold, like a rope, Exodus 39:15 / Exodus 28:22.

Two gold rings were also to be made for the breastplate and they were to be fastened to two corners of the breastpiece, Exodus 39:16 / Exodus 28:23. They are to fasten the two gold chains to the rings at the corners of the breastpiece, and the other ends of the chains to the two settings, attaching them to the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front, Exodus 39:17-18 / Exodus 28:24-25 /.

Two gold rings were to be made which were to be attached to the other two corners of the breastpiece on the inside edge next to the ephod, Exodus 39:19 / Exodus 28:26.

Another two gold rings were to be made and they were to be attached to the bottom of the shoulder pieces on the front of the ephod, close to the seam just above the waistband of the ephod, Exodus 39:20 / Exodus 28:27.

In order to stop the breastpiece from swinging out of the ephod, the rings of the breastpiece were to be tied to the rings of the ephod with blue cord, connecting it to the waistband, Exodus 39:21 / Exodus 28:28.

The high priest bears the names on the breastplate ‘over His heart’ when he goes before the Lord ‘as a memorial,’ Exodus 28:29, foreshadowing the eternal love of the Lord Jesus for His sheep, John 13:1. This shows the Good Shepherd knows His sheep so well He calls them each by their own name, John 10:3.

As the high priest goes about the service of the Holy Place, wearing the breastplate with the engraved names, he passes the lampstand and light shines onto the names, the Light of Life, John 8:12.

He approaches the showbread table and the names correspond with one another in a fellowship of nourishment, the Bread of Life, John 6:35, he comes before the golden incense altar and bears the names individually and collectively before God, praying that we may be given eternal life, which means to know the only true God in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, John 17:3.

Here in the Holy Place, the emphasis is on life. Jesus the great High Priest has come so that they, the names, may have life, even eternal life, and have it abundantly, John 10:10. The High Priest must yet bring us into the Holy of Holies for the fullest view and experience of eternal life, though.

For us to enter in and have this life abundantly and eternally, the veil must be removed. It must be rent from top to bottom, by God, Matthew 27:51. Then we have access through Him, the veil, inside One Spirit, typified by both the anointed unique high priest and by the anointed Tabernacle, now made into just one room, unto the Father, Ephesians 2:18.

Jesus, our great High Priest, carries the names of all His redeemed ones on His strong shoulders. Besides that, all the individual names are brought together in groups, separated only by genealogy and by locality of dwelling, like the tribes of Israel.

The collective names are permanent, like each engraved stone of the breastplate, carried on His loving heart. The breastplate is therefore a foreshadowing of the one church expressed as local churches, one in each place, in God’s design.

URIM AND THUMMIM

Although there is no mention of the Urim and the Thummim here, it's worth noting what they were. The Urim and the Thummim were to be kept in the breastpiece, so they may be over Aaron's heart whenever he enters the presence of the LORD, and so Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the LORD, **Exodus 28:30**.

The breastplate was folded double to form a pocket **Exodus 39:9 / Exodus 28:16**. Inside the pocket, the Urim and Thummim were kept. Urim means 'lights' and Thummim means 'perfections'. They were probably two jewels. When someone had to make an important decision, the request was made known to the high priest. He would stand before the lampstand, holding the Urim in one hand and the Thummim in the other.

As the light reflected from the Urim and the Thummim onto the stones of the breastplate, this flash of light provided up to twenty-four combinations, two by twelve. Since there are twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet, the flashes of light could produce strings of letters.

As God breathed through the ark, the veil would move, permitting a breeze to flicker the flames in the Lampstand to momentarily alter the direction of the light onto the Urim and Thummim, and thence to the Breastplate. Thus, God was able to communicate directly, but not audibly, to the high priest and answer the enquiry.

The Urim and Thummim were a means of revelation entrusted to the high priest. No description of them is given. This oracular apparently consisted of a material object or objects since it was physically stored in the breastpiece of the high priest, **Exodus 28:30 / Leviticus 8:8**.

Most people today think that the Urim and Thummim were a lottery oracle, but this is by no means certain. Besides being mentioned by their full name, **Exodus 28:30**, and **Leviticus 8:8**, and **Ezra 2:63**, and **Nehemiah 7:65**, in reverse order with possessives, **Deuteronomy 33:8**, the Urim and Thummim could also be referred to by Urim alone, **Numbers 27:21**, and **1 Samuel 28:6**.

Sometimes the mention of the ephod, on which the breastpiece housing the Urim and Thummim were fastened, includes a reference to the Urim and Thummim, **1 Samuel 23:9-12**, and **1 Samuel 30:7-8**. Also, the verb 'inquire of' followed by 'the Lord' or 'God' when no means of revelation is specified refers to a usage of the Urim and Thummim.

The Urim and Thummim were used at critical moments in the history of God's people when special divine guidance was needed. The civil leader was expected to make use of this means for all important matters for which he needed direction.

Although referred to in **Ezra 2:63** and **Nehemiah 7:65**, there is no convincing evidence that the Urim and Thummim were used after the time of David. The reason for the demise of the Urim and Thummim is not explicitly given. Since the Urim and Thummim, in whatever way they functioned, were a physical means of revelation, it appears that God was taking his people away from the easy certainty inherent in a mechanical means of revelation to the more consistent use of prophecy and the Word alone.

This would require the more difficult application of the norms for true and false prophecy, **Deuteronomy 13:1-4** and **Deuteronomy 18:20-22** and thus necessitate a faithful teaching priesthood, **Deuteronomy 33:10 / Malachi 2:7**. Although the lot theory has wide support today, there are significant difficulties in identifying the Urim and Thummim. It is questionable whether the key evidence, the Greek text of **1 Samuel 14:41**, is really to be preferred over the Hebrew text.

Also, the vocabulary of lot casting is not used, and the answers contain more information than the casting of lots could yield, e.g. 1 Samuel 1:1, and 1 Samuel 5:23-24.

This last point suggests the involvement of prophecy and the divine inspiration of the high priest in giving revelation. It can also be noted that the use of the actual object(s) constituting the Urim and Thummim appears to have been self-authenticating.

Even in extremely difficult circumstances, the guidance of the Urim and Thummim is followed, **Judges 20:18-28**. It could be theorised that a perfect light that miraculously shone from the gem(s) constituting the Urim and Thummim, which belonged to God, **Deuteronomy 33:8**, gave the needed authentication to the actual answer spoken by the high priest under divine inspiration.

In this way, the judgment of the Urim, the light, may have been given, **Numbers 27:21**. Such authentication would not have been out of place in Old Testament times when special signs were provided more often.

Newton, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They were something in Aaron’s breastplate, but what, critics and commentators are by no means agreed. It is most probable that they were only names given to signify the clearness and certainty of Divine answers which were obtained by the High Priest consulting God with his breastplate on, in contradistinction to the obscure, enigmatical, uncertain, and imperfect answers of the heathen oracles.’

OTHER PRIESTLY GARMENTS

‘They made the robe of the ephod entirely of blue cloth—the work of a weaver—with an opening in the centre of the robe like the opening of a collar, and a band around this opening, so that it would not tear. They made pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen around the hem of the robe. And they made bells of pure gold and attached them around the hem between the pomegranates. The bells and pomegranates alternated around the hem of the robe to be worn for ministering, as the LORD commanded Moses. For Aaron and his sons, they made tunics of fine linen—the work of a weaver—and the turban of fine linen, the linen caps, and the undergarments of finely twisted linen. The sash was made of finely twisted linen and blue, purple, and scarlet yarn—the work of an embroiderer—as the LORD commanded Moses. 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. Then they fastened a blue cord to it to attach it to the turban, as the LORD commanded Moses.’ Exodus 39:22-31

The robe of the ephod was made entirely of blue, **Exodus 39:22 / Exodus 28:31**. It had an opening for the head in the middle, and in order to stop it from tearing, a woven edge like a collar was to be made, **Exodus 39:23 / Exodus 28:32**. Fields, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This pullover robe of one piece reminds us of Christ’s seamless robe. **John 19:23** seems almost an indirect reference to Christ’s High Priestly office.’

It had a hem, attached to which were pomegranate motifs, in blue, purple, and scarlet, with golden bells alternating in between the pomegranates, **Exodus 39:24-26 / Exodus 28:33-34**.

Keil and Delitzsch, in their commentary, say the following.

‘The pomegranate was probably a symbol of the spiritually nourishing quality of God’s Word, **Proverbs 25:11 / Psalms 19:8-11 / Psalms 119:25 / Psalms 119:43 / Psalms 119:50 / Deuteronomy 8:3 / Proverbs 9:8 / Ecclesiastes 12:9-11 / Ecclesiastes 12:13**. The bell was evidently a symbol of the sounding or proclamation of God’s Word through testimony.’

Aaron must wear it when he ministers and the sound of the bells will be heard when he enters the Holy Place and when he comes out, so that he will not die, **Exodus 28:35**.

The golden bells were an audible announcement of the high priest's service, a beautiful sound, backed up by beautiful fruits, the pomegranates. This same balance of words and deeds we find in the Lord Jesus, **Luke 24:19**.

ORDINARY PRIEST

The tunics, **Exodus 39:26 / Exodus 28:39**, were made of white linen, as was the tunic. The belt or sash, **Exodus 39:28 / Exodus 28:40**, was wound around the tunic and the two ends were tied in front. It was about three inches wide and quite long.

The cap, **Exodus 39:28 / Exodus 28:40**, was not of the kind that we are used to, but rather a long strip of fabric that was wound around the head. Tunics, sashes, and caps for Aaron's sons were to be made to give them dignity and honour, **Exodus 28:40**. When Aaron and his sons put these clothes on, Moses is to anoint and ordain them, they are to be consecrated so they may serve God as priests, **Exodus 28:41**.

Undergarments were to be made as a covering for the body, reaching from the waist to the thigh, **Exodus 39:27-28 / Exodus 28:42**. Aaron and his sons must wear them whenever they enter the tent of meeting or approach the altar to minister in the Holy Place, so that they will not incur guilt and die **Exodus 28:43**.

This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants, **Exodus 28:43**. No priest, neither ordinary priest nor the High Priest himself, was fit to serve in the tabernacle unless he was wearing the priestly garments.

The lay, or ordinary, priests must wear four garments. The belt was woven with four kinds of threads: blue, purple, scarlet, and fine white linen, **Exodus 39:5 / Exodus 28:5**.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The clothing described in these verses appears to be the garments the priests, other than the high priest, wore. All the priests ministered barefoot out of reverence for the holiness of God, **Exodus 3:5 / Joshua 5:15**.’

Cook, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The dress of white linen was the strictly sacerdotal dress common to the whole body of priests, **Ezekiel 44:17-18**. The linen suit which the High Priest put on when he went into the Holy of Holies was wholly of white linen, even including the girdle.’

These garments were made from white linen; hence, they were referred to as the ‘garments of white,’ and they were also worn by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement.

This is a picture of the high priest in his ‘holy garments for ministering in the Holy Place,’ **Exodus 39:1 / Leviticus 16:4 / Leviticus 16:23**. Aaron was the first high priest, and he was Moses' brother. After Aaron died, subsequent high priests were his descendants, the sons of Aaron.

The high priest was responsible for the tabernacle, its daily offerings, and functions and also its regular feasts, three times in the year, at Passover, at Pentecost and at the Day of Atonement, which was followed by a week of joy in the Feast of Tabernacles, as seen from **Leviticus 23**.

On the Day of Atonement, it was uniquely the high priest's responsibility to take the blood of the sacrificed goat into the Holy of Holies on behalf of all God's people, for the forgiveness of their sins.

This awesome responsibility required a sanctified person, **Exodus 29**, the high priest, dressed in ‘holy garments’. The uppermost holy garment is apron-like and is called the Ephod. On top of the Ephod, there is the square breastplate, with twelve precious stones.

On the shoulders are two additional precious stones. The blue garment is called the robe, under which the high priest wore a white, fine linen woven tunic. On his head is the white fine linen turban. Round the base of the turban is the crown of gold, saying 'HOLY TO THE LORD', Exodus 39:30 / Exodus 28:36.

All of these garments and items have a wonderful significance. Once we understand what these tell us about the heavenly High Priest, Jesus, we will find a deep-seated thankfulness rising up from within our spirit, and an encouragement to draw near to God with a purified heart in full assurance of faith, Hebrews 13:15 / Hebrews 10:22.

THE TURBAN AND THE CROWN

Attached to the turban and upon the forehead of the high priest was the crown, a gold plate on which 'HOLY TO THE LORD' was engraved, Exodus 39:30 / Exodus 28:36 / Zechariah 14:20. This seal of God is legitimately there on the forehead of our Lord Jesus Christ, our great High Priest.

They were to fasten a blue cord to it to attach it to the turban; it is to be on the front of the turban, Exodus 39:31 / Exodus 28:37. It will be on Aaron's forehead, and he will bear the guilt involved in the sacred gifts the Israelites consecrate, whatever their gifts may be, and it was to be on Aaron's forehead continually so that they will be acceptable to the LORD, Exodus 28:38 / Isaiah 53:6.

The turban was made of white fine linen, Exodus 39:27 / Exodus 28:39, and the sash was to be made of finely twisted linen and blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, the work of an embroiderer, Exodus 39:29 / Exodus 28:39.

Generally, fine white linen signifies righteous deeds, Revelation 19:8. Here, the emphasis is on our mind, the covering of our thought processes, 'taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,' 2 Corinthians 10:5, by taking 'the helmet of salvation,' Ephesians 6:17.

Our mind is the big problem. When Zechariah saw the vision of Joshua, Zechariah 3:1-5, the Lord began to address the problem of the filthy garments by putting a clean Turban on his head.

Since the Hebrew words for Joshua, 'Yoshuah' and salvation, 'yeshuah', are so close, we see here the picture of taking up the helmet of salvation, to deal with our filthy thoughts of unrighteousness.

But for us, whom He has also made priests, Revelation 1:5-6, there is a clear indication that we are not just to be outwardly dressed up in Christ; He must transform us, by the renewing of our mind that we may prove the will of God, our sanctification, Romans 12:2 / 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

How we need to be renewed in the spirit of our mind, to put on the new man created in righteousness and true holiness, Ephesians 4:23-24 / Hebrews 3:1 / Hebrews 4:14-16.

MOSES INSPECTS THE TABERNACLE

'So all the work on the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, was completed. The Israelites did everything just as the LORD commanded Moses. Then they brought the tabernacle to Moses: the tent and all its furnishings, its clasps, frames, crossbars, posts and bases; the covering of ram skins dyed red and the covering of another durable leather and the shielding curtain; the ark of the covenant law with its poles and the atonement cover; the table with all its articles and the bread of the Presence; the pure gold lampstand with its row of lamps and all its accessories, and the olive oil for the light; the gold altar, the anointing oil, the fragrant incense, and the curtain for the entrance to the tent; the bronze altar with its bronze grating, its poles and all its utensils; the basin with its stand; the curtains of the courtyard with its posts and bases, and the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard; the ropes and tent pegs for the courtyard; all the furnishings for the tabernacle, the tent of meeting; and the woven garments worn for ministering in the sanctuary,

both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when serving as priests. The Israelites had done all the work just as the LORD had commanded Moses. Moses inspected the work and saw that they had done it just as the LORD had commanded. So Moses blessed them.’ Exodus 39:32-43

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This refers to the command given in **Exodus 25:40**; and Moses has taken care to repeat everything in the most circumstantial detail, to show that he had conscientiously observed all the directions he had received.’

It’s now time for Moses to inspect the work which was done in the building preparation of the tabernacle, **Exodus 39:32-42**. It took a total of six months to complete the tabernacle, and after completion, he inspected the work, making sure that it was built according to the pattern which God showed him, **Exodus 39:43 / Exodus 25:9**.

Keil and Delitzsch, in their commentary, say the following.

‘The readiness and liberality with which the people had presented the gifts required for this work, and the zeal which they had shown in executing the whole of the work in rather less than half a year (see at **Exodus 40:17**), were most cheering signs of the willingness of the Israelites to serve the Lord, for which they could not fail to receive the blessing of God.’

When God approved the work of the Israelites in constructing the tabernacle, His approval was a witness to the fact that Israel had learned her lesson not to construct religion and religious articles after their own desires. Israel was now ready to be the nation of God.

This was a real object lesson from God, which required total obedience. As a result of this, Moses was moved to bless his people for their efforts and obedience, **Exodus 39:43**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Gave them that praise which was due to their skill, diligence, and fidelity. See this meaning of the original word in **Genesis 2:3**.’

CHAPTER 40

INTRODUCTION

‘Then the LORD said to Moses: “Set up the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, on the first day of the first month. Place the ark of the covenant law in it and shield the ark with the curtain. Bring in the table and set out what belongs on it. Then bring in the lampstand and set up its lamps. Place the gold altar of incense in front of the ark of the covenant law and put the curtain at the entrance to the tabernacle.” Exodus 40:1-5

SETTING UP THE TABERNACLE

The setting up of the tabernacle happened on the ‘first day of the month’, **Exodus 40:1**, which was exactly two years after they departed from Egypt. And as we know, the tabernacle had to be built according to the pattern God gave Moses and assembled according to the pattern God gave Moses, **Exodus 25:9 / Exodus 39:43**.

Moses is to place the ark of the covenant, Exodus 25:10-16, its curtain, Exodus 26:31-35, the table, Exodus 25:23-30, and the bread which was to place on it, Exodus 25:30.

The lampstand, it's lamps, Exodus 25:31-40, the gold altar of incense, Exodus 30:1-10, and the entrance curtain, Exodus 26:36-37, exactly where God wanted them placed, Exodus 40:1-5.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The directions given in Leviticus 24:5-9 are here presupposed and must have been issued before this chapter was written.’

“Place the altar of burnt offering in front of the entrance to the tabernacle, the tent of meeting; place the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar and put water in it. Set up the courtyard around it and put the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard.” Exodus 40:6-8

These were the arrangements for all the items which were to be placed in the courtyard. The outer court itself was open to all Israelites to worship, Exodus 27:9-15. Those who had been redeemed were allowed to enter, Exodus 27:9-19.

Moses is to place the altar of burnt offering, Exodus 27:1-8, the basin, Exodus 30:17-21, the courtyard, Exodus 26:7-14, the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard, Exodus 26:7-14, exactly where God wanted them placed, Exodus 40:6-8.

“Take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and everything in it; consecrate it and all its furnishings, and it will be holy. Then anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils; consecrate the altar, and it will be most holy. Anoint the basin and its stand and consecrate them.” Exodus 40:9-11

Notice the tabernacle was to be anointed when it was erected, Exodus 40:9. Using the special anointing oil, Exodus 30:22-33, Moses anointed the tabernacle in order to designate it to be holy, Exodus 40:9 / Exodus 30:29.

All of the items were also to be anointed with the special anointing oil, Exodus 40:9-11. Once holy, that is set apart, it is sanctified; it wasn't to be touched by anyone other than the designated priests whose job it was to transport the tabernacle from one place to another, Leviticus 8:1-13.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The position of the altar exposed it to the chance of being touched by the people when they assembled in the court, while they were not permitted to enter the tabernacle.’

‘Bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance to the tent of meeting and wash them with water. Then dress Aaron in the sacred garments, anoint him and consecrate him so he may serve me as priest. Bring his sons and dress them in tunics. Anoint them just as you anointed their father, so they may serve me as priests. Their anointing will be to a priesthood that will continue throughout their generations.” Moses did everything just as the LORD commanded him.’ Exodus 40:12-16

Moses is told to bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting and wash them with water, Exodus 40:12. Aaron is to be dressed in the sacred garments, Exodus 28:1-39, anointed and consecrated so he may serve God as priest, Exodus 40:13.

Next, Aaron's sons are to be dressed in tunics, Exodus 40:14 / Exodus 28:40-43, and anointed just as Moses anointed Aaron, so they may serve God as priests, Exodus 40:15. The full description of this dedication ceremony for the priests is found in Leviticus 8 and Leviticus 9.

Notice that ‘their anointing will be to a priesthood that will continue throughout their generations’, Exodus 40:15. We mustn't understand this to mean that this priesthood would be everlasting or eternal, as some understand the words. Jesus is the only everlasting high priest, Hebrews 7:17 / Hebrews 7:23-25 / Hebrews 7:28, and so, the priesthood of Aaron and his sons ended in Christ.

In the statement that Aaron's priesthood 'will continue throughout their generations', God was simply stating that it wouldn't go out of existence until He took it out of existence. When Jesus came, God terminated the existence of the priesthood of Aaron.

Moses oversees the assembly of the tabernacle and does everything the Lord commanded him, [Exodus 40:16](#). This phrase appears eight times through this chapter, [Exodus 40:16](#) / [Exodus 40:19](#) / [Exodus 40:21](#) / [Exodus 40:23](#) / [Exodus 40:25](#) / [Exodus 40:27](#) / [Exodus 40:29](#) / [Exodus 40:32](#).

'So the tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month in the second year. When Moses set up the tabernacle, he put the bases in place, erected the frames, inserted the crossbars, and set up the posts. Then he spread the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering over the tent, as the LORD commanded him.' Exodus 40:17-19

The tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month in the second year, [Exodus 40:17](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'That is, on the first of the month Nisan, [Exodus 12:2](#) / [Exodus 13:4](#), one year, wanting fourteen days, after the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. They had been nearly three months in reaching the foot of Mount Sinai, [Exodus 19:1](#). Moses had spent eighty days on the mountain, [Exodus 24:18](#) / [Exodus 34:28](#), and some time must be allowed for what is related in [Exodus 24](#), as well as for the interval between the two periods which Moses spent on the mountain, [Exodus 33:1-23](#). The construction of the tabernacle and its furniture would thus appear to have occupied something less than half a year.'

It goes up by setting up the boards, [Exodus 26:15-30](#), covering them with the curtains, [Exodus 40:18](#) / [Exodus 26:7-14](#). Notice that Moses again oversees the assembly of the tabernacle and does everything the Lord commanded him, [Exodus 40:19](#).

'He took the tablets of the covenant law and placed them in the ark, attached the poles to the ark and put the atonement cover over it. Then he brought the ark into the tabernacle and hung the shielding curtain and shielded the ark of the covenant law, as the LORD commanded him.' Exodus 40:20-21

The Ark of the Covenant is set in the Most Holy Place. The tablets of the covenant law are to be placed in the ark, [Exodus 25:16](#) / [Exodus 25:21](#) / [Hebrews 9:4](#); the poles for carrying the ark are to be attached, [Exodus 25:10-16](#). The atonement cover was to be placed over it, [Exodus 25:17-22](#), and the veil is set in place, [Exodus 40:21](#) / [Exodus 26:31-35](#). Moses again oversees the assembly of the tabernacle and does everything the Lord commanded him, [Exodus 40:21](#).

'Moses placed the table in the tent of meeting on the north side of the tabernacle outside the curtain and set out the bread on it before the LORD, as the LORD commanded him.' Exodus 40:22-23

The table of showbread is put in the Holy Place, [Exodus 25:23-30](#). It is to be placed on the north side of the tabernacle outside the curtain, [Exodus 26:31-35](#), and the bread is to be set out on it before the LORD, [Exodus 40:22](#) / [Exodus 28:1](#). Moses again oversees the assembly of the tabernacle and does everything the Lord commanded him, [Exodus 40:23](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Moses took part with them, and most likely took the lead, until they were consecrated and invested, [Leviticus 8](#) and publicly set apart for the office.'

'He placed the lampstand in the tent of meeting opposite the table on the south side of the tabernacle and set up the lamps before the LORD, as the LORD commanded him.' Exodus 40:24-25

The lampstand is put in the Holy Place, Exodus 25:31-40. It is to be placed opposite the table on the south side of the tabernacle, with the lamps set up before the LORD, Exodus 40:24. Moses again oversees the assembly of the tabernacle and does everything the Lord commanded him, Exodus 40:25.

‘Moses placed the gold altar in the tent of meeting in front of the curtain and burned fragrant incense on it, as the LORD commanded him.’ Exodus 40:26-27

The golden altar of incense is put in the Holy Place, Exodus 30:1-10. It was to be placed in front of the curtain, and Moses burned fragrant incense on it, Exodus 40:26 / Exodus 30:34-37. Moses again oversees the assembly of the tabernacle and does everything the Lord commanded him, Exodus 40:27.

‘Then he put up the curtain at the entrance to the tabernacle.’ Exodus 40:28

The screen is hung at the entrance of the tabernacle, Exodus 26:36-37.

‘He set the altar of burnt offering near the entrance to the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, and offered on it burnt offerings and grain offerings, as the LORD commanded him.’ Exodus 40:29

The bronze altar is put in its place, and Moses offerings are burnt, Exodus 29:15-18, and grain offerings, Exodus 29:41 / Leviticus 2:1-16 / Leviticus 6:14-23, on it. Moses again oversees the assembly of the tabernacle and does everything the Lord commanded him.

‘He placed the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar and put water in it for washing, and Moses and Aaron and his sons used it to wash their hands and feet. They washed whenever they entered the tent of meeting or approached the altar, as the LORD commanded Moses.’ Exodus 40:30-32

The laver for washing is put in between the altar and the tent, Exodus 40:30 / Exodus 30:17-21. Moses, Aaron, and his sons used it to wash their hands and feet, and they washed whenever they entered the tent of meeting or approached the altar, Exodus 40:31-32. Moses again oversees the assembly of the tabernacle and does everything the Lord commanded him, Exodus 40:31.

‘Then Moses set up the courtyard around the tabernacle and altar and put up the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard. And so Moses finished the work.’ Exodus 40:33

The outer court is now set up, Exodus 26:7-14 / Exodus 27:9-19. When the tabernacle was finally assembled, it was an earthly model of a heavenly reality. It was built exactly according to the pattern that God gave him, Hebrews 8:5. It’s interesting to note that the tabernacle was really a foreshadowing of the heavenly things to come. In Revelation 4:1-6, the Ark of the Covenant, the lampstand, and the laver all correspond to a heavenly reality. In Revelation 8:2-4, the altar of incense in heaven is mentioned.

In Isaiah 6:1-7, the tabernacle structure is implied by the mention of the temple, and the bronze altar is described.

In Hebrews 9:23-24, it tells us that at some point in time, after the cross, Jesus entered the heavenly reality represented on earth by the tabernacle and appeared in the presence of God to offer a perfect atonement for our sins.

THE GLORY OF THE LORD

‘Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out; but if the cloud did

not lift, they did not set out—until the day it lifted. So the cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the Israelites during all their travels.’ Exodus 40:34-38

Once the tabernacle was erected, God visibly demonstrated His approval of what the workmen had done in fulfilling all His commandments concerning the construction. The cloud thus became a permanent feature of the tabernacle, Exodus 40:34.

Notice that Moses couldn’t enter the tabernacle because the cloud settled on it, Exodus 40:35. Solomon, when he finished building the temple, experienced the same thing; he wasn’t allowed to enter it because the temple was filled with God’s glory, 1 Kings 8:10-11.

When the cloud moved, the tabernacle was to be moved, and when it stood still in one place, the tabernacle was to remain in that place, Exodus 40:36-37. The presence of the cloud by day and the fire by night was a demonstration that God was continually with Israel, Exodus 40:38.

They had repented of their sin, and so, the coming of the cloud and fire was a continual reminder that God had forgiven their sin and subsequently would be with them throughout their journeys.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This daily and nightly appearance was at once both a merciful providence, and a demonstrative proof of the Divinity of their religion: and these tokens continued with them throughout all their journeys; for, notwithstanding their frequently repeated disobedience and rebellion, God never withdrew these tokens of his presence from them, till they were brought into the promised land.’

God had answered Moses’ prayer, Exodus 33:14, and despite Israel’s sin, God was once again with His people, Exodus 29:45. Israel was now ready to leave Mount Sinai and enter the promised land. Sadly, as we know, because of their doubt, this would not happen until thirty-eight years after the completion of the tabernacle.

Fields, in his commentary, says the following about the history of the tabernacle.

1. It was set up first at Gilgal after Israel crossed Jordon, Joshua 18:1.
2. It was erected at Shiloh and remained there through the period of the Judges, Joshua 19:51 / 1 Samuel 1:3 / 1 Samuel 4:3 / 1 Samuel 12.
3. It was captured by the Philistines, 1 Samuel 4:10-11.
4. It was returned to Israel at Kiriath-Jearim west of Jerusalem, 1 Samuel 7:1.
5. After the time of Eli, it was removed to Nob, north of Jerusalem, 1 Samuel 21:1-9.
6. The ark remained at Kiriath-Jearim until the times of David, 1 Samuel 7:1-2 / 1 Chronicles 13:5-6.
7. About the beginning of David’s reign (1000 B.C.), it was located at Gibeon, 5 miles northwest of Jerusalem, 1 Chronicles 21:29 / 1 Chronicles 16:39-40 / 2 Chronicles 1:3 / 1 Kings 3:4 / 1 Kings 9:2.
8. David brought it in a new cart to Jerusalem, where he had prepared a new tent for it, 2 Samuel 6:17 / 1 Chronicles 16:1.
9. It was replaced by Solomon’s Temple, all except the ark, 1 Kings 8:4 / 1 Kings 8:6. God destroyed Solomon’s Temple by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.
10. After that, no more was heard of the tabernacle, or the ark of the covenant, which was not in Zerubbabel’s Temple (516 B.C.).
11. The Herodian Temple (in the times of Christ) was also destroyed by God by the overthrow of Jerusalem by the armies of Vespasian and Titus in 70 A.D.