

# Exodus

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(Extracted from Scripture Truth Vol. 37, 1951-2.)

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## Exodus 1 — Exodus 2: 10.

The book of Exodus opens with a recapitulation of the sons of Jacob, and with the fact that not only Joseph died but all his brethren and all that generation. But in spite of this their descendents multiplied exceedingly. God was with them and they grew to be a powerful people in the land of Goshen.

As the years lengthened out, a great change came over the whole situation, occasioned by the rising up of a new king, who "knew not Joseph." This expression may not mean that he was unaware of his existence but rather that, regarding him as an interloper and an oppressor, he ignored him altogether.

During the last century or so, our knowledge of Egyptian history has been greatly increased by the discovery of many monuments and other records of the past, coupled with the discovery of the secrets of their hieroglyphic writing, permitting it to be deciphered. It now seems certain that not very long after the death of Joseph the rule of the "Hyksos," or "Shepherd kings," came to an end. There was an uprising of the real, native Egyptians, which thrust them out and put a representative of their ancient dynasties on the throne. Joseph, being allied in race with the Shepherd kings, was of course anathema to the new rulers, and the people of Israel were regarded in a similar light and therefore as a potential

danger for Egypt.

Verses 8-10, then, evidently refer to this state of things that developed as a century or two rolled by, and it led to a complete change in their fortunes. Egypt had been to them a place of refuge, a **kindly sanctuary** in the time of famine and affliction. It now became to them **the house of bondage**. It became the "smoking furnace" that Abraham had seen when the "horror of great darkness" fell upon him, as recorded in Genesis 15: 12. They were enslaved building treasure cities for Pharaoh under the taskmasters.

This did not, however, hinder what God had purposed. Verse 12 records that, "the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." So here was an illustration and verification of the word uttered by the Psalmist, "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress" (Ps. 4: 1). Pharaoh's efforts at suppression were completely neutralized by the abundant increase that God gave.

They did however succeed in making their lives "bitter with hard bondage" in all manner of rigorous service. Egypt is clearly a type of the world, and one of the first steps into spiritual blessing is when the world, that once fascinated us as the scene of our pleasures, is turned for us into a place of bitter bondage. Sin brings bitterness in its train and we cannot escape it. We shall see this presented again in this typical history recorded in Exodus, for in Exodus 12: 8, we read of the "bitter herbs," with which the Passover lamb had to be eaten; and again in Exodus 15: 23, we read of the "bitter" waters of Marah, that met them directly they entered the wilderness. Happy for us, it is, when "**the pleasures of sin**" lose their attraction and instead **the bitterness of sin** fills our souls.

The latter part of the first chapter reveals the desperate measures taken by Pharaoh in the effort to stem what God was doing. His first effort to destroy the male children failed since the fear of God was on the midwives. His second effort, that of casting all the male babies into the river, which was entrusted to the people generally, looked much more like achieving a complete success.

But we open Exodus 2, and we at once discover two things. First that there were still among the children of Israel men and women of faith. This is made plain in Hebrews 11: 23, where the faith, not of Moses, but of his parents is cited. Moses was born and, according to our chapter, his mother hid him for three months, seeing he was a "goodly child." The verse in Hebrews reveals that his father as well as his mother saw that he was "a proper child," and having the eye of faith fixed on God, they were not afraid of the king's commandment. A greater than Pharaoh commanded their allegiance.

The second thing we notice is that again God makes the wrath of man to praise Him. The wicked design of the king prepared the way for the future deliverer of Israel to be brought into his own house and court, and gain an experience of Egyptian customs and ways that stood him in good stead, when, as the fruit of God's discipline he was ready to act in the name of Jehovah. The story of Moses in the ark of rushes is so well known that one need hardly call attention to the skill of the Divine hand, which ordered that Moses should be nursed by his own mother, that she should be paid wages for doing so, and that finally he should be adopted by Pharaoh's daughter. Little did the Pharaoh of that day think that his design of **death** was preserving in **life** the man whom God would use in the days of his successor to overthrow the might of Egypt. But so it was.

Pharaoh's daughter called him Moses, meaning, "Drawn out," because she drew him out of the river. It was however an appropriate name since God had drawn him out, or rather called him out, to be a servant of His in a very special way.

In Exodus we are only told as to Moses so much as suits the purpose of this book, recording Israel's typical redemption from Egypt. Passing from verse 10 of chapter 2, to verse 11, we read what

came to pass "in those days," and we might suppose that the incident recorded took place soon after he came under the protection of Pharaoh's daughter. From the address of Stephen, recorded in Acts 7, we learn that many years, probably more than 20, elapsed between those two verses. He attained to greatness, but it is passed over in silence as far as Exodus is concerned.

Stephen said: "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds." This informs us that he was what the world would call a man of genius. Not a few men can be found who are good talkers — they have oratorical gifts, but are hardly men of action. Others there are, whose ability is seen in what they accomplish. Their actions are wise and powerful, but their powers of speech are small. The man who shines in both spheres is a rarity.

In Moses three things were combined — learning, oratory and action. We might have said: Here is a man fully equipped for God's service! But it was not so!

## Exodus 2: 11 — Exodus 3: 10

From the address of Stephen, in Acts 7, we learn that at the time of the event, recorded in verses 11-15 of our chapter, Moses was "full forty years old." He had reached complete maturity as well as conspicuous greatness in the highest court circles of Egypt and, if we only had the record of Exodus we might be inclined to regard his slaughter of the Egyptian as an act prompted simply by a sudden burst of indignation. We have to read Hebrews 11: 24-26, and then we discover that it was an outward expression of an inward resolve, which had been reached in the power of faith.

In Exodus we are given a brief recital of the **facts** on the surface history of the episode. In Acts 7 we are told of what was **in his mind**, leading him to act as he did. As to the history, he knew that he sprang from Israel and shared Israel's hopes, though he was a great man amongst the Egyptians. The assaulted Hebrew was brother to him. He "looked this way and that way," and as there were no witnesses, he identified himself with the Hebrew and slew the Egyptian. But what was in his heart was the conviction that God by his hand was going to deliver the children of Israel, and "he supposed his brethren would have understood" that such would be the case.

His brethren however did not understand, for they did not share his faith. In result they rejected him as their deliverer, wishing to pursue their own way of wrong-doing, and not to stir up retaliation from the power of Egypt. In Acts 7, Stephen is led to make these points clear, in order to show that in the rejection of the Lord Jesus the Jews had re-enacted, on a scale infinitely more serious, what their fathers had previously done with Moses. In the Lord Jesus there was not the slightest element of imperfection. In Moses there was distinct failure. His desires were right: his action wrong.

How often this has been the case with all the servants of God save the one perfect Servant! Again and again there is with us the "**seeing**" of some "**wrong**," that should be avenged — or possibly of some **right**, that should be established — and then hasty action, confident that God would endorse it. We too have "**supposed**" that we are at liberty to do God's work in our own way and strength, and that all will understand. A New Testament example of this is furnished by Peter. To stand by the Lord in the hour of His trial was surely a good thing, and Peter "supposed" that he had grace and power to do it. As in the case of Moses his discomfiture was complete, but like Moses he afterwards did in the power of God what he failed to do in his own wisdom and strength, as we see in John 21: 19.

But if in Exodus we are given the surface history, and in Acts what was working in the mind of Moses, we discover in Hebrews the amazing **faith that illumined his mind** and led to his great renunciation — as remarkable a decision as any recorded in Scripture. To his faith the nation of slaves

in Egypt were "the people of God." All that Egypt had to offer him were "the pleasures of sin," though indeed there were "the treasures in Egypt." His faith then had about it a quality which reminds us of the X-rays, which pierce to things beneath the surface. It saw through the oppressed Israelites, unattractive as many of them were, and discovered that God was behind them and beneath them. When the treasures of Egypt with all their pleasures passed before his gaze, he discerned far beyond them, and wholly surpassing them, "the recompense of the reward."

Hence he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God," and he "esteemed the reproach of Christ" to be of surpassing worth. All this happened about 1,500 years before the Lord Jesus Christ appeared. When He did appear, we have the supreme example of the One who stooped from the heights of the Divine glory to take up the cause of sinful men, with all the reproach that entailed. The step that Moses took was a slight foreshadowing of that marvellous event. The reproach that it involved for him was in its principle and character the reproach of Christ.

One thing further we must remark. The elevation of Moses, to the position of influence and power he held in Egypt, was a singular act of God's providence. Providence however is not that which is to guide us, but rather faith. His natural reasoning would have said, Providence has placed me in the court of Pharaoh in a most remarkable way, so of course I must be guided by Providence and remain here. Faith discerned that Providence was only a means to an end, preparing him for the step which faith indicated in due time. If we too, in our much smaller affairs, remember that faith in God's word is to guide us, and not Providential dealings, we shall do well.

The immediate effect of this intervention by Moses was his flight from Egypt and consequent sojourn in Midian for forty years. When he found that the thing was known, and his action, however well-intentioned was rejected by his people, he departed. Reading Exodus, we certainly get the impression that the prevailing motive with him was the anger of Pharaoh. Rather a different light upon it is cast by Acts 7: 29. "Then fled Moses **at this saying**" — the saying of the wrongdoer — "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?" So evidently his rejection by his own people was what cut him to the quick. Forty years later they all had to discover that it was GOD, who made him a ruler and judge over them, but for the time being he was lost to them.

In Exodus 2, the next forty years of Moses' life is compressed into verses 15-22. We again see God acting in His providence and giving Moses a home and a wife in a strange land. The name that he gave to his son showed that he realized that Midian was not the place of God's purpose for him, and that he had expectations that lay outside of it. Only Divine support could have enabled him to endure the long years of exile, doing nothing but keeping the sheep of his father-in-law, as we are told in the first verse of Exodus 3. It was a tremendous humiliation after his princely place in Egypt. What sustained him?

Personally we believe that Hebrews 11: 27 refers to this period, though some treat it as referring to the exodus mentioned in verse 29 of that chapter. The events referred to there, up to verse 31, are in chronological order, and unless verse 27 occurred before 28, the order of time would be broken in this solitary instance. Moreover, as we have seen, Acts 7 shows that what moved Moses in his flight was acute disappointment that his well-intended intervention was rejected by the very people on whose behalf he made it; so that they did not recognize him as a man sent by God. It was **that**, and not the wrath of the king, that sent him forth from their midst.

Accepting this view of verse 27, we see at once what it was that sustained him during the dreary years of his exile. The man who had led multitudes amidst the splendours of Egypt, now spends his years leading about a flock of senseless sheep! Yet "he endured, as **seeing Him who is invisible.**" In

Acts 7 it is stated that he acted as "**seeing** one of them suffer wrong." When wrong exists it is well that we should see it but if that is all that we see, we easily go wrong ourselves. It is when the eye of faith is fixed on God, that we go right. We are told that, "faith is . . . the evidence of things **not seen**" (Heb. 11: 1). Faith can see what is unseen to the natural eye.

Thus it was with Moses. God was before the eyes of his heart during all those 40 years, and hence the discipline to which he was subjected bore its wonderful fruit in due season. During his first 40 years he had attained to being a "Somebody" of much importance in Egypt; but during his second 40 years in Midian he learned how to be a "Nobody" in the world of men.

God was going to entrust to him a work of such magnitude that this lengthy period of discipline and humbling was needful.

The closing verses of Exodus 2 relate the death of the Pharaoh of those days, but the oppression of Israel continuing, God heard their cry and groaning, and He remembered His covenant with Abraham. Let us note that His intervention and His redemption of Israel from the house of bondage was under that covenant, and the covenant of law was not propounded until we reach Exodus 19.

Exodus 3. At the end of the 40 years in Midian, Moses had led the flock of Jethro into the vicinity of Horeb, which appears to be a more general term, embracing the mountain group of which Sinai was the chief peak. At that spot God appeared to him, so that he got his commission at the very place to which he was to lead the people after their liberation from Egypt, and where was to be promulgated the law, which is for ever connected with his name.

A number of times in the Old Testament do we get these appearances of God to men, and they vary in mode and character, so as to suit the communication or revelation that had to be made. Here the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a burning bush. Now in both Old and New Testaments the word used is one that signifies a bush of thorns, or, bramble bush; a bush of little worth and one that fire would soon consume. But God was in the bush, and therefore it was not consumed.

Here was a sight that directly contradicted all that was natural, and Moses was drawn to it. He had to learn that though, "our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 19: 29), He could dwell in the midst of a people, who in themselves were thorny and fit fuel for the flames, and yet **not consume them**. It was indeed a "**great sight**," and surely during the forty years in the wilderness, when Jehovah in a pillar of fire dwelt in the midst of rebellious Israel, Moses must have thought upon the way in which God had revealed Himself to him at the start, in His great kindness.

In this incident the Angel, or, Messenger of the Lord is the Lord Himself, as we see if we compare verses 2 and 4. This being so, Moses had to keep at a distance and remove his shoes, as a sign that the place was holy, and he but a servant. Distance there had to be, but it was not nearly so pronounced as it was later when the law was given, and this doubtless because at the outset the Lord revealed Himself to him as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." The God, who had instituted the covenant of promise, was not so awesome, as when He instituted the law from Sinai.

This is the statement to which the Lord referred when He rebuked the Sadducees, as recorded in Matthew 22: 23-33. The patriarchs had died out of the world of men, but they lived in God's presence, and this guaranteed a resurrection in God's appointed hour; a resurrection, moreover, which would involve an entrance into a new and heavenly order of things. It is noticeable too that the Lord referred to the statement as being "spoken unto you." What was said to Moses stands good for all, and for all time.

Having revealed Himself to Moses in this way, He made a declaration of three things. First, of His attention to the cry of His people and His sympathetic concern for their sorrows. For a century or two it must have seemed as though He was indifferent. But it was not so. God is never in a hurry and He intervenes in His own time, which is the right time. The three statements in verse 7 are very touching: He had **seen**; He had **heard**; He **knew** their sorrows. Thus it ever is with all His people, with us among the rest. The deliverance of Israel meant drastic judgments upon Egypt, and our God is slow to anger. Do we wonder why the Lord Jesus, who is coming quickly, has not yet come? Let us remember that His advent will mean tremendous judgments upon a guilty world.

Second, He declared His purpose to deliver His people from the slavery of Egypt and bring them into a land, "flowing with milk and honey." This is what Palestine was, as corroborated by the spies, in Numbers 13: 27; it is what the land will be in a coming day, though for centuries it has lain desolate. The blessings of that land were earthly, but they came from the hand of God and were not won as the result of irrigation and toil as in the case of Egypt.

Third, He told Moses that he was to be the servant, commissioned to face the mighty monarch, Pharaoh, and deliver the children of Israel out of his hand. As stated by Stephen, "This Moses whom they refused . . . the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel, which appeared to him in the bush." What he had attempted to effect in his own wisdom and strength, and failed to do, he is now to accomplish in the wisdom and power of God.

### **Exodus 3: 11 — Exodus 4: 31.**

The hour had struck for God to act but Moses, who forty years before had been so forward, now shrinks backward. God had declared that He would send him, and He never sends any servant without bestowing adequate power for the carrying out of the mission on which he is sent. But for the moment Moses had his eye upon himself and not upon God. His language is "Who am I, that I should go?" During his many years in Midian he had forsaken all thoughts of his own greatness, which was good; but now he had passed to the other extreme

and occupied with himself, was obsessed with the conviction of his own littleness. He had yet to learn that it is the way of God to take up and use just those who are little in their own eyes. Their littleness makes room for God to display His own power.

Hence the assurance God gave "Certainly I will be with thee." This of course guaranteed everything, but Moses was slow to believe it, hence God condescended to give him a token. When God made promise to Abraham, He took account of the frailty of our faith and confirmed His counsel by an oath, as we are reminded in Hebrews 6: 17. With Moses He did not confirm His word by an oath, but by a token, which was fulfilled as we find later in this Book. But Moses had to accept the commission God was giving him and carry it out before the token came to pass; hence the assurance just given to him did not suffice to revive his confidence in undertaking the task.

So in verse 13 we find him raising a great question by way of further objection to what was proposed. The children of Israel had been in a land of idolatry for several centuries, and therefore knew well the names of the false Egyptian deities. Moses was to approach them in the name of the God of their fathers, but, confused in their minds by all that surrounded them, they would be sure to ask, What is His name?

This led to a fresh disclosure on God's part. He made Himself known as the great "I AM" — the One self-existent, ever-existent, unchanging; and therefore ever true to what He is in Himself. Israel

were to prove themselves to be an unstable yet stiff-necked people, so had it not been "I AM" with whom they had to do, they would soon have disappeared in judgment. God bore long with them and will ultimately achieve all His purpose concerning them, because He is ever true to Himself. We do well to remind ourselves that though we now know God in a far more intimate way, as He has been revealed in Christ, yet we do not lose the value of these earlier revelations. The One whom we know as Father is still the "I AM" to us, as much as He was to Moses and the children of Israel.

This fact is expressly stated in verse 15. Looking backward, the "I AM" is "Jehovah God of your fathers." Looking forward, He declares it to be His name for ever and His memorial to all generations. Evidently then this great name carried the revelation of God to a climax, as far as the Old Testament is concerned. Verse 3 of chapter 6 may be consulted at this point. He had been known to the patriarchs as God Almighty, He had been mentioned as the Most High, but "Jehovah" carries within itself a fulness of meaning not found in these. The actual name, Jehovah, was known to the patriarchs, yet they did not understand its full import, which was now to come to light through Moses. Having come to light, it stands good for ever.

Having revealed Himself, and thereby answered Moses' question, God instructed him as to how he should approach the elders of Israel, and then with them approach Pharaoh. To the elders he was to declare God's remembrance of the fathers and His notice and concern regarding all that Egypt had done to them, together with His promise to bring them out, and then into the land flowing with milk and honey. Then to the king they were all to go with the request from Jehovah God of the Hebrews that they be let go three days' journey into the wilderness so that, free of the pollutions of Egypt, they might sacrifice to Him.

At the same time Moses was to be under no illusion as to the way the king would react to this request, so the last four verses of the chapter predict what would happen. As to Pharaoh he would powerfully and stubbornly resist. But Jehovah would stretch out His hand in wonders, smiting in judgment, so that the king's "mighty hand" would lose its might and he would release them. And God would do this in such a way that the common people of Egypt would be glad to see them go. The children of Israel would be able to ask great favours of them and go out enriched. Thus these four verses give a prophecy which we see fulfilled as we read the next ten or eleven chapters.

Unbelievers have seized upon the word "borrow" in verse 22, and raised the objection that it represents God as telling the people to practise deceit by pretending to borrow what they never intended to repay. The word occurs again in Exodus 11: 2 and Exodus 12: 35. But the word really is "ask," and is so translated in Darby's version. The people had been but slaves, working for a mere subsistence. The position was to be entirely reversed, and their former masters would fear them and give them what they asked. All they could carry out of Egypt would be a mere fraction of what was really due to them.

Moses was still not satisfied, and raised a third objection. The people would not listen to him nor believe the Lord had appeared to him. This we see in Exodus 4: 1. He knew they were incredulous by nature. The Lord knew it too, and hence He did not rebuke Moses but rather gave him three miraculous signs, by which he might convince the people of the reality of his mission. Two of the signs were then and there performed on Moses himself.

The first sign we have in verses 2 - 5. A rod is the symbol of authority. Cast to the ground, and thus debased, it becomes thoroughly evil, and even satanic, so that a man may flee from before it. But Moses seized the serpent by the tail, as he was commanded, and it became again a rod in his hand. The bearing of this is plain. In Egypt power was debased and satanic. As ordered by God, Moses was to

seize it, when the authority, rescued from Satan would be in his hands. We live in a day when satanic power is increasingly in evidence. But as Christians we have no command to seize the serpent by the tail. If we attempt to do it before the time, we shall only get bitten in the process. That action is reserved for the One of whom Moses serves as a type. He will do it finally and gloriously at His second advent.

A second sign is given in verses 6 and 7. It deals, not with outward power like the first, but with inward defilement. Moses was to put his hand into his bosom and it came out leprous and defiled. It was not a case of his hand defiling his heart but of his heart defiling his hand. Here we have in picture what our Lord taught in His words, recorded in Mark 7: 21-23. Then as commanded, Moses put his defiled hand to his heart again, and it was restored whole as the other. A sign this, that cleansing must begin in the heart, which is unseen. Only thus can the hand, which is seen, be cleansed.

The significance of these signs would not have been apparent to the people, and may not have been to Moses, but at least they would be evidence that the power of God was with him. But if even these two failed to bring full conviction, a third was enjoined. He was to take some water out of the Nile and pour it out, when it should become blood — a preliminary sample of the first plague that fell upon Egypt. This was a sign of simple judgment. The river Nile was the natural source of Egypt's fertility and prosperity. The earthly fount of their life should become death; their blessing should be made a curse.

We may remark that the record of Moses giving the people these signs is only found in verse 28, and there attributed to Aaron, who was acting as the deputy of Moses.

But even these signs did not remove the objections in the mind of Moses, and so in verse 10 we find him uttering a fourth, based upon his lack of ability in speech, as if the message of God needed human eloquence in order to make it effective. When we remember the statement of Stephen, referring to the time when he was still acknowledged as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, that he was "mighty in words," whereas he now pleads, "I am not eloquent, **neither heretofore . . .**" we are left wondering. But, knowing something of human nature in ourselves, we think it was not that he had really lost his powers of mighty speech, but that while the forty years of discipline in the desert had completely broken his self-confidence, he had also become self-occupied, and thus so unwilling to answer to the call and commission of God.

Therefore what he needed was to become so God-conscious that he might lose sight of himself altogether. Hence the words of the Lord to him, as recorded in verses 11 and 12. The mouth of Moses was to be simply like an instrument upon which the Lord would play, and whether Moses could play well upon it, or could not, was immaterial. This is a lesson which every servant of God needs to learn. The Apostle Paul had learnt it, as we see in 1 Corinthians 2: 1, and again in 2 Corinthians 4: 2 and 7.

Once more, and for the fifth time, Moses wished to decline the honour of this commission from the Lord, as we see in verse 13. The man, who once ran unscathed, now shrinks from running at the command of God, and with the assurance of His accompanying power! But this is just how the flesh acts in every one of us, though any service that the Lord may entrust to us is so minute as compared with his. Such shrinking back may have the appearance of humility but it really springs from **self-occupation**, and in the last analysis we find that the self-occupation is produced not by humility but by **pride**.

Now of all things pride is most distasteful to God, so "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses." In result part of the honour and activity of this great commission was to be transferred to Aaron, who should be the spokesman. Moses however was to be to him "instead of God;" that is, the

Lord would still deal direct with Moses and Aaron would get all his directions through him. The rod that Moses had had in his hand was now, as it were, given back to him from the hand of God, as a sign of the authority with which he was vested. The subsequent history shows the fulfilment of all this. Again and again we read, "The Lord said unto Moses;" and at critical moments the rod appeared in his hand.

At last Moses is prepared to obey. His way is opened in peace to return to Egypt with the rod — now called "the rod of God" — in his hand. But while now clothed with authority he needed to know just exactly what he had to face. God would give him the words, but in spite of the words backed with mighty deeds, Pharaoh would resist and God would harden his heart. Here we might read Exodus 9: 16, which is quoted in Romans 9: 17. This Pharaoh, whatever his name may have been as recorded in secular history, was evidently brought to the throne in some unusual way by the over-ruling hand of God, and had already pitted himself against the Almighty in such a way that the moment had now come for him to be abased in signal fashion. God would now harden his heart and thus seal his doom. We are to see in him what presently was seen in Nebuchadnezzar, "those that walk in pride He is **able to abase**" (Dan. 4: 37).

The situation is graphically summed up in verses 22 and 23. God adopted Israel as His son, His firstborn, and demanded that he be released. If Pharaoh would not let him go, he would have his own son his firstborn, slain. The preliminary judgments are passed over in silence. The ultimate judgment is threatened, and in Exodus 12 we find it fulfilled.

The episode recorded in verses 24-26 is explained when we observe that God was interfering on Israel's behalf under the covenant He had made with Abraham, as recorded in Genesis 17: 1-14. Of that covenant circumcision was the token or sign, and it was definitely stated by God that if circumcision was not observed death was to be the penalty. Here was Moses, chosen to be the chief actor in Israel's deliverance under that covenant, and he had not obeyed the sign! As the responsible person he was subject to the death penalty! It would appear that Zipporah, his wife, knowing nothing of the covenant, objected, but at last gave in and acted herself, though with annoyance. He was a husband of blood to her.

Just here the firstborn comes much into view. Israel is owned as **God's firstborn**. If Pharaoh refused to acknowledge this, God would slay **his firstborn**. And now the sentence of death has to come figuratively upon the **firstborn of Moses**. Had it not, death itself would have fallen on Moses at the hand of God. The significance of the rite of circumcision comes clearly into view here. It was the sign of death put upon the flesh. This meaning is corroborated by what the Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 3: 3, "We are the circumcision, which . . . have no confidence in the flesh."

Circumcision accepted by Moses, we see in the last five verses of the chapter that the hand of God was with him, and everything moved with smoothness and precision. The Lord instructed Aaron, who obeyed and met him. Together they entered Egypt, consulted the elders of Israel

who believed and worshipped. This Moses, who had been rejected forty years before, was now accepted as their God-appointed leader. He was sent "a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel which appeared to him in the bush" (Acts 7: 35).

## **Exodus 5: 1 — Exodus 8: 19.**

The contrast between the end of chapter 4 and the beginning of chapter 5 is very marked. The children of Israel believed the words of God when they saw the signs, and they worshipped. Pharaoh

heard the words of God with unbelief and replied with insolence.

The word to him was, "Let My people go . . ." Thus the Lord at once claimed the people as **His**, whilst for a century or two the Pharaohs of Egypt had regarded the people as **theirs**, and enslaved to them. So from the outset the issue was joined. Jehovah claimed the people that Pharaoh regarded as his own. Which claimant would prevail? The issue could not be in doubt for one moment.

It is evident that from the first Pharaoh boldly challenged the might of Jehovah. He knew very well the many gods of Egypt, but to him Jehovah, God of Israel was **the unknown God**, and he flatly refused to obey. He adopted the hard and stubborn attitude, which became characteristic of him under the government of God.

In reply to the further appeal of Moses and Aaron he simply increased the burdens upon the people, making their enslavement more thorough and more bitter. From this incident has come the common saying about "making bricks without straw," signifying having to undertake an almost impossible task. Their brick-making was to the end that Pharaoh might pursue his building schemes. Under the task-masters they were beaten into helping to consolidate the power of the king who tyrannized over them.

In 1 Corinthians 10: 6 and 11, we are told that the things that happened to Israel were "our examples," or, "types" for us, and at this point we begin to see the type taking shape. Pharaoh held the power of death over the children of Israel, and thereby kept them in bondage. He is thus a type of Satan as he is presented in Hebrews 2: 14, 15. Egypt with all its magnificence is clearly a type of the world, enslaving the people of God under the direction of the devil, and, ironically enough using them to increase the power and glory of the system that oppressed them. God was now setting in motion the power that was to deliver them.

But the first effect of this intervention was to increase the bondage and miseries of the people. They were made to realize that they were under a sentence of death, as verse 21 reveals. They had but little faith and hence their reaction was to blame Moses and Aaron, who had begun to act on their behalf. Even the faith of Moses shook under the strain and he turned to God with a complaint that had the character of a reproach, as the two verses, closing Exodus 5, record. How often it is the case that, when God begins to deal with a soul in grace, the adversary is immediately stirred up and his energy increases, so that, for a time at least, things are worse rather than better.

The first eight verses of Exodus 6 record, however, the gracious way in which the Lord answered this failure on the part of both Moses and the people. Let those verses be read with care and it will be seen that His answer was virtually to present Himself as, Jehovah, the I AM, faithful to the covenant of promise, made to the fathers. There are chapters in the Bible, such as Job 29, Ecclesiastes 2, Romans 7, marked by the constant repetition of "I," by foolish men. In the case of Job we listen to a self-satisfied "I," in the case of Solomon to a self-gratified, in the case of Paul to a self-condemned. God Himself is the only One who can rightly and truly speak much of "I," and here we find it repeated 18 times in the 8 verses.

Moses had just seen and been painfully impressed by what Pharaoh had done to the people, so Jehovah's word to him was, "Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh." As a result of what He was about to do, the strong hand of Pharaoh, which had been at work to keep the people in slavery; should be stretched forth to drive them out of his land. Pharaoh and his kingdom would be turned upside down.

Moreover God greatly emphasized the Name under which He had just revealed Himself. He had

revealed Himself to Abraham and the fathers as God Almighty but not as Jehovah. They had known the name but the significance of it had been hidden from them. Now its meaning had come to light, and it was to be displayed in His dealings with the insolent man who had begun to defy Him. This furnished the occasion for God to display Himself as the great "I AM" — ever-existing, unchangeable, ever true to His purpose and word, supreme above all the power that would aim at deflecting Him from or thwarting His plan.

In verse 4 He specifically mentions the covenant of promise, under which He was going to act, in delivering them from Egypt and bringing them into the land He had purposed for them. Their redemption from Egypt, their establishment in Canaan which had been the land of their pilgrimage, when they were but strangers in it, all was to be under that covenant, which was made 430 years before the covenant of the law. Galatians 3: 17 tells us this, as also that the law could not disannul the promise that had been made. Of course it could not, for Jehovah had made it, though the implications of that great name were not known to Abraham. God is true to what He is in Himself irrespective of what we may know Him to be. Great comfort comes to our souls when we apprehend this. So this great statement begins and ends with the same words, "I am Jehovah" (verses 2 and 8).

For the moment the anguish of the Israelites was so great that the recital to them of these wonderful words had no effect. Even Moses had lost heart and felt that Pharaoh would not heed anything he might say. Nevertheless the word of the Lord stood.

But before we proceed with the record of how it did stand we have a parenthesis. The last verse of the chapter repeats the words of Moses recorded in verse 12, and in verses 14-27 we are given genealogical details concerning the sons of Reuben and Simeon, and then more particularly of the sons of Levi leading up to Moses and Aaron and their immediate descendants. The identity of these two chief actors on God's behalf is thus established.

The dealings with Pharaoh were now to start in earnest, so the first seven verses of Exodus 7 give us the instructions under which Moses and Aaron were to act. Moses directly represented God before the king, and Aaron was to act as his "prophet," or, spokesman. God is invisible, so Moses was to be His visible representative. Aaron was to speak and act under the direction of Moses, though in point of fact he was the elder. Once more we see how the first has to give place to the second.

Pharaoh, who had no faith, was sure to demand some visible and miraculous sign to accredit Moses, so the sign of the rod of Moses becoming a serpent was given. Aaron performed this, but the magicians of Egypt showed that they also could bring this wonder to pass. Acting under the power of Satan, who is the serpent, they too could show that the casting down of authority produces what is satanic. The next move they did not expect and it was beyond them. Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. Divine power, even if cast down, proved itself stronger than the power of the foe. But in spite of this there was no softening in the heart of Pharaoh.

So the first of the plagues in Egypt was scheduled to take place in the morning, when Pharaoh made his visit to the Nile. The demand for the release of the people was again to be made, and if refused the rod that had been turned to a serpent, and that had devoured the rods of the magicians, was to be stretched out over the river and its waters turned to blood. The river that was the very life of Egypt was turned into a river of death and stinking.

But again the magicians proved that they could similarly produce death and stinking, so that Pharaoh's heart remained hard. That Satan could produce death, or that which is symbolic of death, is not at all surprising, since he is the author of sin, and by sin death has come to pass. Though Pharaoh made light of this first plague, the common people felt the weight of it and it lasted for seven days.

This, we suppose, is what the last verse of the chapter indicates.

At the end of that time the Lord through Moses reiterated His demand for the release of His people, and announced a second plague if the demand was refused. The demand was refused and the frogs in their millions appeared out of the waters that had been smitten (Exodus 8: 5, 6). The magicians showed however that they too could produce frogs out of the waters, thus minimizing the effect of the miracle in the mind of Pharaoh. Those conversant with Egypt and its history tell us that a "red Nile" is something that used to happen annually and that the river was a breeding place of frogs; but what came to pass here was quite out of the ordinary both as to time and intensity, and the invasion of the whole land by the frogs was a dreadful affliction.

Again, we are told by Egyptologists that a special goddess was supposed to preside over the frogs, so as to protect the land from them. She was named Heki, and is represented on the monuments sometimes with the head of a frog. The Egyptians had to learn that Heki was as nothing before Jehovah. It illustrates the word, "Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment" (Exodus 12: 12). It is probable also that when the first plague fell, just as Pharaoh approached the river, he was going to worship the god that the Nile was supposed to represent.

While Pharaoh disregarded the first plague, as we saw in verse 23 of the last chapter, he was not unmoved by the second, as we see in verse 8. Out of every branch of the river, the irrigation canals, the reservoirs, as indicated in verse 5, the slimy creatures came, penetrating into houses, into their beds, their food vessels, their ovens, defiling everything. The magicians may have helped to increase their numbers slightly, but they could not take them away. He had to recognize the hand of the Lord was in this dreadful affliction. So he made pretence of yielding to the demand of God in order that the plague might be removed.

The removal was made the more impressive by Moses asking him to stipulate when the frogs should go. The words, "Glory over me," are rendered in the Septuagint "Fix for me." His answer was, "Tomorrow." Moses replied that Jehovah the God of Israel would prove His power by removing the plague just as the king had stipulated. It seems obvious that their removal in this fashion was an even more impressive miracle than their being brought up.

But even so, the effect of the plague was not yet over for, save in the river, the frogs all died that day in a miraculous manner, and gathered in heaps the land stank with their carcasses. Yet even this was a respite, and directly Pharaoh saw it he hardened his heart and continued to defy God. The judgment had not produced any vital change.

Hence, without further delay or appeal to the king, Moses was to stretch out his rod and smite the dust, when it was to become lice throughout all the land. This was done by Aaron on behalf of Moses and the trying plague came to pass. At this point the magicians of Egypt were baffled. Out of the dead dust the living lice had come. The magicians could not imitate it, and they had to confess as much. Only God can bring life out of death. They could only confess, "This is the finger of God," and retire from the contest. From this point we hear of no more attempts to belittle the acts of God by satanic power.

From those who are experts in ancient languages we learn that the word translated "lice" is an unusual one, and in the Septuagint is translated by a word which means a kind of small mosquito. It is of small moment what exactly the word means, but it is of interest to learn that the difficulty is occasioned by the word not being a strictly Hebrew one. It is an importation from the language used in Egypt, and is one of the many internal proofs that the Pentateuch was not written about the time of Ezra, as the "higher critics" would have us imagine. It was written when these Egyptian terms were

well known and quite intelligible to the Hebrew reader.

Darby's New Translation gives us "gnats" as the plague, which accords with what we have just written. We may well be thankful to God that He has caused to be woven into the very texture of the Scripture these little signs that Moses, who was so well acquainted with Egypt, its words and its ways, was indeed the writer under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. This fact is the more striking, as we shall see when we consider the fourth plague, since the word, used there for the "swarms" that came up, is again not a Hebrew one but rather one that was peculiar to Egypt.

## Exodus 8: 20 — Exodus 9: 35.

There is no record here of the plague of lice being removed, but Moses is told by God to present again to Pharaoh His demand that the people, whom He claimed as His be released. He is again to intercept the king as he was going forth to the river early in the morning. Those who have studied the records of ancient Egypt have told us that the Nile was worshipped as representing one of the chief deities of that land of idols, and we remember that when the river was smitten under the first plague Pharaoh was going in the same direction in the morning (Exodus 7: 15). It gives us the impression that he was going forth to worship the Nile-god, and just at that moment his god was smitten. So also there was a goddess, who was supposed to preside over frogs. This shows us how these judgments affected the gods of Egypt, as indicated in Exodus 12: 12.

By the river, Pharaoh is threatened with the fourth plague. We notice that seven times it is described as "swarms" — to which word our translators have added "of flies" in italics, since the word in the original is evidently an Egyptian one and not Hebrew, and no one knows its exact significance. The Septuagint uses a Greek word meaning "dog-flies," and this is the word used in Darby's New Translation. Other authorities believe that it really signifies "beetles." If so, that would again bring in the thought of the gods of Egypt, for the beetle was venerated by them.

We pause here a moment to observe that Urquhart in his "New Biblical Guide," points out very forcibly that there are a number of words used that have their roots in the Egyptian language and not the Hebrew, as well as allusions to Egyptian customs and geographical details, which would only be known to people familiar with Egypt, and that these are introduced without one word of explanation. The unbelieving "Higher Critics" insisted that the Pentateuch was never written by Moses, but was the work of Ezra, or of someone else about his time — that it was a "pious fraud" perpetrated in the hope of making the people attach more weight to the law they were supposed to observe. But Ezra, or someone else, coming from **Babylon**, would never have had this intimate knowledge of **Egyptian** words and customs dating a thousand years before, and could he in some miraculous way have obtained the knowledge, he would have had to insert explanations to make them intelligible to the readers of his day. No, the hallmark of the Egypt of the time of Moses is plainly to be seen. It is as well for us ordinary Christians to know these facts, for we may occasionally be confronted by these infidel reasonings.

Another thing we must notice is that in this fourth plague Israel in the land of Goshen is exempted entirely from its effects. The "swarms" appeared punctually the next day, as the Lord had said, and this severing of Goshen greatly heightened the impressive force of the miracle. The land was "corrupted," or "destroyed" by these "swarms," which rather supports the idea that they were beetles, for in recent times travellers in Egypt have testified to the very destructive habits of the sort of beetles that are found there.

This plague evidently made a deep impression on the stubborn mind of Pharaoh and for the first time he made a show of yielding, but only by way of a small concession of a compromising nature. The Israelites might have a short release from their tasks and sacrifice to their God, but it must be in Egypt and not outside its borders. They might have a little bit of their religion so long as their links with Egypt were not cut. A type this, of the snare that has prevailed so largely in Christendom. The god of this age is content for us to carry on Christian observances, so long as we remain attached to, and controlled by, "this present evil world."

Moses at once rejected the offer, for the sacrifices of Jehovah were of a kind that would be a deadly offence to the people of Egypt and provoke murderous action. In this again we can see a typical significance, for that which lies at the root of all our worship is the unique excellence of Christ contrasted with the condemnation of Adam's race as fallen sinners. A doctrine which involves **that** judgment is an abomination to the world.

Pharaoh evidently had to acknowledge the force of this objection, for he at once altered his concession to giving permission for a very short journey into the wilderness, only not very far away. He wished to have them well within the reach of his arm, so that their separation from his land should be only nominal and temporary. Once more we see how this fits the type. If there is to be a breach between the church and the world, let it be only of a nominal sort, and one which lends itself to the Christian being still held in bondage.

With this concession the king asked for the intercession of Moses, which was granted with a warning against the deceitful line that he had been following. The Lord acted according to the prayer of Moses and another great miracle took place. On the next day the swarms departed so thoroughly that not one insect remained in the land. But, relieved of this infliction, in spite of the warning, once more Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to allow the concession he had just promised. How true all this is to human nature! Under affliction people appear to become quite pious, the affliction is removed, and they promptly resume their godless ways.

Exodus 9. The fifth plague is now threatened by command of the Lord. The first three had occasioned terrible inconveniences upon Egypt, the fourth had corrupted their possessions; the fifth was to smite them in one of the chief sources of their wealth. Horses and asses are mentioned first, and for these animals Egypt was specially famed. A very grievous "murrain," or "plague," would come upon them and again there should be complete exemption for the Israelites. So it came to pass. On one side of the line of separation there was death, on the other not one animal was affected. This again was plainly the hand of God, but Pharaoh was unmoved, and remained hard and impenitent. Therefore, as we see in verse 8, Moses is instructed to act without giving Pharaoh any warning of what was coming. It is worthy of note that this feature also marked the third plague, and we shall find it again repeated when we come to the ninth. No comment is made in our chapters as to this feature, but it seems to be a part of God's ways to warn twice and if no attention is paid, then to strike the third time without any warning being given. Later on we do get the word, "God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not" (Job 33: 14). That saying of Elihu was certainly exemplified here.

This time Moses was without warning to perform an act in the sight of the king, casting into the air handfuls of ashes from the furnace. Egypt had been "a smoking furnace" (Gen. 15: 17), into which the children of Abraham had been plunged, and now ashes of the furnace were to recoil upon the heads of their oppressors, smiting them with boils and blisters. It is specially mentioned that the severity of the boils was such that the magicians, suffering from them like the rest could not stand before Moses. They were utterly discomfited. No hint is given here why this smiting of the magicians is specially

stated, but it is known that great soundness and cleanliness was imposed upon these men, who were the very highest rank of idolatrous priests, and without it they were disqualified from exercising their office and their charms.

But in spite of all this Pharaoh remained obdurate, and in verse 12 we are plainly told that the Lord hardened his heart. Yet the dealings of God with him proceeded and even worse afflictions were threatened. Again Moses was to intercept him early in the morning, and warn him of further chastisement upon his realm.

This time the word of the Lord through Moses contained not only a plain threat of what was impending but also a revelation of how the hand of the Lord had been upon him in the past, raising him up to sit upon the throne of Egypt. Verse 16 is quoted by the Apostle Paul in Romans 9: 17, as a striking example of the working of the sovereignty of God. Some of those who have studied the records of ancient Egypt have told us that in their opinion this Pharaoh of the exodus was not altogether of royal blood, but rather a son of the harem, who ascended the throne by being married to a princess fully of royal blood and in the line of succession. If this be so, it illuminates the position. He was "raised up" by God, not in the sense of being born into the world, but of being raised to the throne in an unusual way.

The sovereignty of God is one of the great foundation facts of Scripture: a fact that may well move our hearts to praise. If He were not sovereign in His omniscience and omnipotence, we might well tremble before the might of the great adversary. The responsibility of man, even though fallen, is another fact made plain in Scripture, and both facts we must maintain, though we may not feel able to correlate the two. Nebuchadnezzar, whose responsibility was undoubted, acknowledged the Divine sovereignty when he said, "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?"

God knew the stubborn self-will and pride of this man, and working behind the scenes raised him up to where he could carry on and even intensify the ill-treatment of His people, and thus bring things to a head. The hour was now ripe for God to deal with him, and in doing so, display His power in such fashion that His name would be declared throughout all the earth. That in those days the name of Jehovah was so declared is borne witness to by such a scripture as Joshua 2: 8-11. And even in our day, 3,500 years later, the fame of it has not died away.

We must take note of verse 17, for in it we find an early example of the principle that what is done against the people of God is accepted as done against God Himself. It came most fully to light when Saul of Tarsus was arrested by, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Again we see it in Matthew 25: 40, 45, applying there to what is done **for** the Lord as well as **against** Him, but in both cases their attitude manifested in their treatment of His people. In exalting himself against the children of Israel Pharaoh was exalting himself against God, and thus hurrying on to his doom.

Verse 26 tells us that in this seventh plague the land of Goshen was again exempted. But there was also a new feature as regards the Egyptians in that; warning being given, there was an opportunity for any of the common people, who regarded the word of the Lord, to take action which would save them from the worst of it. The violence of the hail storm was so great that man or beast exposed to it would die. The crops were wrecked and even trees of the field destroyed. Verses 31 and 32 give explicit information, which shows us that the time of year must have been late February or early March, for then in Egypt the barley is in the ear and the flax in blossom (or, boiled), but the wheat and the rye not yet in the stalk.

The visitation was so terrific that Pharaoh was frightened and inclined to make some confession

of wrongdoing, as verse 27 shows, and to promise to let the people go, if only there might be a cessation of this fearful scourge. Moses however was not deceived by this fresh profession of repentance and piety, and told him plainly that he knew he would not fulfil his promise, yet he went forth as an intercessor and spread his hands out unto the Lord, when the visitation ceased as suddenly as it began. Both in **its onset** and in its cessation it proved itself to be an act of God.

Sceptics have raised a difficulty as to cattle being slain by the hail seeing they had been smitten under the fifth plague. They overlook perhaps that the fifth was upon all "which is in the field" (Ex. 9: 3), so there may have been a good number not in the field. And further the cattle of the Israelites were wholly untouched, and there was nothing to prevent the Egyptians, in the two or three weeks that probably elapsed between the fifth and seventh plagues, seizing many of them for their own use.

Under this seventh plague Egypt must have lost nearly all its glory and have been brought very low. Most of its livestock destroyed, its trees broken, barley and flax ruined - the latter especially a very valuable crop. But directly the chastisement ceased Pharaoh relapsed into his stubborn defiance, and not only he but his servants also. How all this should drive home into our hearts the fact that what is born of the flesh is still flesh, no matter to what treatment it is subjected; and that the mind of the flesh is enmity against God.

## **Exodus 10: 1 — Exodus 11: 10.**

Chapter 9 closed with the fact that both Pharaoh and his servants hardened their hearts. Chapter 10 opens with a statement by the Lord to Moses that He had hardened their hearts, and thus shut them up to their doom. It furnished also the occasion for the Lord to display Himself as the God of judgment in such fashion that it would be remembered in the generations to come. Even to our day this witness stands, and it will yet be remembered until the day of grace is succeeded by the epoch of judgment. Then God will deal in His righteous judgment and wrath not with Egypt only but with the whole earth, as is portrayed in Revelation 6 - 11, 15, 16. Of that coming day of judgment the plagues of Egypt were a small sample.

However, such is the longsuffering of God that Moses was sent once more to Pharaoh with a remonstrance and demand that he let the people go. He is warned that, if he still refused, God would smite Egypt with swarms of locusts, and this was to happen "tomorrow." In the previous chapter twice did God announce a plague for **tomorrow**, thus giving at least twenty-four hours respite in view of a possible relenting on the part of Pharaoh. In contrast to this, salvation, as we know, is always presented **today**.

Locusts were well recognized as a serious plague even in those days, and the extra severity of what was coming was plainly indicated, for it would destroy all that was left in the land. The wheat and rye escaped before, but they would not escape this. Moreover while the trees of the field had been broken by the hail, they were still in leaf: they would now be stripped bare. The only way of escape was indicated: that of Pharaoh humbling himself before the Lord, and letting Israel go.

Though the locust invasion now threatened was to be of altogether exceptional severity yet such a plague was not unknown in Egypt. Hence there was remonstrance from the servants of the king, and they were so stirred as to allow themselves an unusual freedom of speech, seeing the Pharaohs of those times were regarded almost as deities. Moved by this, he recalled Moses and Aaron and proposed another cunning device, raising a question as to who should go. In reply, Moses made it quite plain that there is no **compromise** permitted when God makes His demands. The Lord claimed the people as His;

men, women, children and possessions. This is an important lesson which we all have to learn. Though we are not under law but under grace, yet there are "the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14: 37) and these are not issued that we may negotiate about them or compromise, but that we may **obey**.

Pharaoh attempted to negotiate. He would permit the men to go and sacrifice, but all the rest should remain in his power. He knew enough of human nature to be sure that this would bring the men back under his authority. Pharaoh was a tool of the devil, who knows very well the practical working of "thou . . . and thy house" (Acts 16: 31) and wished to turn it to his own advantage. The suggestion was, Let each man go, but let him leave his house behind. But if God was to have any, He would have ALL.

This declaration moved Pharaoh to more drastic action and Moses and Aaron were simply driven from his presence, and as Moses stretched forth his rod, the Lord brought up the strong east wind on the wings of which the mighty hordes of locusts came. In the annals of the east there are plenty of records as to the havoc that is made by a bad swarm of locusts. This was a visitation so grievous that "before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such." We can imagine therefore the terrible plight into which the land of Egypt was plunged.

As a result, Moses and Aaron, who a few days before had been driven out of Pharaoh's presence, were recalled in haste. Pharaoh adopted a humble attitude, confessing he had sinned and asking for a forgiveness which should include the removal of the punishment. The Lord knew his heart, yet He listened to his plea and by a strong west wind He removed the locusts so completely that not one was left. The locusts were drowned in the Red Sea. Not many days after Pharaoh and his hosts were drowned there too.

It now seemed as if the heart of Pharaoh had been softened, but it had not been so really. Directly the infliction was removed he reverted to his stubborn attitude of resistance. As predicted the Lord had hardened his heart. He provides us with the classic example of the sinner who defies God, but is quite prepared to adopt a humble attitude, if thereby he may avoid reaping the punishment he deserves. We have to remember this word: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov. 28: 13). Under chastisement Pharaoh did not mind doing a little bit of confessing, but he had no idea of *forsaking* his self-willed way. The fair words he uttered in verses 16 and 17 of our chapter were merely an effort to avoid further punishment.

So, as we see in verse 21, the ninth plague was ushered in without any warning being given. Again Moses was to stretch out his hand toward heaven and there fell upon Egypt darkness of a supernatural kind. It is described as "darkness which may be felt." From this expression some are disposed to regard it as being of the nature of the hot south-west winds that do bring on Egypt great dust storms that darken the land; the wind being laden with tiny particles of sand, it can be felt. But on the other hand the expression may be a figurative one, in which the feeling about and groping in dense darkness is attributed to the darkness itself.

How it came about need not concern us. It was something supernatural. It lasted for three days. It was so dense and complete that all activity stopped. Every Egyptian was isolated from his fellows in the midst of his ruined country, and none of them knew when, if ever the visitation would end. Of all the plagues this must have been the most terrifying, because most mysterious and unprecedented. And all through the dreadful three days the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

We cannot fail to see here a pictorial representation of what we find laid down in the New Testament. Take such a passage as this: "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes" (1 John 2: 10, 11). The present-day men

of the world, though refined and educated, as were the Egyptians in their day, are in spiritual darkness. Only those who are born of God, and therefore possess the divine nature, are abiding in the light.

At the end of the three days, the darkness having departed, Pharaoh was again ready to attempt a compromise. This time it was, Let all men, women and children, go, but your flocks and herds must remain. But, as Moses pointed out, this would defeat the object of their going forth, since they would not have the wherewithal to sacrifice to the Lord. He stated again the Divine terms, in the nature of an ultimatum, "there shall not an hoof be left behind." It was the purpose of God to take His people, and every single thing they had, clean out of Egypt.

God's purpose for us who belong to His church today, is just the same in principle. Egypt typifies the great world-system, Pharaoh typifies the god and prince of this world. The children of Israel were to enjoy a physical deliverance: in body and in possessions they were to be free. Ours is a spiritual deliverance. We still live on earth and in the midst of the world-system, but it is the purpose of God that we be completely delivered from its enslaving power.

The uncompromising stand which Moses took on this point evidently angered Pharaoh, and his heart being still hardened of the Lord, he broke off all negotiation at this point. On God's part the ultimatum had been presented: on his part it had been rejected with a threat of death to Moses who had presented it to him. In reply to that threat Moses spoke as a prophet, and foretold in a veiled form his doom. It was not Moses who was about to die but first Pharaoh's firstborn and then himself.

As we commence to read Exodus 11, we realize that all God's preliminary dealings are over and the final strokes must now fall. As the preliminary judgments proceeded they increased in severity, and we are sometimes tempted to enquire why they should be necessary. We may ask: Since God knew in advance all that would transpire, why should He prolong the agony in this way? Why did He not eliminate the preliminaries and strike the final blow at once?

The answer surely is this: His ways and judgments are always **right**, yet He so acts as to **manifest their rightness** before His intelligent creation. Being omniscient, He knew that all nine plagues would not subdue the stubborn heart of Pharaoh; but the angelic principalities and powers in heavenly places are not omniscient, nor are men upon earth. So by testing Pharaoh, and giving space for repentance as plague succeeded plague with increasing severity, no one could rightly question the final stroke when it came. The same thing may be said as to the judgments of seals, trumpets and vials of the Book of Revelation, preceding the final destruction of the power of the adversaries at the glorious appearing of Christ.

Moses therefore was prepared of God for this "one plague more," that was very soon to fall. It was to be of such a nature that panic-stricken Pharaoh would not merely let them go but hasten to thrust them out. In view of this he was to instruct the people both men and women to ask of their neighbouring Egyptians "jewels" or "utensils" of gold and silver. By this time fear and respect had been instilled into their hearts, and Moses himself had become very great in their eyes. Hence they readily yielded up all that was asked of them. It is not an uncommon thing that humbler and more simple people are impressed by the acts of God when the great ones of the earth are undiscerning.

It would appear that verses 1-3 are somewhat parenthetical, for in verse 4 we again have Moses speaking, and as verse 8 indicates, he was still in the presence of Pharaoh. What he announced as about to happen was an act of God, both in its character and its severity, lifted far above all that had gone before. In the nine preceding plagues God had used things of His own creation in such a way as to chastise by them. But now He, the Creator, was going to step in after a personal sort: "About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt."

Now if the holy and righteous God comes down thus into the midst of His fallen and sinful creatures there can be but one result. The death penalty must fall, for "the wages of sin is death." Yet even so the mercy of God is displayed for death was not to fall upon all the Egyptians but only upon the firstborn of both man and beast. Many of us may have seen a "genealogical tree," showing the descent of some well-known family from the days of old. In such a tree the outmost twigs show the firstborn sons of the various branches of the family. Now using this as a figure, we may say that God was about to cut off all the young twigs, as a sign that His sentence of death rested upon the trees, though He would not at that moment cut down every tree.

But again there would be exemption for the Israelites, for the Lord was going to put a difference between them and the Egyptians. There was no fundamental difference between them; had there been it would not have been needful for the Lord **to put a difference**. Here then we have foreshadowed the "no difference doctrine" of Romans 3: 22, 23. The Israelites were sinners as the Egyptians were, and equally subject to the death sentence, and God is no respecter of persons. Hence if God puts a difference, it must be done in a righteous manner. We have to pass on to the next chapter to discover how the difference was to be put.

In Romans 3 the "no difference doctrine" is followed by verses 24-26, which reveal the righteous basis of the justification of the believer, which puts a difference between him and the unbeliever. When we reach Exodus 12, and read of the blood of the Passover lamb, we find in type the basis of the difference that is to be put between the Egyptians and Israel.

In speaking thus Moses gave Pharaoh and his servants full and clear warning of what was impending, and his words were prefaced by, "Thus saith the Lord." Having delivered this final message with the full weight of the Divine authority behind it, he went out from Pharaoh "in a great anger," or, "in a glowing anger." It is no sin to be angry with sin, and there was in Moses merely a reflection of that which was in the heart of God.

Our chapter closes with Pharaoh brushing aside all that had been said and for the last time but one we read of the Lord hardening his heart. His stubbornness however would only furnish further occasion for the multiplication of God's wonders in the land of Egypt.

## **Exodus 12: 1-36.**

When Pharaoh heard Moses speak the words, commencing with "Thus saith the Lord" as recorded in Exodus 11 he was listening to the voice of God for the last time, though doubtless he did not know it. The preliminary judgments had run their course. The time for talking was over. Decisive action was now to start. Chapter 12 begins with the Lord speaking to Moses, but all, that He now has to say concerns the people, whom He had chosen as His own.

There was now to take place an event of an epoch-making character. This is indicated in verse 2. By it the Jewish calendar was to be entirely recast. They had, and still have, their reckoning on a secular basis, since their New Year 5712 fell on October 1st, last. Now, however, their reckoning, in the Divine estimation, was to begin in the month of the Passover, which comes, as we know, in our spring.

Here we reach a point when the typical value of all that happened to them becomes very conspicuous. Reading verse 2 we have to remind ourselves that the appropriation of the death of Christ lies at the very beginning of everything for us. If we have not started there we have made no real beginning at all. What was typically represented in the Passover lies at the basis of all God's dealings

with us.

In verses 3-5, our attention is centred upon the many lambs that had to be selected by the Israelites. Their number was to be determined by the number of households, except that, when those included in a household were unusually few, two houses were to be combined. Thus early do we see that a house formed a unit in the Divine reckoning, and the principle of "Thou and thy house," is emphasized.

It was a stringent condition that the lambs selected were to be without blemish, and this was not to be determined in a hurried way, since though chosen on the tenth day they were not to be slain until the fourteenth, and hence their unblemished state carefully ascertained. The lamb was to be a faint foreshadowing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who passed through every possible test, thus displaying His perfection before He died. It is worthy of note that though the fact is made quite clear that there were many lambs, yet after verse 3 the word is always in the singular. It is "the lamb," or "your lamb," or, "it." So we have before us the lamb that typifies, "the Lamb of God."

On the fourteenth day between the evenings the lamb was slain, and its blood applied to the two side posts and the lintel, outside the house where they dwelt, and inside the house its flesh was to be eaten by the family. The blood marks on the door were the external witness that death had already taken place within. The eating of the flesh within the house typified the realization and appropriation of the death of the lamb by those who were sheltered by its blood.

The way in which this was to be done, as recorded in verse 8 is very significant. It was to be roast with fire, and accompanied with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. All three details are important.

First, roast with fire, and not sodden with water. To boil is to apply the heat indirectly through the medium of water. To roast is to subject the body of the lamb to the direct fierceness of the flame, which is ever figurative of the searching judgment of God. If we are sheltered from judgment by the precious blood of Christ we are ever to digest inwardly as applying to ourselves, the fierceness of that judgment, which He endured in order to accomplish our deliverance.

Second, the bread which they were to eat with it must be unleavened. This is not the first mention in Scripture of unleavened bread for we had it mentioned in Genesis 19: 3, where it formed part of the food offered to and accepted by angels; but consistently leaven is used as a figure of sin, and its fermenting properties make it a very apt type. If we enjoy the benefits that reach us as the result of Christ bearing the judgment of our sins, then the sins for which He died, and the sin to which He died, are not to be countenanced by us. How plainly the antitype is seen in 1 Corinthians 5: 7, 8.

Third, the bitter herbs typify that inward work of self-judgment, which must ever accompany the benefits we receive. Sin and its judgment, from which we are delivered is a very bitter thing, and it is the plan of God that we should be made to realize it deeply. And let us once more emphasize that eating implies, **an inward appropriation.**

Let us further notice that the lamb was to be roasted whole — "his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof." There was to be no mutilation of the carcass as it was exposed to the fire. And further in the eating of it no bone was to be broken — see verse 46 of our chapter. The force of this we see when we read John 19: 36, "A bone of Him shall not be broken." Moreover what could not be eaten was to be burnt with fire. Nothing was to be put to unholy use or left to some chance happening. Even about the type there was a sacredness that was to be observed.

And further again, they were to realize that these solemn acts to be performed were not only designed for their safety but also had a great end in view. They were going to be sheltered from the

impending judgment in order that they might be delivered from the grip of Pharaoh and from the bondage of Egypt. Hence they were to eat it in the manner prescribed in verse 11. They were not to eat it reclining, as though it was an ordinary meal, but standing with staff in hand, girded for the journey and in haste, as just about to depart. The import of this we must never forget. God has sheltered us from His judgment in order that He may deliver us from Satan and from the world-system, of which he is the god and prince, and bring us to Himself. This is plainly stated in Galatians 1: 4.

The word "passover" occurs for the first time in Scripture at the end of verse 11. We are told that the Hebrew word thus translated means to pass over protectively, rather like a bird stretching its wings over its young, and not merely the negative idea of omitting to notice when it is a question of judgment. On that fateful night Jehovah was going to smite the firstborn and execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt, but, wherever the token of death was seen on the house, over it His wings of protection should be spread and the plague should not enter to destroy.

In this we may see another delightful Gospel type. In virtue of the blood of Christ the believer is clear of the judgment. But it is not merely that, righteousness having been satisfied, the believer can be exempted from judgment when the stroke falls upon the world, but rather that the very righteousness of God instead of being a **sword** to **smite** him has become a **shield** to **protect** him. This fact, when we really lay hold of it, exerts a very establishing effect upon our souls.

It is also important for us to remember that the blood of the lamb was outside for the eye of God. The word was, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Once the blood was there, God would not fail to see it. They had not to see the blood, but rather, knowing it was there, to rest content with the definite word of God that, since it was there, He would pass over them. The blood was for the eye of God: His word was for the ears and hearts of those within.

Verses 14-17, contain further words of the Lord, showing that what He now was instituting was not something to be observed on that particular night only, and then to be treated as having served its purpose and to be dismissed from their thoughts. It was rather to be perpetuated as a yearly feast, so that they might never forget that their links with Egypt had been broken by God, in order that they might be brought to Himself as His own special possession. The Passover was to be followed by the feast of unleavened bread, extending over the next seven days. It was to be marked by the absence of leaven. It was to begin and end with "an holy convocation," in which no manner of work was to be done. If "no manner of work," then even the sort of work which would have been considered the most meritorious was excluded. Man's work was to be shut out, and only God's work was to be considered.

The word, "memorial" occurs in verse 14, and this describes the bearing of the Passover feast among the Jews. It guaranteed the objective reality of the basis of their deliverance from Egypt, and kept them in yearly remembrance of it. They may often have failed to observe it properly, or even observe it at all; but such was its intention. The observance of the Lord's Supper by the saints of today has, amongst other things, a similar intention, as we see in the words of the Apostle — "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come" (1 Cor. 11: 26). We are to show forth, or memorialize, His death, thus establishing its objective reality for all who have eyes to see.

The Passover feast was a matter of a few hours at the most, whereas the feast of unleavened bread covered seven days. This had a typical bearing. The Passover was a prophecy, as well as a memorial commemorating a past event. The prophecy was fulfilled in the death of Christ which, though of eternal importance, took place within a few hours. But the seven days of the unleavened bread feast set forth a whole cycle of time, as signified in 1 Corinthians 5: 8. For each believer today it covers the whole

period of his life of responsibility. As long as we are in this world of sin, we are to keep clear of the "leaven," as those that are, "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God" (Rom. 6: 11).

In verses 21-24, we have the record of how Moses conveyed these instructions to the people, and one or two additional features are mentioned. The blood was to be applied with hyssop, a small plant that grew freely on walls. Several times in Leviticus cedar wood and hyssop are mentioned together. Now the cedar is an emblem of majesty, and by way of contrast hyssop is an emblem of what is humble and insignificant. It was fitting that the hand that applied the blood should be covered with humility. It is when we are brought down into the dust of repentance that we are covered by the blood of Christ.

And further, those covered by the blood had to remain in the house until the morning. While judgment was falling upon the Egyptian world the firstborn were to remain safely housed beneath the blood. When the morning appeared their deliverance from Egypt became an accomplished fact. We pass through the night of this world to the brightness of the morning that is coming. Thanks be to God, the efficacy of the blood of Christ abides throughout the night. No fresh application of it is needed.

Verses 24-27, show how Moses impressed upon the people that the Passover ritual was to be carefully observed, so that future generations might be kept in remembrance of God's work of judgment and deliverance. For the moment the people received the words, and worshipped the God who was intervening on their behalf. Verse 28 tells us that they rendered obedience to all the instructions that God had given. Obedience is always the way of blessing.

At midnight the Lord did exactly as He had said, and the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast, died by the stroke of the destroyer. Egyptian custom demanded much wailing when death occurred, so there must indeed have been a great cry in the darkness of that night. We may take it as a forecast of that "weeping and gnashing of teeth" in the "outer darkness," of which the Lord spoke three times in Matthew's Gospel.

Under this tremendous and unprecedented stroke the resistance of Pharaoh collapsed, and he conceded all that had been demanded by Moses. The Egyptian people also were urgent that the children of Israel should depart. They realized that they were all under the death sentence. There was not one house in which there was not one dead. Death indeed had been universal. In the houses of the Egyptians it was the death of the firstborn. In the houses of the Israelites it was the death of the lamb.

The fear of God now lay heavily on the minds of the Egyptians and they were disposed to give to the people all that they asked. Hence they were laden with plenty of raiment and also with "jewels," or "utensils" of gold and silver. Their departure in such haste also helped to the fulfilling of the instructions as regards the leaven. There was no time to leaven their bread, so that any forgetfulness in this matter was avoided. Under these circumstances they could not but eat unleavened bread for the next seven days.

These facts here recorded show how it was that the people had such an abundance of materials and of gold and silver when the time came in the wilderness to construct the tabernacle according to the word of the Lord.

## **Exodus 12: 37 — Exodus 14: 20.**

The latter part of Exodus 12, and the whole of Exodus 13, are occupied with two things. First, certain historical details concerning the actual departure of the people from Egypt. Second, the record of certain instructions, conveyed to them from God by Moses.

Verses 37-39, show us how greatly God had multiplied the people under the afflictions of Egypt. They went out about 600,000 men, whereas when Jacob went down there the number mentioned in Genesis 46: 27 is 70. They went out complete with children, flocks and herds, as verse 38 records, but also with "a mixed multitude," who presently became a source of weakness and trouble. This is a very significant statement and worthy of note.

We do not find such a thought as God having a people of His own until we come to the children of Israel in Egypt. How striking then that as soon as God takes a people for His own and calls them out of bondage to be for Himself, there should be the intermingling of a foreign element, which helped to develop the corruption innate in the people themselves. Thus it was with Israel, and thus it has been in the history of the church.

Verses 40-42 show us the exactitude with which God keeps to His own appointed time. He had mentioned 400 years to Abraham, as we see in Genesis 15: 13. We are not told the exact point from which the calculation of the 430 years starts, but on the very day it ended the people went out of Egypt, and they are designated, "the hosts of the Lord," though to all appearance they were but a large collection of liberated slaves. That night of their deliverance they were never to forget. That it was the "self-same day" of the Divine purpose is again affirmed in verse 51.

We have, in the intervening verses, further instructions from the Lord as to the observance of the Passover. It was to be what we may call a household feast, for all outside Israelite households were excluded from it. The hired servant, who might at short notice quit his job, was not regarded as of the household, whereas the bondman, who had sold himself for money, according to the regulations of Exodus 21: 1-6, was considered as belonging to it, under one stringent condition, that he was circumcised.

This feast was for all Israel and none could excuse themselves from it. All were to join in this observance which kept alive the memory of the great deliverance from Egypt, while at the same time it had a prophetic value, as pointing forward to the death of Christ. This is apparent to us though in all probability the children of Israel did not know it. In the same way the intention of the Lord in instituting His supper is that all His saints should observe it; the memorial of His death on the one hand, while pointing forward to His coming on the other.

But whether the native Israelite or the servant bought with money or the stranger, all must be circumcised. This outward rite — a cutting around and off of man's flesh — pointed on to that which was effected in the death of Christ, as is shown in Colossians 2: 11. In this verse the words "of the sins," have very little manuscript authority. It should read, "putting off the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of the Christ" (New Trans.) As Christians we are to recognize that we have put off the flesh in its totality in the death of Christ. We are "circumcised" in His "circumcision;" that is, His death.

The rite was one which only applied to the males among the people. They had to suffer the pain and inconvenience of it, the female was regarded as circumcised in the male. In this respect also the type is a fitting one, for all the suffering entailed fell upon Christ and we are circumcised in Him. Now that the type has been fulfilled in His death, those who would merely enforce the outward rite are dismissed as the "concision," which means a mere cutting down, a lopping off, and not a complete removal. The true circumcision today are those who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh as said in Philippians 3: 2, 3. Such treat the flesh as condemned, and hence are not merely trying to lop off its more objectionable habits.

Exodus 13 opens with another very important matter. In the previous chapter the firstborn had

been sheltered by the blood of the lamb. They are now formally claimed by God as belonging to Him. "They are Mine," is the word, and hence Moses was to "sanctify" them; that is, set them apart for God's special pleasure and service. If we turn to Numbers 3: 40-45, we find this confirmed, but that the Levites were taken in substitution for the firstborn to do that service. This is the first mention in Scripture of sanctification as applied to persons. The previous use was in Genesis 2, when God sanctified, or set apart, the seventh day of creation. Both scriptures help to show the simple meaning of "sanctification" — "to set apart for God." It is because we are thus sanctified that practical sanctification is incumbent upon us. We have not been sheltered from judgment by the blood of Christ to set us free to please ourselves but to be for Him.

Verses 3-10 made clear to Israel that the feast of Unleavened Bread was not something to be observed just as they came out of Egypt, and then to be dismissed as done with; It was for all time, as a memorial of the great deliverance. If we had only the record in the three Gospels of the institution of the Lord's Supper, it might be thought that the bearing of that did not extend beyond the night in which He was betrayed. But the fourth record, in 1 Corinthians 11, settles the point. It is to be observed, "till He come." Israel was to "keep this ordinance in his season from year to year." We observe the Lord's Supper from Lord's Day to Lord's Day.

Verses 11-16, present another commandment to be observed in Israel, as a further reminder of how God delivered them from Egypt. All the firstborn in Israel, whether of man or beast, were to be regarded as the Lord's. That the firstborn of Israel should be linked together with the firstling of a donkey is a humbling thing, but thus it is in verse 13. The firstborn of man must be redeemed. The firstling of an ass might not be, and in that case it suffered death itself. If redeemed, it was by the death of a lamb in its room and stead, just as the firstborn were redeemed in Exodus 12. Thus again do we have presented to us that redemption is made effective on a substitutionary basis.

From verse 17 we learn that the Philistines were already settled in the coastal plain of Palestine, and that they were a warlike race. Now for the pilgrim people of God war is inevitable, but God in His compassion did not mean Israel to be faced with it within a few days of their deliverance. Hence what looked like the short and easy cut to Canaan was avoided and the longer route by the Red Sea was ordered of God. There was therefore a good reason for the longer and more difficult route, just as there are good reasons for difficult passages in the lives of saints today. Though the more difficult road had to be taken, they went under authority. Translators, it appears have some difficulty as to the exact meaning of the word translated "harnessed," but in a general way it surely indicates that they went forth in good order as a host and not as a disorderly rabble.

We see from verse 19 how observant Moses was of the dying charge of Joseph, though uttered long before Moses was born. In this charge, as Hebrews 11 shows, the faith of Joseph expressed itself, for he knew it would be better for his bones to rest in the land in which Messiah's glory should shine than lie entombed in the elaborate and costly sepulchres of Egypt. God did not permit the desires of his faith to be overlooked.

The closing verses of the chapter record how God put before His people the visible symbol of His presence. He became their Leader in this striking way and in spite of all their subsequent failure and faithlessness did not forsake them. In the pillar of cloud He was their guide by day. In the pillar of fire He was their light by night. And what He was, He was always. What they had in this visible way we have in His word today and in the presence of His Holy Spirit.

Exodus 14 opens with definite direction being given through Moses as to the first movement they were to make. There was nothing haphazard about this, though it led them into what seemed an

impossible position. God knew exactly what Pharaoh's reaction to this move would be. Panic-stricken he had let the people go, but he was just the same Pharaoh. His heart was quite unchanged and the hour had now come for his destruction. When God hardens a man's heart his doom is fixed, and God would be honoured in the judgment of him and his hosts.

Thus it turned out in the event. The move they made, as Divinely directed, appeared to the warlike eye of Pharaoh as a colossal military mistake. They were entangled in the land, with the sea before them and the wilderness on either flank. It was so apparent that Pharaoh could not resist the temptation to have his last revenge upon them. So collecting the very flower of his formidable army, he planted his forces behind them; the obvious thing to do from a military standpoint. The children of Israel were now hemmed in by death on every side — death by drowning in front; death by wilderness starvation on the right hand and on the left; death by the sword of Pharaoh behind.

This the people saw quite clearly. They cried out to the Lord, which was right. But they also cried out against Moses, which betrayed their lack of faith. Modern discoveries of the many graves of Egypt and their treasures enable us to appreciate the sarcastic sting in their words, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" A few days before, "the people bowed the head and worshipped" (Exodus 12: 27). How different now! Immediately danger appears they betray their lack of faith and claim that they had asked to be let alone to serve the Egyptians. Here at once we see the germ of that unbelief which eventually led to their carcasses falling in the wilderness. They did die in the wilderness, not because Moses or God failed them, but "because of unbelief" (Heb. 3: 19).

Their words were a cutting blow to Moses, but his answer to them is very fine. No recrimination, but rather a word of calm faith, calculated to still their panic and assure their hearts. The people put their unbelief between themselves and the Egyptians, whereas he saw the Lord between them, and about to act on their behalf. It was not theirs to act, but to see the salvation of the Lord as He acted on their behalf.

While Moses displayed this calm faith that may well fill us with admiration, he yet made a mistake. He bade the people to "stand still," whereas when he cried to the Lord the command was that they "go forward," and he was to act on behalf of the Lord. Their going forward was to be an act of faith by which they would appropriate the remarkable salvation that God was about to effect. If they had remained stationary, the dividing of the sea would not have delivered them.

Can we not see a striking type here? The great salvation which is ours is not something that we **accomplish**, but it is something that we **appropriate** in faith, and we are warned against neglecting it. By His death and resurrection Christ has wrought salvation on our behalf, and we have no hand in it. But this does not shut us up to that species of fatalism which would say that there is nothing we can do about it, and that, if we are to be saved, we shall be without any move on our part; and that if we are not going to be saved, that is final and nothing we can do will alter it. Truly only Christ can accomplish the work but it is ours to go forward in faith and receive for ourselves the benefit of what He has done. Let us endeavour to hold evenly the balance between these two sides of Gospel truth.

Moses was to act, lifting up his rod over the sea, when the Lord would carve a way through it for His people. That way would be salvation to Israel but destruction to proud Pharaoh and his host, and that in such signal fashion as to be remembered through many generations. We see in type that a way of life was to be made through the waters of death.

Verses 19 and 20 record what we may venture to call the decisive move in this tremendous drama. The Angel of God in the pillar of cloud removed from the van of the Israelites and planted

Himself between them and the pursuing Egyptians. The Angel was about to walk with them through the waters of death, but He would do so as covering their rear with the cloud of His presence. Whatever was now about to happen, no Egyptian would be able to strike a single Israelite unless he could pierce through the cloud. Before he could touch any of those who were escaping from slavery he would have to overcome God Almighty!

Was not this move then the most decisive of the whole remarkable series? It happily illustrates the great word that the Apostle wrote in Romans 8: 31, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" Yes, indeed! Who can be? Let us never lose the sense of the security and the triumph of this wonderful fact.

## Exodus 14: 20 — Exodus 15: 27.

Not only did the Angel of God in the cloud plant Himself between Israel and their foes, but He so ordered it that, while to the Egyptians the cloud presented itself as an impenetrable fog of darkness, to Israel it was a powerful light. Verses 21 and 22 tell us of the dividing of the sea by a strong east wind, so that there was a dry passage across, and there was a wall of water on their right hand and on their left.

Now consider the situation. Behind the very last of the host was the presence of the Almighty like an immensely powerful searchlight — not in their eyes to dazzle them, but so placed that reflected from the glassy walls of water, it must have illumined all their way. All that night Israel walked in the light, and the foe, in spite of their swift chariots, was stumbling in the darkness. All that night too the Angel of God Himself was walking through the sea of death, and the Angel was the representative of Jehovah, as we see, comparing verse 19 of our chapter with Exodus 13: 21.

We may say therefore that not only did Jehovah make the way through the sea, but He went that way Himself, and Israel went through inasmuch as they appropriated the way that He had made. Here then we clearly have the second type of the death of Christ, that is furnished in Israel's history. The first, of course, was found in the lamb sacrificed on the Passover night, but this carries us a step further, since it typifies not only death but resurrection also.

Before we reach this point however we are shown how the Lord acted not only **for** His people but **against** their foes. For most of the night they were vainly pushing forward into the cloud of darkness, so that they were well into the midst of the sea. In the morning watch the Lord took off their chariot wheels, which must have reduced them to a crawl. Then once more they realized that the Lord was fighting against them. They would have retreated, but had lost the power to do so with any speed. When the morning appeared Moses once more stretched his hand over the sea, and it resumed in its strength. The mighty walls of water collapsed upon the Egyptians to their total destruction. We can but faintly imagine what an irresistible overthrow it must have been.

The type is a very striking one. In the death of Christ, death itself has become the way of life to the believer. But only to the believer — the one who by faith appropriates the way that has been made. It guarantees the judgment of the unbeliever, for if God did not spare His Son when He became the Sin-bearer, how shall the unbeliever be spared when he has to bear his own sins?

But the Angel of the Lord with Israel did not only go down into the sea passage in the evening: they came up out of it when the morning was come. In their coming out we see a type of resurrection. So, Jesus our Lord was not only delivered for our offences; He was also raised again for our justification. This it is that brings us into peace with God, as we see at the end of Romans 4, and

beginning of Romans 5. The believer is as clear of the judgment of his sins as Christ, who once bore them, now is.

When Israel stood on the further bank of the sea and saw all their enemies dead on the shore, their doubts and fears, as to what Pharaoh and the Egyptians might do, were over. As to that, every question was settled to their peace of mind — a peace that was not theirs in Egypt, even though they were sheltered from God's judgment by the blood of the lamb.

God's work is ever marked by thoroughness. Every soul of Israel was triumphantly saved, and every Egyptian was dead on the shore for we read, "there remained not so much as one of them." Has ever an army, before or since, been so completely destroyed? We doubt it; the only possible approach to it being the case of Sennacherib's army, recorded in 2 Kings 19: 35.

"Thus the Lord saved Israel that day." We do not read of Israel being "**saved**" as long as they were in Egypt, though they had been sheltered from judgment. Egypt typified the world and Pharaoh typified Satan, the god and prince of the world. When clean delivered from these, Israel was said to be saved, and similarly in the New Testament salvation means not only that we have been forgiven and justified, but also delivered from the authority of Satan and from the world-system that he dominates.

In 1 Corinthians 10: 1, 2, this passage through the Red Sea is spoken of as being "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." The first record of Christian baptism, as distinguished from John's baptism, is found in Acts 2. There we have Peter saying in connection with it, "**Save** yourselves from this untoward generation." Again in his first Epistle, Peter writes of baptism as that which, "doth also now **save** us," likening it to the passage of Noah and his family through the waters of the flood. These passages are by many looked upon as difficult and obscure, but we believe the key to them lies in what we are now pointing out. The prime thought in baptism is, in one word, **dissociation** — the cutting of the links with the old life, the old world-associations, the old slavery to the power of the of the adversary. God means His people to be delivered in this real and practical way. And when they are thus delivered He pronounces them to be **SAVED**.

The last verse of the chapter speaks of all this as "that great work which the Lord did." The people saw it and they believed; yet their belief sprang from sight, and hence later on it so easily evaporated. It was not the sort of which the Lord Jesus spoke to Thomas, when He said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20: 29). The faith that springs from sight so largely characterized Israel all through their history, and will do so again in the coming day, as we see predicted in Zechariah 12: 10. Ours is the privilege to believe in, and love, the One whom we have not seen.

Exodus 15 opens on the note of triumph. If Exodus 12 is that of **shelter** from judgment, and chapter 13 that of **sanctification** to God, and Exodus 14 that of **salvation** from the foes, Exodus 15 is that of the **song** of triumph. Redemption by power had been accomplished and song was the natural outcome. This is indeed the first mention of singing in Scripture, for Genesis 31: 27 only mentions songs as something that might have been, but did not take place. This first recorded song has certain clearly defined features which we shall do well to notice.

First of all, the song had one great theme — the glory and might of Jehovah their God, as displayed in His acts of power before their eyes. It begins with Him, "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously." It ends with Him, "The LORD shall reign for ever and ever." Twelve times in all does His sacred Name occur in the song. Moses did not lead the people to sing about themselves, not even of their experiences of wonder and delight in all that they had witnessed. We venture to think that one of the weaknesses in our modern hymnology is the frequency with which we are led to sing

about the depth of our feelings and experiences in praise and worship. It is spiritually damaging to tell the Lord in song that we praise Him "in strains of deepest joy," when as a matter of fact our joy is very shallow; and we have never--known that of which we read in 1 Peter 1: 8. Joy of that depth would reduce us to silence for it is "unspeakable." We avoid all extravagance when we celebrate the grace and glory of our Lord, for here it is impossible to exaggerate.

Secondly, though they did not sing about themselves, they did appropriate for themselves that which the Lord had done. They owned Him as their strength and salvation, in verse 2; as their Leader, their Redeemer and their Guide, in verse 13. All this He had proved Himself to be. They thankfully acknowledged Him in these things, and praised Him accordingly, confessing Him to be supreme above all the gods of Egypt that they had known, marked as He is by holiness and by powerful wonders.

Thirdly, that this deliverance was only the beginning, that He had a purpose in it, and that He would certainly carry it to fruition, completing what He had begun. The faith of Moses realized that God would overcome the opposition of Edom and Moab and bring them into Canaan, planting them in the mountain where the Sanctuary was to be established, and that they as a people would have the honour of preparing His habitation.

Moses was so sure that God would not fail of His purpose that at the end of verse 17 he speaks of the Sanctuary as something which His hands had already established. It is a fact that as soon as we view anything from the standpoint of Divine purpose questions of time become relatively insignificant. If God has purposed it, the thing is as good as done. What an establishing fact this is!

We cannot doubt that in this song Moses spoke as a prophet and in an inspired way. It was his song at the beginning of the 40 years in the wilderness, and Deuteronomy 32 records his song at the end of the 40 years just before he died. How different is the second song! The sad deflection of the people had to come into that, though he ends it on a note of victory. In Revelation 15: 3, we read of those who had got the victory over the beast singing, "the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." Singing the song of Moses, an allusion, we judge, to our chapter rather than Deuteronomy 32; they will glorify the power of God in the victory that had been given to them, whilst the song of the Lamb would indicate that they had gained the victory through weakness and apparent defeat.

Verse 19 of our chapter reiterates the completeness of the overthrow that overtook Pharaoh and his hosts, when the floods that had stood upright as an heap because congealed, were loosed and the watery walls collapsed upon their heads.

In verse 20 Miriam is mentioned as a prophetess. She and the women of Israel had their part in this jubilant praise to the Lord. Thus all Israel was as one in ascribing all the glory to God.

But how great the change of scene when we read the six verses that close the chapter. Israel had been redeemed from the bondage of Egypt and now they take their three days journey into the wilderness, a land without natural resources of water or food. We are told that they carried some food with them out of Egypt, but water quickly became an urgent necessity. The typical significance of this is plain. To the unconverted, who know not God's redemption, the world is the scene of their pleasures and the gratification of their natural desires, and consequently it is anything but a wilderness to them. To us, who have been redeemed, it is a wilderness for it offers nothing to please or feed the new nature that now is ours.

After the three days water was found, but it was bitter and undrinkable. So the name Marah was given to it. This is the third time that the adjective "bitter" **has occurred** in this narrative. First the

Egyptians made the lives of the Israelites bitter with hard bondage. This is recorded in chapter 1: 14. Then in chapter 12: 8, we read of "bitter herbs" with which the Passover lamb was to be eaten. Now they find bitter water in the wilderness. In this type is enforced the bitterness of sin. It enslaves into bitter bondage. If we appropriate the sacrifice of the Lamb of God it is as those who have to realize inwardly the bitterness of the judgment of death, that it entails. In the world, now turned for us into a wilderness, bitterness- still meets us. Water normally would speak of refreshment and life. But the world's water becomes bitterness to us, for its sweetest joys are polluted by sin.

The people were not prepared for this, and forgot the power and goodness of God. They only saw Moses and uttered their murmurings and complaints to him. Moses, however, saw God in this emergency, and cried to Him.

At once the remedy was revealed. The Lord showed him a tree which, when cut down, was cast into the waters and they were made sweet. It was the tree that removed the bitterness and brought in the sweetness.

Here again a type confronts us. In Eden there were two living trees. By man's disobedience the fruit of the tree of knowledge became death to him, and the way to the tree of life was barred. Now we have not a living tree but a tree cut down. It was on a tree cut down that our Lord was crucified, and, as we know, "cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3: 13). But as that chapter in Galatians proceeds to show, by bearing the curse on the tree the blessing is secured for those who believe. It is the "tree" of the cross of Christ that turns bitterness into sweetness.

Let us make up our minds that in our wilderness experiences we must of necessity find much that is bitter to us on a natural basis. But as we take up the cross and follow our Lord we shall find our circumstances are transfigured, and what is bitter to the flesh becomes sweetness to the spirit.

This first wilderness experience was a landmark in Israel's history. They were tested and for the result we have to read verse 26. We meet with that ominous "**If**." They were not exactly put under the law as yet, but a certain measure of probation was established and God's governmental dealing declared. They should be spared the diseases common in Egypt, **if they obeyed**. Their obedience was to be practical and not nominal. They were not only to "hearken," and "give ear," and "keep," but also to "do" what was right in the sight of the Lord. He is satisfied with nothing short of reality.

But though bitterness is found in the experiences of the wilderness God in His mercy provides oases in it. It was thus for Israel. Passing on from Marah they came to the oasis of Elim, and here there was an ample supply by which they could rest. God acts similarly in regard to the spiritual needs of His saints. An illustration of this is seen in Acts 9: 31. Under the persecuting hand of Saul of Tarsus the churches had a "Marah" experience. But the grace of God acted in his miraculous conversion, and then for a season the churches reached their "Elim."

And God's ways with us as individuals conform to this pattern. So when we reach our "Marah" let us seek to profit by the experience; and when we are conducted to an "Elim" let us not forget to bless God for it.

## **Exodus 16: 1 — Exodus 17: 16.**

Though a pleasant and refreshing spot, Elim was not the permanent resting place to which Israel had been called. So it had to be left behind just one month after they had come out of Egypt, since it was on the fourteenth day of the first month that the passover lamb was slain. Immediately they entered the wilderness of Sin the murmurings of the people broke out afresh.

Not water but food was now the urgent necessity. By this time doubtless all that they could have brought out of Egypt had been consumed, and in the wilderness there was no visible source of supply. Sad to say, the people were walking by sight, and though the marvels of both the passover night and the passage of the Red Sea had taken place within the month, the power of their God was completely forgotten. Only the flesh pots of Egypt were remembered, and they reproached Moses and Aaron. They saw nothing before them but death, and would have preferred it in Egypt rather than in the wilderness.

The people were not yet formally put under the law, hence the Lord at once intervened in mercy, though by the bread from heaven there would be a preliminary testing to see whether they would walk in His law when given or whether they would not. This we see in verse 4. It was made very plain to them however that their complaints were really directed against God and not against His servants, and that God would take up the challenge they had flung down.

This therefore immediately took place by the appearing of the glory of the Lord in the cloud, when He spoke to Moses, promising that by evening they should have flesh to eat and be filled with bread by the next morning. They were still being treated not on the ground of law but of grace.

The word of the Lord was fulfilled by an extraordinary flight of quails that evening in the first place. This bird is known for its migratory habits and being easy to capture, but the immense numbers of this flight settling on the camp gave a miraculous turn to the episode. Nothing more is said here as to them, but when under the law this miracle was repeated, it was followed by judgment, as we see in Numbers 11: 31-34.

Then, in the second place, there was in the morning the falling of the manna round about the host. This was a miracle not of a moment but one that continued all the wilderness journey. The miracle of the quails is dealt with in part of one verse only, but all the remainder of our chapter is occupied with details of the manna inasmuch as it is a type finding its fulfilment in Christ, as the wilderness food of His saints. The Lord's own words in John 6 make this manifest. The manna was the type, but He is the "true bread from heaven." Again He said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven."

Let us notice a few features that are marked in the type. First of all the manna fell during the quiet hours of the night and not amidst the heat and bustle of the day. Silently and unseen by the eyes of men it fell, and only revealed itself lying on the dew when the morning was come. It is not mere fancy when it is asserted that we Christians need times of retirement and quiet that the spiritual manna may descend upon our souls.

Secondly, in appearance it was "a small round thing," so small as to be compared to the tiny particles of hoar frost. By coming down from heaven into Manhood, so that He might give His flesh for the life of the world, the Son of God did indeed make Himself small and of no account in the eyes of men. Moreover it was round, and not angular and uneven. Even so, in Christ once humbled here, there was manifest an even-ness that was produced by perfection in every detail.

Thirdly, as we see in verse 31, it was like a certain seed — not a crystal, which though attractive is but lifeless matter, but a seed which has life — it was white in its purity, and in taste it had the sweetness of honey. It was not honey though when made into wafers for eating it had the sweetness of honey. In all these things we can see a foreshadowing of the purity and sweetness found in the humbled Christ, who became through His death the true seed of life for all His people.

The way in which it was to be gathered is very instructive. There was enough for all but it was to be gathered according to the capacity of the individual to assimilate it. Verse 13 reads almost as though the manna had ability to accommodate itself to each person, so that he that gathered much had nothing

over and he that gathered little had no lack. It is often said that we enjoy Christ and His grace according to our capacity and our diligence, and here we have in type the basis for such a remark.

We inserted the word, **diligence**, as well as, capacity, because of verses 19 and 20. The manna was given according to capacity and was to be assimilated up to capacity, so that none was left until the next morning. There were some who did not use diligence to eat all they gathered and, leaving it till the next day, it bred worms and stank. Thus it became worse than useless. We all know the proverb, "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting" (Prov. 12: 27) but here we have the case of the slothful man who did not eat all the manna he gathered, with a very displeasing result. We may make an application of this, if we say that what we gather of Christ from the Scriptures is for our immediate food and enjoyment, and not something to be put aside for display to others. If we treat it thus it will only stink when we display it.

But every week there was one exception to this. They gathered it every morning, but on the sixth morning there was a double supply and the half could be retained so that there was no gathering on the sabbath. Before the sun waxed hot it had to be gathered. Thus from the outset God emphasized the rest of the sabbath day which was to be the sign of the covenant shortly to be established. It had been "given" for man's benefit, even from the days of creation. But in this matter the people were careless. Some retained the manna when they should not, and some transgressed in going forth on the sabbath, expecting to find it, and they did not.

In the light of all this, how remarkable is the instruction to Moses recorded in verses 32-34. A small pot — an omer, the tenth part of an ephah — was to be filled with manna and laid up before the Lord. In due time Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, and thus it was preserved, without stinking or breeding worms, from generation to generation and from century to century.

The Epistle to the Hebrews, as is well known, furnishes us in several places with details not mentioned in the Old Testament. Here is one of them — "the **golden** pot that had manna" (Exodus 9: 4). It was deposited in the Ark, which was made of shittim wood overlaid with gold, speaking of the Deity and Humanity of Christ. So similarly, the manna typifying the marvellous grace as manifested in His Humanity, as come down from heaven, was laid up before God in a golden vessel, which typified His Deity.

The promise to the overcomer of Pergamos, "to eat of the hidden manna" (Rev. 2: 17), refers to this, and indicates that the reality typified will endure for ever. When in our Lord Jesus Christ the Deity entered into Humanity and was manifested before the eyes of men, there was such a display of excellence and beauty as shall be remembered for ever. Tested, as it was, by the malignity of the adversary and the sin and sorrow of man, these things served as a dark background, throwing its brightness into relief. It is indeed true that,

"The touch that heals the broken heart

Is never felt above,"

yet the remembrance of the gracious and powerful touch, that once did the healing, will be the worshipful joy of saints through an eternal day.

Another move forward now took place, as we learn in the opening verse of Exodus 17. Rephidim was reached, and again there was an emergency. At Marah there was bitter water; here was no water at all. Again the people proved themselves to be a generation in whom was no faith, and therefore no ability to profit by their past experience of the power of God. They demand water from Moses with bitter upbraiding, so bitter as to be almost ready to stone him. Moses however, as a man of faith, knew

where his resource lay, and referred the matter to the Lord.

The rod of Moses had become the symbol of the Divine authority that had been conferred upon him, and from this point we find the word used in Scripture with this significance, as, for instance, "The Lord shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion: rule Thou . . ." (Ps. 110: 2). There was the **rock** in Horeb on which Jehovah would stand, and with the **rod** Moses was to smite the rock.

Now, remarkably enough, this is the first mention of a rock in Scripture, and as 1 Corinthians 10: 4 tells us, "that rock was Christ." The rock being smitten, the waters gushed forth; a clear type of the Holy Spirit, as a river of living water flowing forth as a result of the death of Christ. Here was all the water that the people needed, furnished in grace in spite of their complainings.

We cannot refrain from a slight digression. As we read Matthew 16: 18, again we have to say, "that Rock was Christ," the Son of the living God. How great the error of those who imagine that the rock was Peter! Why, a little lower down we find Peter trapped into doing the devil's work, and wishing to hinder that smiting of the Rock in His death, that would bring to pass the flowing forth of the Holy Spirit. No adverse power can prevail against that church which is built by the Son of the living God upon Himself, the Rock, from whom proceeds the Holy Spirit of God.

But to return to our chapter, Moses saw that the people's cry of unbelief was in effect a tempting of the Lord, inviting from His hand some drastic display of His might to show that He was amongst them. The fact that He displayed His power in an act of mercy, and not one of judgment, did not alter the fact that it was a tempting. If there is one thing worse than unbelief it is self-satisfied presumption, such as we find in Micah 3: 11. At the beginning of their national history Israel **doubted** if God was amongst them, **when He was**. Towards the end of their history they were **dogmatically sure** that He was amongst them, **when He was not**, and they were ripe for judgment.

In the previous chapter we had Israel hungry and crying out for bread. In contrast to this, we find in Matthew 4, that our Lord was tested by hunger in the wilderness, but waited on God and would not act for Himself. Now we have the people tempting God at Massah and Meribah, whereas the Lord, when faced with the second temptation in the wilderness, quoted, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." In Exodus 32, we find Israel worshipping the golden calf, but in contrast to this the Lord replied to the third temptation by saying, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Israel had 40 years in the wilderness and Jesus 40 days, but He re-trod their wilderness way, and where they fatted He displayed His perfection.

The closing section of Exodus 17 is occupied with the record of the first fighting in the people's history. At the Red Sea they saw the Lord fighting on their behalf, and they had but to enter upon the fruits of His victory. Now Amalek appears and they have to arm themselves for the battle. Amalek was descended from Esau, the man of fleshly appetite, who for a morsel of meat sold his birthright; and so he becomes very aptly a type of **the flesh**.

Now let us recapitulate a little. In type, Israel had been sheltered from judgment by the blood of the lamb, and redeemed from the world and Satan at the Red Sea. They had been miraculously fed, and now through the smitten rock the gushing water, typical of the Spirit, had been given. Immediately after Amalek, typical of the flesh, appears. How fitting all this is! We read that, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal. 5: 17), So it is not until as believers we receive the Holy Spirit that this conflict begins. In our unconverted days the flesh reigned supreme, and its power in our lives was unchallenged.

Many Christians are very disturbed in mind when, soon after conversion, this conflict begins

within them. But at least it is a sign that they are indwelt by the Spirit of God. Now Amalek was a very subtle foe, as we discover when we read Deuteronomy 25: 18, and in our experience the flesh acts just in this way, attacking us in what we may call our weak points — though these may often be what we may fancy to be our strong ones! Now God put the sentence of death, in its extremest form, on Amalek, as we see in verse 14, just as God has "condemned sin in the flesh" in the death of Christ.

Still in this conflict Israel had to fight, but under the leadership of Joshua, the man who at the end of the 40 years was to be the captain who led them into Palestine. This is the first time we meet with his name, and from this point onwards he is presented to us as a man of faith, and consequently as a man of conflict in a variety of ways.

In this incident he is seen acting under the direction of Moses, deriving the power through him. Moses was on high; Joshua was below leading the fighting men. The fortunes of the day hung upon the intercessor on high who, being but a man, soon became weary with his hands lifted up to heaven. It is easy to discern the spiritual application of this. In our conflict today all depends upon our great Intercessor on high. Truly the Spirit is also an Intercessor with us here below, but He is with us as "another Comforter," who represents the Man, Christ Jesus, who is out of our sight, having gone on high. The interceding hands of our great Priest on high never hang down with weariness; thanks be to God!

Amalek was repulsed and discomfited but he was not yet utterly destroyed, as he will be. The victory was a great one and commemorated by an altar, Jehovah-nissi, for the victory belonged to Him. This fact too has a voice for us. There is power for us to keep the sentence of death on the flesh, so that we do not fulfil its lust, and are preserved from doing the things that otherwise we might, but it still remains in us, though we have received the Spirit. Hence the Spirit still lusts against it from generation to generation. A time is coming when it will be blotted out from under heaven, but that time is not yet.

Even today there are to be found some who foolishly and falsely imagine that for them the flesh has been utterly blotted out, and, in those who hold it, this idea much distorts the understanding of what the flesh in its subtlety really involves. It is too often reduced into meaning only the grosser sins of the body, to the exclusion of many more refined and less obvious sins. Let us never fall into this snare, but humbly acknowledge that the flesh is not only a subtle but also an implacable foe within us, and that only as we walk in the Spirit will the victory be ours.

## **Exodus 18: 1 — Exodus 20: 11.**

The eighteenth chapter is somewhat parenthetical in its nature, inasmuch as it recounts an episode in which Moses' father-in-law played a considerable part. To get the more direct dealings of God with the people we have to read straight on from the end of Exodus 17 to the beginning of Exodus 19.

Jethro must have known the full story of Israel's sufferings in Egypt for Moses had dwelt with him for forty years. Now he had heard the wonderful story of their deliverance, and he came to rejoice with them, bringing Zipporah and her two sons. Only now do we learn that Moses had sent her back to her father, and what was the name of the second son.

The episode related in Exodus 4 had shown us that Zipporah was not prepared for circumcision, the sign of the covenant with Abraham, and the type of the cutting off of the flesh. And, in that chapter it is "son," in the singular, which we take as applying to Gershom, previously mentioned in Exodus 2. In naming his elder son Gershom, Moses revealed his consciousness of strangership in the world where he sojourned, and the cutting off of circumcision was very appropriate in regard to that. Now the

second son is mentioned, and we pass from what is negative to what is positive, since Eliezer signifies, "My God is an help." This had now been made very plain, and in these two names we find Moses saying in principle what Joseph before him had said in the names of his two sons, which meant, "Forgetting," and "Fruitful."

Many see in this chapter a picture, though perhaps a faint one, of what will take place at the end of Israel's history. It is given to us before we turn from God's dealings with the people in grace, under the old covenant with Abraham, to the fresh covenant of law, with which Exodus 19 is occupied. Let us consider this picture in its broad outlines.

In the language of Deuteronomy 33: 5, Moses was, "king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together." In our chapter we find the heads of the people being selected, as Jethro counselled under God; for he only advised it, if "God command thee so." So it seems that here we have a little sample of the coming kingdom. Moses is king; the people are subject to him; the Gentile, in the person of Jethro, comes to rejoice with him and his people. Moreover his Gentile wife is there, though she had disappeared during the time when God was redeeming His people by powerful judgments, and in her we see a faint type of the church.

Further, in the men appointed as rulers under Moses we see a type of those who will reign with Christ in the day of the kingdom. This is in keeping with Daniel 7: 14 and 18, where we are told that while the Son of Man will take the kingdom as the supreme authority, the saints also will take the kingdom in that day. The men who took authority under Moses were to be, "able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness." This reminds us that the places of authority in the coming kingdom of Christ will be given to those who have approved themselves as worthy during the present time of responsibility here.

Exodus 19 opens with the people camping at the foot of Sinai in the third month after their deliverance from Egypt; and, reaching that spot, Moses was called by God to go up into the mount in order that he might receive from God and convey to the people a fresh proposal.

The people were reminded what God had done on their behalf, bringing them to Himself in His grace. They however had not responded aright. They lacked faith in God, and did not really know themselves. Would they now have their footing with God established on a legal basis? Should God's attitude towards them be governed by their attitude towards Him, so that, if they obeyed they should be in favour, and if they disobeyed they should be rejected?

In order more fully to grasp the difference between law and grace we may note the contrast between verses 4 and 5 of our chapter and 1 Peter 2: 9. In Exodus the people were to be "a peculiar treasure," "a kingdom of priests," "an holy nation," but only if they obeyed God's voice indeed. In Peter the Christians of Jewish nationality are reminded what **they are**, without any "if." They are not only "a royal priesthood," "an holy nation," "a peculiar people," — three things almost identical with the three things of Exodus — but they are a fourth thing, which does not appear in Exodus. They are "a chosen generation," and that made a difference of immense import. They were a new generation of God's choice — a born-again people.

As a result of this, grace had set them in a new and wonderful position, and being this they were to show forth the praises of the One who had called them into it. In Exodus, the position of privilege before God was only to be theirs if their conduct merited it — if they obeyed. And, as we see in other Scriptures, they had to obey in **everything** and **all the time**. Hence the position was forfeited. They never had it, and on that basis they never will. Law can only say, "Do and live," whereas grace says, "Live and do."

This legal proposal was laid by Moses before the people, and their reply was promptly given, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." Evidently it never occurred to their minds that they lacked both **inclination** and **power** to do what the law of God would enjoin. It is just this that both they and we have to learn. But did not God know it? That, He most certainly did.

We may wish then to ask why did God propose the law, if He knew from the outset what the result would be? This is virtually the question that Paul raises in Galatians 3: 19. He answers it by saying, "It was added because of transgressions," while they were waiting for the advent of Christ, the promised Seed. The force of this becomes clearer if we read Romans 5: 13; and Romans 7: 7-13. God gave the law to Israel that by it they might have their sinful state brought home to them. Sin is lawlessness, and it was filling the earth from the days of the fall; but, immediately the law was given, a clear line was drawn, and stepping over that line a man became a definite transgressor. His sin could now be imputed to him in a way not possible before. God intended that in Israel definite proof should be given of the fallen and sinful state in which men were found.

Let us not forget that Israel was chosen, not only to be the central nation in God's scheme for the government of the earth under Christ, but also to be the sample nation, in whom was to be made the test as to the real state of fallen humanity. They are a nation that has sprung from the finest human specimen — Abraham, who was "the friend of God." Moreover they came into being by a miracle — the birth of Isaac. They were specially separated from the idolatrous nations and divinely educated by the voices of the prophets. Nothing could be fairer than this test of humanity in this people, who were the finest obtainable sample. We Gentiles were never put under the law, but we must never forget that, when we speak of how the law brought condemnation on Israel, we are thereby condemning ourselves.

In our chapter then, we see the people accepting the law as the determining factor in their relations with God, and doing so in the confidence that they would be able to keep it **all**. Had they had any true knowledge of themselves they would never have done this. Having accepted it, however, a complete change came over the scene. God veiled Himself and came to Moses in a thick cloud, as verse 8 tells us, and from thence He would speak with Moses and make him His mouthpiece to the people.

Moreover, there would have to be special preparations on the part of the people. For two days they were to be set apart; they were to wash even their clothes, and bounds were to be set, preventing any from touching the mountain, under pain of death. The law was now to be given, and it was important that the people to whom it was given should be impressed with the holiness of the One who gave it.

From verse 16 to the end of the chapter we have a vivid description of the tremendous scene that took place on the third day when the law was given. The people were marshalled at the foot of the mount that they might meet with God, as far as it was possible for them to do so. On the crest of the mountain Jehovah descended in fire, heralded by thunders, lightnings, cloud and smoke, and also the loud sound of a trumpet and quakings in the earth. It must indeed have been a scene to strike terror into every heart. If we turn to Hebrews 12: 21, we discover a detail which is not mentioned in Exodus — "So terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." Exodus tells us that the people trembled, but that Moses, accompanied by Aaron, went up into the mount. Hebrews tells us how he quaked as he did so.

Verse 22 shows us that there were already in Israel men who were acknowledged as priests, and in chapter 24: 5, we read of certain young men who were sent to sacrifice unto the Lord. Who these were is not disclosed, and not until we reach chapter 28 do we find Aaron and his sons named, as to be set apart for the priest's office. What does appear clearly in our chapter is that the special privilege

connected with priesthood is that of drawing "near to the Lord," and that such nearness demands sanctification in no ordinary degree.

Verses 1-17 of Exodus 20 put on record the ten commandments which specially summarized the demands made by the holy law of God. The next chapter opens with the "judgments," which were to be set before them. If we turn to Malachi 4: 4, we find both "statutes" and "judgments" mentioned as well as the "law." The three words evidently cover all the legislation that reached Israel through Moses, and as we begin to consider the legislation we shall do well to note that in the days of Malachi, nearly a thousand years after it was first given, it was still as binding as at the beginning. It was for "**all** Israel," and valid **all through** that dispensation. What God originates at the beginning of any dispensation stands good, and He never swerves from it however much His people may do so.

In giving the commandments God presented Himself to Israel as Jehovah, who had become in a special sense their God by having delivered them from Egypt, the house of their bondage. He addressed Himself therefore at the outset directly to the people, as verse 19 indicates.

In the first three commandments God demanded that His rights as Creator, and their Redeemer from bondage, should be respected. He alone is God, so they were in the first place to recognize no other "god."

In the second place they were to make no attempt to have an image or material representation of any unseen power. God is "in heaven above," and anything purporting to be an image of Him is forbidden. Many other powers there are both invisible and visible, and no representations of such are to be made. All the idols of the heathen are strictly forbidden, and in this connection the warning is issued as to the sins of the fathers descending in retribution on the children. God knew how terribly infectious such idolatrous practices are; and, that if the fathers start them the epidemic rages with tenfold virulence in the children, and brings down the judgment upon their heads.

On the other hand the government of God would be in favour of those who are obedient because they love Him. Thus at the outset was it indicated that love is what is really enjoined in the law. Love is the fulfilling of the law, as we know very well.

In the third place the name of the Lord is safeguarded. Though Jehovah Himself was unseen, His Name had been manifested, and His supreme place in their midst would soon be disregarded if His Name were to be used in an unworthy way.

It is remarkable that the commandments given with the object of asserting and safeguarding the glory and the rights of God should be three, and this long before the reality of the three Persons in the Godhead was brought to light. We cannot but see in the second the clearing away of all that would be calculated to confuse the issue when our blessed Lord Jesus appeared as "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1: 15). In Him, and in Him alone, is found the true and perfect representation of all that God is.

Similarly it is remarkable that when the Holy Spirit — who is not incarnate, but invisible — was sent forth He was sent by the Father **in the name of the Son** (see, John 14: 26). That name has to be safeguarded, and it is further to be noted that it is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, who has come in that name, which is the unpardonable sin.

The fourth commandment concerns the due observance of the sabbath day, which was to be the sign of the covenant which was just being established. The first three commandments lay down man's duty in regard to God; the last six his duty in regard to his fellows. Between these two divisions stands 'the sign of the covenant, for it of necessity drew a clear line of demarcation between Israel, who as

God's people were to observe this weekly day of complete rest, and the rest of the nations, who did not observe it.

The Gentile nations had by this time lost all knowledge of the true God and of His work in creation. Israel alone had the knowledge of this and of the fact that God had rested on the seventh day. In the law God was enforcing His creatorial rights over man, and by Sabbath observance Israel was to have His creatorial work in constant remembrance.

We Christians are not under the law but under grace. The Sabbath, as the sign of the law covenant, has therefore lost its significance for us, as we see in such a Scripture as Colossians 2: 16. Nevertheless there can be no doubt that a rest of one day in every seven is the wise and beneficent intention of God for man. The resurrection of Christ is the seal of our faith, and hence the first day of the week, on which He rose from the dead, became the day that Christians have from the very beginning devoted to His worship and service, and it has become the day on which we cease from our ordinary toil. Israel's week **worked up to** the day of rest. The Christian's week **starts from** the day of rest, based upon the resurrection of Christ.

The world around us has turned it into a day of amusement, sport and sin. Let us take good care to use it aright for the glory of God and our own blessing.

## **Exodus 20: 12 — Exodus 22: 31.**

We now have to consider the six commandments that are concerned with man's duty in regard to his fellows. Sin has not only estranged man from God, so that the rights of the Creator have to be safeguarded, but utterly disorganized society, so that fundamental human rights have to be maintained. Only the first commandment of the six is of a positive nature. The last five are of a negative sort — "Thou shalt **not**."

The honouring of both father and mother is the one positive command. In God's ordering of human society the family is the fundamental unit, and of that unit the father and mother are the responsible heads, and to be recognized and honoured as such. If they are not so honoured rapid disintegration sets in, and all the relations of life are adversely affected. Proof of this stares us in the face today. Men of wholesome mind — magistrates, and others — join in deploring what is called "juvenile delinquency," as directly traceable to the break-up of home life. In most cases the parents themselves are mainly to blame. Obsessed with the pleasures of sin, parental discipline is neglected, and the children left to their own devices.

The Apostle Paul points out in Ephesians 6: 2 that this is "the first commandment with promise;" the promise being long life in the land which was to be given to them. Conversely, the flouting of this command was to entail severe penalty, as we see in Deuteronomy 21: 18-21. The penalty pronounced against the "stubborn and rebellious son," who would not, "obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother," may seem to us very drastic, but it serves to emphasize the great importance of this fifth commandment in the thought of God. Were it faithfully and universally observed, there would be very little infringement of the remaining five commandments.

In the sixth commandment there is the safeguarding of human life, of which God is the Source. Man cannot give life and he has no right to take it away, except he does so as ordained of God. After the flood Noah was authorized to slay animals for food, and government was established and the sword committed to his hand, so that death should be the penalty for murder. In the New Testament we are reminded that the earthly authority "beareth not the sword in vain" (Rom. 13: 4), which shows that the

introduction of **grace** in Christ has not nullified what has been established as to **government** in the earth. Authorized government takes its course, but murder is strictly forbidden.

The seventh commandment safeguards the purity of human life. "Adultery" here has the widest sense, covering what are considered to be lesser forms of this sin between the sexes. The history of peoples shows those who have widely practised this evil have degraded themselves both physically and mentally, and out of it spring a host of other ills.

The eighth commandment enforces the rights of personal property. There was some measure of communal life amongst the children of Israel, and in the New Testament we read of a brief period of Christian communism, when many sold properties, and in Jerusalem they had all things in common. But even then the rights of private property were not set aside, for Peter said to Ananias, "While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?" (Acts 5: 4). Yes, it belonged to Ananias, and no one had the right to grab it away from him. The law forbade stealing, and when today anyone is converted the word is, "Let him that stole steal no more" (Eph. 4: 28).

The ninth safeguards truth against man's sinful propensity to distort it into positive lying. A man may lie as to almost anything, but what is specially prohibited is his tendency to lie at the expense of his neighbour. The devil, we know, is the father of lies, but since man fell under his influence he has become a very apt pupil in that direction. In this world lies have become one of the most potent forces of evil. We may note that while killing and stealing are two of the commonest and worst forms of violence, adultery and lying are two of the commonest and worse worst forms of corruption. All four are most destructive of human happiness. When they vanish in the millennial age the world will become a paradise.

But of all the commandments the tenth is the one that most surely brings conviction and a sense of the death sentence into the soul, if it be honestly faced. We find the Apostle Paul saying, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Rom. 7: 7); and he goes on to say, "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." We all know that fallen human nature is such, that the fact of anything being prohibited stirs up a desire for that very thing. Quite possibly, before the prohibition reached us, the thing was not even in our mind; but, reaching us, the thing was presented to our mind, and at once the covetous desire was there, and we realized we were dead men in the sight of the law.

In the tenth commandment, then, God legislated against not only evil things but against the desire for evil things, and this makes it so death-dealing for the awakened conscience. It was in keeping with this that the Lord Jesus removed the weight of the law against both murder and adultery from the **act** to the **desire** and **impulse** that prompts the act, when He gave His Sermon on the Mount, reported in Matthew 5. Hence also the warning against covetousness, which the Lord uttered, in Luke 12; and the statement of the Apostle Paul, "Mortify therefore . . . covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col. 3: 5).

When the rich young ruler approached the Lord with his question as to eternal life, Jesus tested him with five out of the ten commandments. He did not cite the first four, dealing with what is due to God, nor did He mention the tenth. The young man could say he had kept the five that the Lord mentioned. No doubt he had, if only the prohibited acts were in question. Had he been tested on the basis of the tenth, he would have been hopelessly condemned.

Verses 18-21 give us the immediate reaction of the people to the giving of the law. Twice we get the words, "afar off." They had not yet had time to commit any breach of what was enjoined, but they were conscious at once that distance had supervened between themselves and God. Further, they begged Moses to act as mediator, saying, "Let not God speak with us, lest we die." So these two things

— **distance** and **death** — laid their fear upon them. To the Galatians it was written, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse" (Gal. 3: 10). Paul did not say, "As many as have broken the law." Such are of course under the curse. But man being what he is, it is sufficient for him to be, "of the works of the law," that is, standing before God on that basis, to be under the curse. That is just what we see in the passage before us.

Moses realized that the law was given as a test, for he said, "God is come to prove you." The people moreover were to realize the gravity of the position in which they had set themselves. They appear to have taken up that position in quite a light-hearted way, and God intended that His fear should be before their faces, so that they might not sin. If fear could induce the fulfilling of the law all would have been well for there was everything present to provoke fear. We have to turn to the New Testament to learn that, "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13: 10).

In the closing verses of the chapter we get what the people were not to make, and what they were to make. They were **not** to make gods, even of the most precious substances. They **were** to make an altar of earth. In the next chapter we get the "judgments" that accompanied the ten commandments, and the first of these is concerned with the "Hebrew servant."

Now at first sight the sequence of these subjects may seem strange, and especially we might be tempted to regard these regulations as to what was to be done when an Hebrew undertook the modified form of slavery that was permitted, as a descent into something very trivial compared with the thunders of the law. We discover it to be far otherwise when we consider their spiritual import. The giving of the law became a ministry of death. Nothing could meet that situation but sacrifice, hence next comes the altar. But where can a sufficient sacrifice be found? Only in the One, of whom the Hebrew servant was a type.

As to the altar, it was to be of earth or of unhewn stone. If men were to lift up their tools upon the stones to shape them according to their thoughts, they would pollute it. An altar of earth or of unhewn stone might seem very crude and offensive to aesthetic taste, but since it typified death — the death of Christ — God intended it to stand in its native roughness and not be embellished by art and human device.

Neither was the altar to be placed in an elevated position and approached by steps, as was the custom apparently with the altars of the heathen. We may give this a present-day application if we point out that in the sacrifice of Christ God has come down to us, so that we are not to attempt to climb up to Him. When men endeavour to do this, they only expose their own nakedness in a spiritual sense.

A peculiar form of bond-service was permitted amongst the children of Israel, details of which we have in the early verses of Exodus 21. An Hebrew might place himself under such a bond for six years, but in the seventh he was to go out free; and if he came under it with a wife, she went out free with him. If, on the other hand, he obtained his wife through his master, and children were given, complications ensued as we find in verses 4-6. In these complications we find a remarkable type.

If the bondman should declare that for love of master, wife and children he will not go out free, saying this plainly and distinctly, then his master shall take him before the judges, and to the door — normally the place of exit — and there shed a few drops of his blood by piercing his ear against the door or door post. Then henceforward he should be a servant in perpetuity. Such was the first of the "judgments" under the law.

We cannot but wonder if ever a Hebrew servant did say, "I love my master, my wife, and my children," thus placing his master before wife and children. We can only say that the master would

have to be a most wonderful person to gain such a place of ascendancy. But when our blessed Lord took the servant's place, He came primarily to do the will of God in devotion to His glory, and secondarily to establish a relationship with redeemed men that nothing will be allowed to break. The Antitype of this we see in John 13: 1 and 14: 31.

In that Gospel, while the Deity of our Lord is fully stated, the place He took of subjection and dependence is made very manifest. At the close of the discourse in the Upper Chamber the Lord went forth to Gethsemane and Golgotha that the world might know that **He loved the Father**. The Evangelist had previously told us that having loved His own in the world **He loved them to the end**. His declaration of love to the Father, whom He came to serve and of love to those that He brought into relationship to Himself, could not have been more plainly made.

His love led Him into death. In the type we have only a faint type of this, but the spot of blood on the doorpost, where the ear was bored, does lead our thoughts to the true shedding of blood, when our Saviour was hanged on the tree.

Verses 7-11 deal with the case of the woman who becomes a bondservant. As the weaker party she might become the victim of wrongful treatment, so her rights are clearly defined. We may remark that under the law things were permitted that would not be tolerated by Christians today. That this was so is shown by the Lord's own words recorded in Matthew 19: 7, 8. We must ever bear in mind that, "the law made nothing perfect" (Heb. 7: 19), since it set forth the **minimum of God's demands**, so that all, who **in any way** or **at any time** fell short of it, came under the sentence of death. The maximum of all God's thoughts and desires are realized and set forth **in Christ**.

From verse 12 to verse 27, we get judgments in regard to acts of violence, beginning with the differentiation between manslaughter and murder. For the former a place of refuge is promised. Later we find how amply this promise was fulfilled, for no less than six cities of refuge were appointed.

On the other hand, we notice that the severity of God is displayed in the law. The death sentence is pronounced against sins that today are not accounted worthy of the capital sentence — verses 15, 16 and 17, for instance — though we must remember that the wages of sin — of all sin - is death. The sentence of verse 17 is one that our Lord quoted in Matthew 15: 4. To deprive forcibly a man of his liberty comes near to depriving him of his life, and this is legislated against in verse 16.

Verses 23-25, summarize the demands of the law as to these things, and to them the Lord referred in Matthew 5: 38; but there we see the grace of Christ beginning to appear.

The rest of the chapter is occupied with judgments connected with the ownership of cattle, and the violent acts they may perform, or violences that they may suffer. All is to be settled on a strictly righteous basis.

If in Exodus 21 we get judgments which give an extension to "Thou shalt not kill," we find in Exodus 22 judgments giving an extension to "Thou shalt not steal." Men may defraud each other in a variety of ways, and this theme continues to the end of verse 17; for a maid may be defrauded of her virtue, and a penalty lies against this as against all the rest. The first demand is for "restitution," and, if that be not possible then damages to be paid. No fairer form of penalty than this can be devised.

From verse 18 to the end of the chapter we get sundry judgments that may not seem very closely connected, but they evidently cover both the rights of God Himself and also of the poor among His people. The witch commits an outrage against God by trafficking with demons. The sinner of verse 18 outrages His order in creation. He who sacrifices to demon powers is to be destroyed. Verse 28 demands that the "gods" — the "elohim" who represented the one true God in matters of earthly

judgment, were to be respected, and the following verses demand a steady yielding of the firstfruits to God, as befitted holy people.

The verses in between (21-27) safeguard the rights of the less important and more defenceless folk — strangers, widows, fatherless and poor. The tendency of fallen mankind is to take advantage of these, oppressing and defrauding them. Such conduct is abhorrent to God, and His kindness shines out, even as He gives His law. He will be their Defender. As He thinks of them His word is, "I am gracious."

## **Exodus 23: 1 — Exodus 25: 9.**

Chapter 23 continues, and carries to a conclusion, these "judgments" that Moses was to set before the children of Israel. It appears to divide quite naturally into four sections.

The first — verses 1-9 — prohibits those perversions of righteous judgment which are so common amongst men. They were not to be practised in Israel, and there is much instruction here for ourselves. It is to be noted that the first thing to be prohibited is "a false report." Against the word, "raise," the word "receive" is put in the margin as an alternative translation, and other versions rather confirm this. What great harm has been wrought amongst Christians by false reports! That it is wrong to raise them we all admit. Do we all realize the wrong of receiving them? When a matter of argument or dispute arises among Christians and an evil or disparaging report is brought as to one's opponent in the matter, how tempting it is to receive it at once as certain to be true, when it is after all a false report. Any evil report should be scrutinized with care and verified before it is accepted. We do well to note the care Paul took as to reports of evil at Corinth — see, 1 Corinthians 1: 11 and 11: 18.

The injunction against following a multitude in wrongdoing is to be noted. All too often have Christians gone off on a wrong course, assuring themselves that it must be right because many of their friends are travelling on that road. A multitude of real saints may pursue a course that is wrong, but that does not make it right. Our responsibility is to be governed by the Word of God, even if that means diverging from a multitude.

It is noticeable how human feelings are eliminated in these matters of judgment. Not only is all unrighteous witness prohibited but one's feelings of dislike for an enemy must not be allowed to withhold assistance in a time of need, as we see in verses 4 and 5. And further, one's feelings in regard to the poor must not sway the judgment, either for him (verse 3) nor against him (verse 6).

Verse 8 prohibits all forms of bribery, which is an appeal to the feelings of the one who is bribed. Where bribery is rampant, justice is practically unknown. "The bribe blindeth those whose eyes are open" (New Trans.). Let us read this verse in the spirit of it as well as in the letter, for it is possible for self-interest to blind the eyes of a sincere Christian, who would not for one moment entertain the idea of accepting a bribe.

This first section ends with throwing the protection of the law over one who might be a stranger in Israel, and therefore likely to be treated differently. In this we see the compassionate interest of our God for those outside "the commonwealth of Israel" (Eph. 2: 12).

In the second section — verses 10-13 — we have rest enjoined, not only for man and beast but even for the land. The natural tendency undoubtedly would be to say, "But if we follow out verse 11 as to one year's rest in seven, how are we to live the seventh year?" The answer surely would have been, "As to that you must trust in God." This accounts, we think, for the closing injunction to be "circumspect," or, "on their guard;" and not to name other gods. No false god could give them any such

assurance. They would only destroy the assurance that would enable them to obey. As a matter of fact Israel did not obey this law, as is intimated in 2 Chronicles 36: 21.

The third section — verses 14-19 — gives in brief form regulations as to the three great feasts of the year. They were to be observed, and in them all the males were to appear before God. When Deuteronomy 16: 16 is reached we learn that they were to appear in the place that the Lord would choose; so the place as well as the times was settled by God and not by them. Brief details are also given as to the manner of their offerings — leaven utterly excluded and the fat treated as wholly belonging to God, and all firstfruits of their land duly rendered up.

The closing sentence of verse 19 is certainly remarkable. One may wonder why it comes in here, and why repeated in Deuteronomy 14: 21. May it not be to show us that while God demands that His rights and the rights of His house be scrupulously honoured, it is His will that what is seemly be observed as to even the lowliest of His creatures? The goat gives her milk, as ordained of God, to sustain the life of her kid. It is not seemly therefore to use what God has ordained for life as an instrument connected with its death. Let us all ponder whether the principle involved in this may not have some spiritual application for us today.

The fourth section extends from verse 20 to the end of the chapter, and introduces us to the Angel, who was to be their Protector and Guide. The word for Angel is sometimes translated "messenger." It is so in Malachi 3: 1 where it occurs twice. In its first occurrence there John the Baptist is indicated, as we know. But "the Messenger [or, Angel] of the covenant, whom ye delight in," is evidently to be identified with, "the Lord, whom ye seek," mentioned earlier in the verse, and therefore refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. In our chapter therefore we believe that the "Angel" is to be identified with Him. Hence full obedience to Him in all things was essential if they were to experience the power of God acting on their behalf.

Obedience to Him would ensure that none of the nations then in the land would be able to stand before them, but would be utterly dispossessed. They were to be most careful not to touch their idolatries but completely to destroy them. Then they would be blessed with health and plenty; that is, with fulness of earthly good.

But in all this God would so act as not to create a vacuum. He would drive out these nations, "by little and little," just as the Israelites increased in number and were able to fill up the land. One can see the wisdom of this, and also note that God acts after this fashion in His dealings with our souls. We have to grow in grace, and as we do we enter into the fulness of the blessing that is ours in Christ, and the old things are dispossessed in our hearts and lives. Hence we progress spiritually "by little and little."

While thus the process went on by stages there was the danger ever present of Israel being entangled in the ancient idolatries of the land. They are once more warned as to this, and we must accept the warning for ourselves. Seeing that we have within us the flesh with all its evil tendencies, we cannot but feel the pull of the world and its sinful attractions. Hence we too continually need the word, "Keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5: 21).

In the closing verse of Exodus 19 we read how Moses went down to the people, and through him the words of Exodus 20 - 23 were given. He was now called to go up the mount to the Lord. He was to take others with him who could worship afar off. Moses alone might come near. The people could not approach at all. This we learn as we commence Exodus 24. Before we come to details we have an important parenthesis, extending from verse 3 to verse 8.

In this parenthesis we learn firstly, how faithfully Moses carried out the task with which he was entrusted. Again the people promised complete obedience. **All** the people promised, and they promised **all**. They promised this in Exodus 19: 8, before the law was given. Now that it had been given they repeat their promise. Thereby they reveal to us that they were quite ignorant of their own sinfulness and weakness. But the law was given that these painful facts might be made manifest, as is indicated in such Scriptures as Romans 4: 15; Galatians 3: 19; 1 Timothy 1: 9.

Secondly, he committed to writing the words that had been uttered. Unbelievers used to assert that he did nothing of the kind, inasmuch as the art of writing was unknown in the age in which he lived. It is now proved that the art existed long before his day. God intended His law to be authoritatively recorded for all time. Putting the law thus on record, Moses instinctively felt that the condemnation it inevitably brought could only be expiated by sacrifice, hence next is recorded the building of an altar, and the twelve pillars as a memorial of the tribes. Young men acted as the priests, while as yet Aaron and his sons had not been formally inducted to the priest's office.

Then thirdly, Moses applied the blood that had been shed, first upon the altar and then upon the people. The sprinkling on the altar came first, then the reading of the law that had been written, hearing which the people for the third time promised obedience, and then came the sprinkling of the people. It is of interest to note that when this is referred to in Hebrews we are furnished with details not given to us in Exodus. He took, "water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop," and further he sprinkled not only the people but also the book that he had written.

There had not as yet been time for the people to have broken the law, to which they had just listened, so this blood-shedding was not so much an act of atonement, but rather penal in its bearing; that is, a solemn reminder that on the law-breaker the death sentence rested. The book was sprinkled with blood, inasmuch as every infraction of its holy demands or prohibitions meant death to the sinner.

Verses 9-11, record what was seen by Moses and the privileged company that began the ascent of Sinai. They "saw the God of Israel" and this is not contradicted by 1 Timothy 6: 16, which refers to God in His essential being and glory. As Ezekiel saw, "the likeness of the glory of the Lord" (Ezek. 1: 28), and as John in Patmos saw One who sat on the throne, who was "like a jasper and a sardine stone" (Rev. 4: 3) so these saw a manifestation of God. We note that no attempt to describe Him is made. We are only told that what was beneath His feet had the appearance of "paved," or "transparent" sapphire and the "clearness" of heaven. To this extent they "saw God," and were sufficiently sustained in their spirits to eat and drink before Him.

It is noticeable that of the sons of Aaron only Nadab and Abihu are mentioned. The two who died under judgment, almost as soon as they were consecrated as priests, had no excuse for their sin. They fell in spite of this great privilege; whereas Eleazar and Ithamar, who carried on as priests, did not apparently have this unique experience. It is often the way that failure is most pronounced in those who are most highly privileged.

Then Moses alone was called up into the mount of God, though it would appear that Joshua accompanied him for some little way. On the top of Sinai there was the cloud of the Divine presence and the glory of the Lord like a devouring fire. Into the midst Moses went and there abode for forty days and nights. We must remember that, though we now know God as revealed in Christ in the fulness of grace, it is still true that, "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12: 29). He is unchanging in nature and attributes, though under the law one feature may specially be emphasized, and another emphasized under grace.

How striking the contrast between the sojourn of Moses in the mount with God and the forty days

and forty nights, spent by our Lord fasting and tempted of Satan in the wilderness. Moses was shut up with God and His holy things, totally separated from the failure and evil that transpired below. Jesus, on the contrary, was cut off from all human sustenance, and subjected to the attacks and wiles of the adversary; but it was as true then as later that "the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me" (John 14: 30). On the mount Moses received the "shadow of good things to come" (Heb. 10: 1). In the wilderness Jesus proved Himself to be impregnable and therefore the Redeemer, accomplishing the work that made these "good things to come" an assured reality.

We may also note a contrast between the prolonged sojourn of Moses in the mount and the brief sojourn of Paul, whether in the body or out of the body, in the third heaven. Moses heard and saw things that he was expressly commanded to give to the people. Paul heard, "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. 12: 4). The shadows of the law revealed through Moses are indeed wonderful, and we do well to study them. But the Gospel will ultimately put us into touch with wonders that cannot be revealed to us while we are in our mortal bodies. Our very language has no words in which they could be expressed.

We now arrive at seven chapters (Exodus 25 - 31) in which are recorded the details of the tabernacle system and the priesthood, which served as a shadow of the good things that were to arrive in due season. As we start to consider them we emphasize afresh that here we have "not the very image of the things," but only the "shadow." As we observe the evening shadows, we can say with confidence that this is the shadow of a house and that of a tree. But we cannot from the house-shadow deduce the position of the front door nor how many windows there are. We shall not therefore attempt to discover minute details, but consider these shadows in their broad outline.

The first nine verses show that when a sanctuary was to be constructed, that God might dwell in the midst of Israel the people were privileged to furnish the materials of which it was to be made. The New Testament contrast to this is found in Ephesians 2: 22. We often observe, when reading the Epistle to the Hebrews, that there is a strong contrast between the shadow and the substance. So it is here. The saints today are, so to speak the material out of which God's present habitation is constructed. We are that by reason of the quickening work of God in us (see Eph. 2: 1), and it is far more wonderful than just bringing gold, silver, precious stones and other things.

Verse 9 emphasizes the importance of observing the word of the Lord. God Himself furnished the pattern of the tabernacle and all its details. The business of Moses and the people was to adhere to God's pattern and not deviate from it according to ideas of their own. Here is a broad principle of action, which is valid today, in regard to all that God has revealed, as much as it was then. The thoughts of God embodied in His instructions, are perfect and cannot be improved. The thoughts and ways of men can only spoil them.

The detailed instructions begin at verse 10, and the first word is as to that which was to be the centre-piece of the whole typical system. Here at the start we see that God's thoughts are not ours. We should have begun with the tabernacle in which all was to be housed, working from the circumference to the centre. God begins with the centre, and works outward from that. The shadow definitely declares that the centre of all God's thoughts is — CHRIST.

## **Exodus 25: 10 — Exodus 26: 30.**

The details as to the ark are given to us in verses 10-16. It was the very centre of the whole typical system and yet in itself nothing could have been simpler. It was a rectangular wooden box, but

made of the very durable "shittim," or "acacia" wood, and then overlaid both without and within with pure gold. It is clear then that the wood gave to the ark its form, and the gold imparted to it its character.

At once we can see how aptly this typifies the incarnate Saviour, in whom both Humanity and Deity were perfectly found. The very durable shittim wood, which gave form to the ark, indicated His humanity, for He was in "the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2: 7). But when the ark was completed only gold was visible, though it was supported by the wood. His Deity gave character to all He said and did.

In Paul's address to the Athenians he said that, "We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (Acts 17: 29). In keeping with this, art and man's device were wholly excluded from the ark. It was just pure gold without ornamentation, but with a "crown," or "border" round its top, and the gold was as much within it as without. What our Lord was externally, where He could be observed, He was internally, where no one could see. There was no discrepancy.

Further it was so constructed as to be adapted for journeying on their way to the land. It had rings of gold into which were inserted staves of wood overlaid with gold. Thus it was until a permanent resting place was found for it in the temple which Solomon built, when the staves were drawn out, as we learn in 1 Kings 8: 8. Lastly, Moses was instructed to put in the ark the testimony that he was to receive from God, engraved on the tables of stone. This too turns our thoughts to Christ, for He alone could say "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart " (Ps. 40: 8).

Verses 17-22, give us details of the mercy seat and the cherubims. The mercy seat formed the lid of the ark, and it was of pure gold without wood. When we reach Leviticus 16, we learn that once a year the blood of atonement was sprinkled on the mercy seat, and thus propitiation was brought to pass. Now while it is man who needs to be justified, redeemed, reconciled, it is God who must be propitiated. The claims of His righteousness and holiness must be met: hence, we believe, only pure gold — typifying God in holiness and righteousness — was employed in constructing the mercy seat.

The two cherubims were also of gold, beaten into the required shape, and really all of a piece with the mercy seat, one at either end of it. Genesis 3: 24, plainly indicates that the cherubims are a special order of angelic beings, that are concerned with the execution of God's righteous judgments. The next time they are mentioned in the Scripture is in our chapter, where they are to be represented in gold. Beyond the mention of their wings and their faces no attempt is made to describe their form.

The fact that they had faces indicates that they had perception - eyes to behold. Their wings declared that they would be swift to act in righteousness against sin. But their faces were to be, "toward the mercy seat," and not looking outward toward the sinful people. They were to be represented as gazing on the spot where the blood of propitiation was to be. So in Genesis 3, we see them with the flaming sword of judgment against sin. Here as in repose, because their eye is on the blood. In Ezekiel we find the cherubims more fully described, and there they are seen supporting, "the likeness of a throne," and on that, "the likeness as the appearance of a man." Thus these foreshadowings advance step by step, and we see them first, with the sword of justice; then with the blood of sacrifice; lastly, upholding the Saviour on His throne.

For the moment however the Lord emphasized that the mercy seat was to be the place where He would meet with Moses, and commune with him of all the things as to which He would command the children of Israel.

Verses 23-30, give us details as to the construction of the table, on which the showbread was to be placed. It was smaller than the ark and serving a different purpose, but otherwise the details are very similar. This was to stand outside the veil in the holy place where daily it was under the observation of the priests. Again here we see a type of Christ, but as supporting the showbread, or "bread of the presence," which became food for the priests. We do not get the details as to the showbread until we reach Leviticus 24. All the vessels connected with it were to be of pure gold.

Verses 31-39, give us details as to the candlestick, or lampstand of pure gold, and here we have very clearly a type of the Spirit of God. There were to be three branches on either side of the central stem; seven lamps in all, and these provided all the light that was necessary in the holy place. The table with its showbread were only visible in the light that the lampstand shed. In that light the priests went about their daily service. The branches were so constructed that both flowers and fruit were to be seen, and though there were six branches they were to be of one piece with the central stem — "one beaten work of pure gold."

We can see here an indication in type of the truth announced in 1 Corinthians 2: 10-16. The things of God are not to be apprehended by any powers which are resident in ourselves, but only by the Spirit of God. No other light than His illuminates God's holy place and things.

In the seven lamps, which yet were but one lampstand, we see a foreshadowing of that presentation of the Spirit of God which we find later in the Bible, when we read of the Lamb having "the seven Spirits of God." With this we may connect Isaiah 11: 2, where we read of the Spirit of God — like the central stem — but connected in detail with the three couplets, "of wisdom and understanding," "of counsel and might," "of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." In Revelation 1: 4, the seven Spirits are "before His throne," as typically the lamps are found in our chapter. In Revelation 5: 6, they are, "sent forth into all the earth," as preparing for the work of judgment, about to be directed by the Lamb. It is made abundantly clear in the New Testament that the Spirit of God is one, yet in the fulness of His power there is a sevenfold completeness.

The chapter closes with an admonition to Moses that he was to follow with exactness the pattern of all this, which he was to see while in the mount with God. He was not to be tempted to alter anything or improvise anything. Moses saw the pattern, but he did not see the mighty Realities which, in a shadowy way, the patterns represented. Had he altered anything the good things to come would have been misrepresented. God's patterns were perfect, as far as they went, for perfection marks all the works of God. If man alters he spoils. Let us take this to heart in regard to the far more wonderful teachings of the New Testament.

Exodus 26 is occupied with instructions as to the construction of the tabernacle. But, before we consider these, let us raise the question as to why the instructions of chapter 25 do not embrace the details as to the golden altar of incense — which was the third article of furniture in the holy place, standing just before the veil. We believe the answer to be that the three that are mentioned - ark, table, lampstand - set before us God's approach to man, in Christ and by His Spirit. The altar of incense is connected typically with man's approach to God, conducted through the high priest. Hence we find the details in chapter 30, after details of the priestly garments and of the consecration of the priests given us in chapters 28 and 29. What looks like disorder from a human standpoint, we find to be God's order, when its spiritual import is understood.

The first fourteen verses of Exodus 26 give details of the curtains which composed the tent, which is called the tabernacle. As in the previous chapter so here the instructions start with the innermost curtain. God works from the within to the without, from that which was only visible to the priests

within to that which met the eyes of the people without.

Before considering the details given to us, we must ask this question — What is the typical significance of the tabernacle as a whole? And we must attempt to answer it.

The Epistle to the Hebrews makes it plain that it was "the patterns of things in the heavens" (9: 23); that Christ is, "an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands" (9: 11); that there is, "the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (8: 2). Consequently we must regard it in the first place as a type of God's mighty universe. The people were on the earth, and they had to stand without. Between the door of the court and the door of the tabernacle stood the altar of burnt offering, as we learn in the next chapter. This typified the first heaven; and into the first heaven the Lord Jesus was "lifted up" to die.

The holy place, where stood the table and the lampstand, was a type of the second heaven. The holiest, where the ark, the mercy seat and the cherubims were placed, typified the third heaven, the immediate presence of God, where the only light was the glory cloud. Aaron was the minister of the tabernacle: Christ is the Minister, who will uphold God's universe of blessing for ever.

But, in the second place, we may discover in the tabernacle, and particularly in the curtains, that which is typical of Christ Himself. God dwelt in the tabernacle, and later in the temple that Solomon built, and it was the Lord Himself who, "spake of the temple of His body" (John 2: 21). Typically, God was in the tabernacle, when Moses had made and pitched it. In a far more wonderful way, "God was in Christ" (2 Cor. 5: 19).

Thirdly, we may see, in certain details at all events, that which is typical of the saints as God's present dwelling-place by His Spirit. This is referred to in Ephesians 2: 22.

Now let us consider the details of the curtains as typical of Christ. They were in four layers. Only the bottom one would be visible in the holy place and the holiest of all. It was of fine twined linen, shot through with blue, purple, scarlet, embroidered with cherubims. Fine twined linen itself was cloth of a beautiful texture. Blue is the heavenly colour. Purple is the royal colour, while scarlet is emblematic of earthly glory, and also of the blood of sacrifice. Cherubims represent God, acting judicially in righteousness. All that was represented by these things were found in perfection in Christ. His holy Manhood was perfect in its texture, not one thread missing or out of place. In Him was manifested every heavenly grace and all royal power, whilst in the blood of His sacrifice every judicial claim of the Divine nature was met and satisfied for ever.

This inner covering was composed of ten curtains of the same length and width, coupled together by loops of blue attached to taches or clasps of gold. These things, which typified what was heavenly and Divine, brought the ten curtains into one whole. The wonderful life of our Lord might be divided into different parts — for instance, the days of His infancy, of His childhood, of the early, hidden years of His manhood, of His baptism, of His temptation in the wilderness, of His public ministry, of His sufferings and death — but all was of a piece, coupled together by the Divine and heavenly fulness that dwelt in Him.

On these beautiful curtains were laid curtains of goat's hair. They are called the "covering," or "tent," of the tabernacle. So evidently the ten inner curtains were considered the tabernacle proper. This tent was a size larger, for each curtain was two cubits longer, and though of the same width — four cubits — there were eleven of these, so that in the front one could be doubled over. The goat's hair curtains therefore made a complete covering.

Now curtains of goat's hair would be rough and unattractive in appearance compared with those

of fine twined linen beneath. They would typify therefore that holy separateness from the ways of sinful men, even when our Lord received sinners and ate with them, and that brought Him into severe conflict with the Pharisees and scribes. We are reminded that truth as well as grace came by Jesus Christ.

If the beautiful curtains of fine twined linen formed the tabernacle, and the goats' hair curtains formed the tent, we lastly have in verse 14 two coverings that were to be placed over all. First, one of rams' skins dyed red. In Exodus 29 we find repeated several times the words, "ram of consecration." Two rams were slain in the consecration of the priests. Hence here we may see a type of Christ filling up the full measure of His consecration to God in death itself. His beautiful life, so fully maintained in holy separation to God, was offered sacrificially to God, and this filled up the measure of His devotion.

Second, there was the rough outer covering of badgers' skins. This protected all that lay beneath from any defilement. There was in our Lord that which was wholly repellent of all evil. But this stirred up the antagonism of the world, and it explains why the prophet had to announce that, "When we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him" (Isa. 53: 2).

Verses 15-30, give us the details of the boards and bars which formed the framework of the tabernacle, and on which all the curtains rested. Here, we think, we have a type of the saints, who are "fitly framed together," and who are "an habitation of God," as we see at the end of Ephesians 2, though there it is the temple rather than the tabernacle that is referred to.

Each board had two tenons, which fitted into sockets of silver. Thus they were enabled to stand upright. Silver, as we presently find, was the metal used in the redemption money, and it is only on the ground of redemption that the saint can stand upright in the presence of God. But even so, without the bars there would only have been a collection of separate boards standing upright in the wilderness.

It was the bars that braced together the individual boards into one structure. There were five bars, and the middle one was to stretch from end to end. That middle bar it was that specially imparted a unity to the structure. Today there are more things than one that bind the saints together, but the one supreme bond is found in the indwelling Spirit of God.

Lastly, we notice, that all the boards and bars were covered with gold, and the rings through which the bars were inserted were also of gold. That which was to characterize the ark was also to characterize these. The saints are by no means divine, but as God's workmanship, "created in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2: 10), they bear Christ's character. There is a fulfilment of the prayer of Moses, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us" (Ps. 90: 17).

Let us never cease to praise God that this is so.

## **Exodus 26: 31 — Exodus 29: 28.**

Moses having been instructed as to the tabernacle and the tent, there follow details of the veil, that was to separate between the holy place and the most holy, and also of the hanging that was to screen the holy place from the outer court. These are described in that order in verses 31-37.

The veil was to be made of the same materials as the curtains which formed the tabernacle. It was to be hung upon four pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Though very different from the ark, as to their form, they were made of the same materials. When the camp moved, the veil was to be taken down and used as a covering for the ark, as we read in Numbers 4: 5 By the veil therefore the ark was to be hidden from every eye, save from that of the high priest once a year.

The Epistle to the Hebrews shows us that the veil had a twofold significance — the immediate and the prophetic. All Israel could see its immediate effect. It hid the ark and the glory of God resting thereon, as we read, "The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest" (Heb. 9: 8). The cherubims, cunningly wrought in both veil and curtains, were not depicted as gazing on the mercy-seat, where blood was to be sprinkled as were the cherubims over the ark. Consequently they depicted the holy judgment of God, which kept sinful men at a distance, excluded from His presence.

But there was a prophetic meaning, which could not be revealed until Christ had come and redemption was accomplished. Now we have, "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus .... through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Heb. 10: 19, 20) Earlier in the Epistle we are told that He took part of flesh and blood that "through death" (Heb. 2: 14, 15), He might annul the adversary and deliver us. Through His death and resurrection He has opened for us the new and living way into the holiest. That which spoke of separation and exclusion to the Israelite speaks of access and nearness to us.

The hanging which formed the entrance into the holy place was of the same materials as the veil and to be "wrought with needlework," but no mention is made of cherubims upon it. Its pillars stood in sockets of brass and not silver as did the boards and the pillars of the veil. The altar of burnt offering standing without was to be made of brass. When God's righteous demands were met by sacrifice at the altar, the priests could step over the brass sockets and enter the holy place.

Exodus 27 opens with a description of the altar made of acacia wood and overlaid with brass, which seems to be typical of God's righteous judgment against sin, which can only be met by the blood of sacrifice. This altar was big enough to consume a sacrifice of the largest size, such as a bullock. It was so placed in the outer court that he who entered at once came face to face with it, plainly declaring that there was no entrance until the claims of God's righteousness were met by sacrifice. Typically therefore it indicated the death of Christ by which every claim has been satisfied.

The description of the altar is followed by that of the court, which enclosed the whole tabernacle system. It was to be 100 cubits long by 50 broad, and composed of fine twined lined fabric suspended on pillars of brass, standing in sockets of the same metal. The entrance was to be on the eastward side. It was to extend to no less than twenty cubits, and there the plain linen was to give place to the blue, purple, scarlet, fine-twined linen, wrought with needlework, similar to the curtain at the entrance to the holy place. He who only entered the court had to realise the character and the glory of Him who dwelt in the tabernacle, as much as did he, who entered the holy place. Extending for twenty cubits it was a broad entrance, indicating that God is marked by largeness of heart, with no desire to exclude any. But all who would enter must approach by the altar of sacrifice, which stood straight in front of them.

The chapter closes with the direction that "pure oil olive beaten" be brought to cause the lamp in the holy place to burn continually. Only twice before have we read of oil, both times when Jacob poured it on a pillar (Gen. 28 and Gen. 35) but there the nature of the oil is not specified. Here its nature is specified. It was to be beaten out of the fruit of the olive and pure. This first mention of pure olive oil is clearly typical of the Holy Spirit, and fixes its significance right through the Scripture. The golden lampstand would have been of no service without the oil. In the New Testament the churches, as well as the individual believer, are likened to lamps. But apart from the oil of the Holy Spirit they have no ability to shine to the glory of God.

Exodus 28 is occupied with details of the priestly garments that were to be prepared for Aaron and his sons, that they might be inducted to the priest's office. We have to note that Aaron alone was a

type of Christ in His priestly office, though even in him we have to observe that in many things there is more in the way of contrast than of resemblance, as the Epistle to the Hebrews so plainly shows. When we consider the sons of Aaron, even though Aaron himself be linked with them, we find rather a type of the priestly company, in which we as believers are included. The saints of today are priests by reason of their association with Christ, the great High Priest on high.

Aaron was to wear holy garments of a very special type. They are described in verse 2 as being "for glory and for beauty." Now if we read Leviticus 8, 9 and 10, and then Leviticus 16: 1-4 it appears that Aaron only actually wore these beautiful robes on the occasion of his consecration. Failure having supervened with his two elder sons, he had henceforward to appear before God clad in only the linen coat and breeches. The garments for glory and beauty had to be laid aside as a memorial of what might have been. In Hebrews 2: 7 we read of Jesus, who is our High Priest, being "crowned with glory and honour." His garments of glory and beauty are never laid aside, since He is a Priest for ever. What a contrast!

The special garments that were to be made for Aaron are specified in verse 4, and according to verse 3 supernatural wisdom was given to the workers, who had to make them under the difficult conditions imposed by the wilderness journey. Verse 5 mentions the various materials that were to be used, and we notice that they are the same as were employed in the tabernacle itself. The ephod with its girdle was distinctively the priestly garment, and just as the tabernacle and the veil set forth Christ as the One in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelt, so these garments spoke of Him in His priestly office.

Then on the shoulders of Aaron were to rest two frames of gold enclosing onyx stones on which were engraved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. A type this of how the Lord Jesus in His priestly grace bears His saints before God on the shoulders of His strength. Here, we know, is the secret of the perseverance of the saints. Hence the Apostle could say of a saint who might come under criticism, "Yea, he shall be holden up" (Rom. 14: 4).

Next comes the description of the breastplate. The same materials were used, in connection with a golden framework, secured by chains of gold and connected, it would seem, with the shoulder-pieces above. In the breastplate were to be placed twelve different precious stones, on each of which the name of a tribe was to appear. Thus Aaron was to bear the names of the children of Israel "upon his heart," as verse 28 says. They were as much on his heart as on his shoulders, and the typical import of this is apparent in Hebrews 4: 14-16. Our great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, is passed into the heavens in His strength; but at the same time His heart is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. How boldly then may we draw near to the throne of grace.

Several times does the expression occur, "the breastplate of judgment." It is so called because in it was also placed "the Urim and the Thummim." These two words have the meaning of "Light" and "Perfection" respectively. Just what these were, and how they worked is not known, and after the captivity in Babylon they were lost, as Ezra 2: 63 indicates. What seems certain however is that by means of the Urim and the Thummim enquiry might be made of God and answer received, so that dark points in Israel's history might have Divine light shed upon them in a perfect way. It is a striking fact that in Hebrews 4, to which we have already alluded, the verses as to the priesthood of our Lord are coupled with two others (verses 12 and 13), which emphasize the light and perfection of the word of God, since, "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

In verse 31 we find that "the robe of the ephod" was to be "all of blue," forecasting the heavenly priesthood of the Lord Jesus. Moreover, on its bottom hem were to be suspended pomegranates of blue,

purple and scarlet, alternating with bells of gold. When Aaron went in and out before the Lord his sound was to be heard, but equally the fruit was to be seen. What this signified was perfectly realized in Christ. In Him both fruit and testimony were found in equal perfection, and His testimony was golden; that is, Divine. Saints today are brought into a priestly place, so in principle the same thing should mark us. If the fruit of the Spirit is not manifested in our lives the bells of our testimony will not give a certain or a convincing sound.

Aaron was also to have a coat and a mitre of fine linen, and connected by blue lace to the latter was to be a plate of gold on which was to be engraver the words, "Holiness to the Lord." This plate was to be in front, upon Aaron's forehead, where it would be visible to all. He was not to forget, and no one else was to forget, that he was wholly separated to the service of Jehovah. As thus separated he was to bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the people would set apart as gifts to the Lord. By this remarkable expression God would teach the people that there was no perfection in anything they might offer. The solemn fact is that man being a sinner he defiles all that he touches, if it be viewed in the light of the sanctuary.

This is not an easy lesson for any one of us to learn. It is clear that Israel forgot it. When a remnant returned from Babylon they had to be reminded of it by Haggai the prophet. Read Haggai 2: 10-14, and see how the word of the Lord came through him to the people. The nation, and their work, and that which they offered was marked by uncleanness. It is a lesson that we too need to learn. Let us not think that the finest offerings we ever made, whether of praise and worship or of service, were marked by perfection. They were not. The flesh is still in us, and in subtle ways it tarnishes the fairest things we offer. But we have a great High Priest who bears the iniquity of our holy things, and presents to God our defective worship or service in His own perfections, just as He will ultimately present us all "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

The closing verses of our chapter give much shorter details as to the much plainer linen garments that were to be worn by the sons of Aaron in their lesser service. Nevertheless they too were to be "for glory and for beauty." Whether in the case of Aaron or in the case of his sons the glory and the beauty was something that was put upon them and not something native to themselves. So indeed it is for us today.

The instructions as to the formal investiture of Aaron and his sons follow in Exodus 29. At the door of the tabernacle they were first of all to be washed with water. Then Aaron alone was to be robed in the garments of his office and the holy anointing oil was to be poured upon his head, without there being first an application of the blood of the sacrifice. This was suitable inasmuch as he was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in His perfection needed no sacrifice. Viewed as a man Aaron did need a sacrifice, as we see in verses 20 and 21 of our chapter, and thus the contrast is drawn which we find in Hebrews 5: 1-3 and 7: 27. But here it is not Aaron **as a man** but **as a type, and** so the blood is omitted.

The washing all over with water is typical of the new birth, and to this the Lord Jesus alluded in John 13: 10, when He said, "He that is washed [bathed] needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." The ceremonial bathing when the priests were consecrated was not repeated, but they had to wash hands and feet at the laver every time they entered the sanctuary, as we are told in Exodus 30.

Aaron having been invested and anointed alone, the second part of the ceremony followed in which he and his sons were joined together. The commencement of this was sacrifice. The bullock of the sin offering was to be slain, its blood placed on the altar and its flesh consumed without the camp. The ram of burnt offering was to follow on this; its blood sprinkled on the altar, and its whole body burnt as a sweet savour to the Lord. Then a second ram was to be slain and its blood not only sprinkled

on the altar but also applied to Aaron and his sons, who had identified themselves with this sacrifice by laying their hands on the head of the ram. Only after this was the holy anointing oil to be applied to Aaron, his sons, and their garments. The order was: first, the water; second, the blood; and third, the oil.

Only when all this was accomplished were offerings to be placed in the hands of Aaron and his sons that they might wave them before the Lord. Verses 22 and 23 tell us what these offerings were to be. They were typical of Christ in the perfection of both His life and His sacrifice. Certain parts of the offering moreover were to be taken as food both by Moses who was to officiate, and by Aaron, and by his sons, as we are told in verses 27 and 28.

The typical value of all this is clear. When Aaron stands alone he represents Christ as High Priest, as we have seen. When linked with his sons, the priestly company is represented, and here the saints come in. To be priests we come under the new birth, and then the application of the blood of Christ by faith, and on this we receive the anointing of the Spirit of God. In Peter's first Epistle it is noticeable that before we reach our priesthood in 1 Peter 2, we have redemption by the blood of Christ and the new birth mentioned in 1 Peter 1. Then we find that as a holy priesthood we are to offer spiritual sacrifices, of which the material sacrifices that Aaron and his sons waved before the Lord, are a type. And we may know that the One whom we offer is to be the food of our souls.

To this we must add just one word: let us be much concerned that we not only understand the type, and appreciate the New Testament truth that it typifies, but also enter in our experience and in practice into the priestly activities that thus are indicated to us.

### **Exodus 29: 29 — Exodus 31: 18.**

Aaron and his sons being consecrated and having waved their offering before the Lord, they are to be reminded of the temporary character of their appointment, as we see in verses 29 and 30. No priesthood for ever was theirs: it was transmissible from father to son, in contrast to that which we read of our Lord in Hebrews 7: 24. Moreover the special garments mentioned were soon to be unused, as we have seen. The Lord Jesus is crowned in His glory and honour for ever. So that here again, when we view the type in the light of the Antitype, it is the contrast rather than the comparison that strikes us.

In verses 31-37 Aaron and his sons are again in view, and two things are mentioned. The first is that certain parts of the ram of consecration and of the bread, which had been waved as an offering before the Lord, were to be food for Aaron and his sons. As priests they were to eat and assimilate that which had been offered as a sweet savour to God. The saints of God today are a holy priesthood, as we are told in 1 Peter 2. As such it is our privilege to "offer up spiritual sacrifices," but in the same chapter we are reminded that "to you therefore that believe is the preciousness" (New Trans.), which infers that we assimilate for ourselves the excellencies of the One, whom we present to God in our praises.

The second is the holiness of God, and all that it demands in the way of sacrifices. The consecration of Aaron and his sons had to cover seven days, and on every one of those days a sin offering had to be slain for atonement, and thus the altar at which they were to officiate was to be cleansed. Having thus been cleansed by the blood, it was to be anointed and thus set apart for God. An inanimate thing, such as an altar, could be sanctified, inasmuch as "to sanctify" simply means, "to set apart for God." The two things that we saw in Exodus 12, — the blood applied, and the flesh of the victim eaten — reappear here.

This leads to the ordinance as to the daily sacrifice of two lambs, one each morning and one each

evening. Thus priests and people were to begin their day and end it with a reminder that they only stood in acceptance before God on the ground of sacrifice. Only thus was it possible for God to dwell among them and sanctify the tabernacle with His glory and communicate His mind to His people through Moses.

The order of the priesthood with the appropriate sacrifices having been prescribed, there follows at the opening of Exodus 30 the instruction as to the making of the altar of incense, which was to stand in the holy place immediately in front of the veil. As with both ark and table of showbread, it was to be of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold. In size it was smaller and in use it was different. It was never to be used for burnt or meat or drink offerings, as verse 9 shows, and the incense burnt thereon had to be only that which was made according to the instructions which we have at the end of the chapter.

In this type, it would appear, we have again two things. In the first place it set forth the perfect fragrance and acceptance of Christ in the presence of God, in which acceptance the priestly company today can draw near to God. Aaron drew near, when on the day of atonement he was permitted to enter the holiest with the blood of the sin offering, but he had to be enveloped in the cloud of incense. He only entered once a year, signifying that the way into the holiest was not yet opened. We have a boldness of entrance which was unknown to him.

In the second place, we see a type of the service of our Lord as Intercessor. In this capacity He stands as the great Priest over the house of God, through whom the praises of His saints come up before God as an odour of a sweet smell. As we have previously remarked, we are still in a condition of weakness, the flesh still being in us, and consequently, as it was in the days of Haggai (see, Haggai 2: 10-14) so today, there is an element of what is unclean and defective in the holiest and most spiritual of our worship. What we offer He presents in the fragrance of His own acceptance.

Just as a lamb was to be offered as a burnt offering both morning and evening, so the sweet incense was to be burnt before the Lord morning and evening. The burnt offering was on the altar **without** and the incense on the altar **within**. Thus both within and without there was to be an odour of a sweet smell before the Lord. The fragrant excellencies of Christ are ever before God, and in His acceptance we are accepted.

Yet, once a year on the day of atonement was the blood of the sin offering to be upon the golden altar. Aaron, who ministered there, was a sinner like the rest of Israel, and as such there was an element of defilement in all that he handled. There was no perfection in the Levitical priesthood, as we see in Hebrews 7: 11. So the ceremonial worship of the people, carried out through the high priest, had to be based on the blood of sacrifice.

Aaron thus represented the people; but what about the people themselves? They had been redeemed as a nation out of Egypt, but the necessity of redemption had now to be brought home to every man among them in an individual way. This we discover as we read verses 11-15. Every man numbered among them from twenty years old and upward had to give half a shekel as a ransom for his soul, and this was called the atonement money. If we turn to Exodus 38: 25, we find the statement that this atonement money was silver, and it was used for the sockets of the tabernacle. Hence we regard silver as typical of redemption.

Let us take note that every man had to give this small silver piece no more and no less. The rich man might have wished to display his wealth and generosity by giving more: the poor might have felt he should be excused from giving anything. All had to give alike. Here we have a foreshadowing of the "no difference" doctrine, which is stated in the Epistle to the Romans 3: 22 23, and Romans 10: 12. In the presence of the holiness of God all human distinctions dwindle and disappear. The way of

atonement is the same for all.

When we reached Exodus 26, we pointed out that in the description of the whole tabernacle system we had first those items that typified God's approach to man; then details of the tabernacle tent itself with the altar of burnt offering. After that we had details as to the consecration of Aaron and his sons; and lastly the items that typify the approach of the worshipper to God. We have had the priest, the altar of incense and a people for whom individually a ransom had been given. One thing more was needed, and that we have described in verses 17-21.

The laver was to stand between the brazen altar and the door of the tabernacle, and it too was to be made of brass — typical of the demands that flow from the holiness and righteousness of God. Those demands were met firstly by the blood on the altar; and secondly, for the priests who would enter the sanctuary, by the water that filled the laver. There they had to wash both hands and feet every time they entered. They were never to carry anything of the dust or defilement that was outside into the presence of God.

In this we see a striking type of that which is often overlooked. The Christian, being introduced into priestly nearness, needs the water as well as the blood. It seems evident that the Lord Jesus referred to this when He spoke the words recorded in John 13: 10. The priest who had been bathed all over, needed this oft-repeated washing to draw near. Peter had the initial washing of the new birth, but he needed the feet-washing if he was to have the "part with Me," of which the Lord spoke. When we reach John 15: 3, we find that this secondary cleansing is ours "through the word which I have spoken unto you."

This washing of water, then, is by the word, which cleanses **morally** and **spiritually**. It is important to remember this, and to keep it in our minds distinct from the blood, which cleanses **judicially**. Both blood and water were necessary for the Aaronic priests, if they were to enter the sanctuary without dying. In type, the blood witnessed that the judicial penalty of their sins had been borne: the water that worldly defilement had been removed.

These things help us to understand such a Scripture as 1 John 5: 6. Jesus Christ came, "not by water only, but by water and blood." In that epistle the introduction of anti-Christian teachings is contemplated, and in our day similar teaching is common, to the effect that He did come simply as a reformer of morals, both social and individual, by the power of His word; that is, "by water only." But He came "by water and blood;" dying to pay the penalty of sin.

Before we pass on it may be helpful to remark that in Numbers 19 we get the ordinance of the "water of separation," which was a "purification for sin," available for any of the people that contracted defilement by such a thing as touching a dead body. This shows that God demands moral fitness **from all His people**. Our Scripture shows that for **priestly** nearness and service there must be a cleansing by the word from any defilement of the outside world that might otherwise cling to our actions, typified by the hands, or to our walk, typified by the feet.

The rest of Exodus 30 is taken up with detailed instructions as to the composition of the "oil of holy ointment," and then of the "perfume . . . tempered together, pure and holy," which was to be used for incense. The holiness of both these is strongly emphasized and any attempt to imitate them stringently forbidden. When we consider their typical import, we can understand this, for the former was typical of the Holy Spirit of God, and the latter of the fragrant excellencies of Christ.

The oil was to be used to anoint the tabernacle and its vessels, and also Aaron and his sons, as we have seen. All the ingredients were to be "principal," or "best," and the proportions of each to be as

prescribed. Upon man's flesh it was not to be poured since it prefigured the anointing of the Spirit, that characterizes our day. Man's flesh is sinful flesh, and the anointing of the Spirit is only received where the blood has been applied.

In verse 34 the spices of equal weight are specified, and verse 35 says, "thou shalt make it into incense, a perfume . . . pure, holy" (New Trans.) Before use it had to be beaten "very small," evidently into a powder. This of course was to release the maximum amount of fragrance. The beating very small may remind us of the way our Lord was tested in all things, enduring the contradiction of sinners against Himself, all of which only served to make manifest the fragrance of His perfection. No man could possibly produce anything like unto it, but men might have tried to copy the incense which was the type of it; hence the attempt was forbidden.

All these instructions having been delivered, one can imagine Moses standing rather aghast at the minuteness of the details and the solemn warnings against any deviation, and wondering by what means they could be carried out. His mind must have been set at rest by God's words recorded in the first eleven verses of Exodus 31. God Himself had made provision by calling and equipping two men, whom He names, Bezaleel and Aholiab. The former sprang from Judah, the very foremost of the tribes; the latter from Dan, which as to its subsequent history we should place amongst the last. In His choice of these two men God revealed His sovereignty, calling whom He will and endowing them as He sees fit.

The thought of this should be a great encouragement to us, for we may be sure that God always raises up the necessary servants for the carrying out of His work. If God orders work to be done He supplies the workmen, and if the work is not done it implies failure in the workmen and not in God. As all these things that were ordered had to be constructed in the wilderness, far from the civilized surroundings of Egypt, supernatural wisdom and understanding must indeed have been needed for their accomplishment. God gave that wisdom, and He also endowed with skill many other wise-hearted ones, whose names are not supplied. They helped in a subsidiary way. This we see, as we read verse 6.

From this we ought also to accept a word of warning. It is evident that to do God's work mere natural ability is not enough. Bezaleel may have had a natural aptitude for such work; if so, it was not enough. He had to be filled with the Spirit of God to accomplish it. If this was the case when material things were being dealt with, how much more so when the service of God concerns spiritual things, and the welfare of the souls of men. Let us never take up the work of God as though we had in ourselves the power or the wisdom to carry it out.

That which God spake to Moses when he was in the mount for forty days and forty nights began with Exodus 25, and now in verses 12-17 of our chapter we have God's closing words. They concerned the proper observance of the sabbath, which He declared was to be "a sign between Me and you throughout your generations." This fact is twice stated — verses 13 and 17 — so it is evidently of much importance. Based upon God's rest after creation the seventh day was chosen for it, and the penalty for its infringement was to be death. This may appear to us a very stringent enactment, but we must not forget that now everything was on the basis of law, which the people had just accepted, as that which should govern their relations with God.

Now in order to be a sign a thing must be of an outward nature which can be observed of men. The sabbath was such an outward observance. Its careful observance would at once have made Israel a peculiar people amongst the nations of the world, and signified that they were in covenant relations with God. In the light of this fact we can at once see how full of meaning were the repeated actions of our Lord in mercy on the sabbath day. He was not only showing that the mercy of God is not restricted

by the law God had given, but also that the grace He brought was setting aside the law of Moses as the basis of acceptance before God. This is particularly marked in John 5: 17, 18. The sabbath, which spoke of rest, was the sign of the law system, but no **rest** had been reached on the basis of the law. It was now set aside in favour of **work** — that work which was shared by both the Father and the Son. After the foreshadowing of Abraham and Isaac, in Genesis 22, Father and Son were working together towards the sacrifice of the cross.

Our chapter ends with the statement that to Moses were given two tables of stone, on which as a testimony the commandments were inscribed by the very finger of God. On stone — be it noted — which is of all things most rigid. It cannot be twisted as rubber can be, but it can be broken.

It is of interest to observe the three occasions on which the finger of God wrote. The law on tables of stone. The judgment of the impious Belshazzar and Babylon on the plaster of the wall — Daniel 5: 5. The grace of God written on the dust by our Lord — John 8: 6.

### **Exodus 32: 1 — Exodus 33: 11.**

At the beginning of chapter 32, our thoughts are carried from the mount, where God communed with Moses, to the plain where the people were encamped during his absence. We can well imagine that as the forty days drew toward their close they became restive. They had seen him disappear into the cloud on the crest of Sinai and to them it seemed as though he was gone from them for ever. Tested as they were in this way, they showed very plainly that they walked by sight and not by faith. Moses had at least been a visible leader, though already a rebellious and unbelieving spirit in regard to him had been manifested. They had not the faith which would have made the unseen Jehovah a reality to them.

Consequently they desired a visible something which should represent the invisible before their eyes. They had been familiar with the veneration of bulls and calves in the depraved idolatry of Egypt. Aaron weakly acquiesced. The ears of the people, which should have been used to hearken to the Word of God, were adorned with gold rings like the ears of the heathen, and these were taken to make the golden calf, which they saluted as though it were a god.

Verse 5 shows that in some way the unseen Jehovah was to be represented by the visible calf — so they thought. Now it is a fact that among the heathen the visible idol does represent an unseen power as 1 Corinthians 10: 20 shows. The idol is nothing, but the power it represents is that of a demon. Hence if any power was behind the golden calf, it was of a Satanic kind and not of God.

In this crisis Aaron appears in a very unfavourable light. He had not had the schooling that Moses had endured during the 40 years in the backside of the desert, and hence he was less in touch with God, and more influenced by the wishes of the people, who began to attribute their miraculous deliverance from Egypt to the calf. By instituting an altar and sacrifices he did indeed attempt to give the festivities the semblance of a feast to the Lord. But it was something that he devised out of his own heart and not a feast ordained by the Lord.

The real character of what ensued is indicated in verse 6. "The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." This is quoted in 1 Corinthians 10: 7 as a proof that they were idolaters, and a later verse in our chapter (verse 5) indicates how such idolatry at once degenerates into licentiousness and obscenity.

Do we wonder at such a warning being needed by the church at Corinth? But if we know how sodden Corinth was with these evils, we are not surprised; nor shall we be surprised that we need the

warning today, if we realize how full the present world is of idolatry of a subtle nature. For what is the chief good, to which all the peoples of the earth hope to arrive? It is summed up in the words of the parable; to have, "much goods laid up for many years," so that they may say to themselves, "take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke 12: 19). These words are almost identical with what we have just read in verse 6. The Lord stigmatized the attitude of the rich fool of Luke 12 as covetousness, and in Colossians 3: 5 the Apostle Paul writes, "covetousness **which is idolatry.**"

The programme of the rich fool was: plenty of leisure, plenty to eat and drink in spite of slacking as to work, plenty of fun and pleasure to fill up the hours of leisure. This is precisely the ideal dangled before mankind today. If attained, it means idolatry. As Christians may we have grace to mortify our members which are on the earth, one of which is this covetousness which is idolatry. Israel enjoyed these "pleasures of sin" for a very brief season, until Moses reappeared; a man who, rather than enjoy them, had chosen to "suffer affliction with the people of God." (Heb. 11: 25).

The forty days were expired, and God sent Moses back to the people, revealing to him first how they had corrupted themselves and utterly broken the law in its most fundamental requirement. Verses 7-10 indicate the completeness of the collapse of the people under the law, that so light-heartedly they had undertaken to keep in all its details. They had revealed themselves to be a stiff-necked people, subject to death and the hot wrath of God. Everything had been lost, and God disowned them, speaking of them to Moses as "thy people," and not "My people," as He had spoken of them to Pharaoh in Egypt.

So fully had they placed themselves under the death sentence that God spoke of removing them entirely, and of raising up a new and great nation from Moses himself. He had already set aside the old world and started afresh in Noah and his sons. Again He had turned from the idolatrous world and started afresh with Abraham and Isaac, the child of promise. He could have done the same thing in principle the third time, starting afresh with progeny derived from Moses.

In verses 11-13 we have the reply of Moses, which is very fine, and reveals him indeed as, "very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Num. 12: 3). Here was an offer at which the natural heart of man would have jumped — an offer which would have given Moses a place of extraordinary prominence and renown. Yet Moses besought the Lord against it. He insisted that after all the children of Israel were not his people but Jehovah's people. This comes out in verse 11.

In verse 12 he displays his zeal for the name of the Lord, lest it should have its glory dimmed in the minds of the Egyptians. They had felt the mighty power of the arm of the Lord in the deliverance of His people. Were they now to hear that those that had been acknowledged as His people were likewise destroyed? The proposed act of judgment would be right; but would it have the appearance of being right in the eyes of men?

In verse 13 we have a third thing of great significance. Moses, the servant of God through whom the law was given, falls back, not on the law covenant — all was lost on that basis — but on the unconditional covenant made much earlier with Abraham, Isaac, and Israel — using that name, and not Jacob, the name after the flesh. By an instinct divinely given, Moses in his plea forsook law for grace. On that ground his plea prevailed, in keeping with what is stated in Galatians 3: 17, "the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect."

So the Lord "repented" of the proposed evil, and this statement does not in any way clash with Romans 11: 29, but rather confirms it. When it is a question of God's gifts and calling, which are according to His purpose, no change of mind is possible. When it is a question of His ways with sinful men, they vary in detail, though ultimately all achieve His purpose. God tested Abraham, telling him to

offer up Isaac, but when he had fully responded, God cancelled the order, having reached His purpose. Similarly here, He tested Moses by this proposal, so attractive to a self-seeking mind, and the test completed, He turned from the proposal and reverted to the ancient covenant which was the expression of His purpose.

In keeping with God's command Moses descended from the mount, meeting Joshua on his way down, and having the two tables of stone in his hand. The tables themselves were the work of God, and the testimony inscribed on them was the writing of God. In the coming day under the new covenant the law will be written in the hearts of the people. At the present time the Spirit of God is writing not the law but Christ upon the hearts of those who receive the Gospel. But here God's righteous demands on men were inscribed on stone.

Hence, bearing in mind the condition of things in Israel, we see at once that the tables of the testimony brought a ministration of condemnation and death. Approaching the camp in its dreadful state, Moses instinctively felt this, and he broke the tables before he came amongst the people. We read that, "Moses' anger waxed hot," so, directly he saw the evil for himself, he shared the Divine anger, which was made known to us in verse 10.

Moses had pleaded for the people and they were not to be destroyed, but the very man who had acted as intercessor on their behalf, now acted in a governmental way to bring home to them the bitterness of their sin. He burnt the golden calf and then ground it to powder — a humiliating end for the supposed "god," that brought them up from Egypt! And not only this. He also mixed the burnt dust with water and made the people drink their "god," instead of drinking in honour of it, as they had been doing.

The chemical process involved in doing this unusual thing was known to the Egyptians, and Moses, we must remember, was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," and so knew well how to do it. There was, we are told, an ironic suitability about this punishment inflicted upon them, since gold thus treated and made into a drink has a most nauseous taste. In this literal and material way the people had brought home to them the filthiness and bitterness of their great sin.

The chief weight of the sin lay upon Aaron, and his attempted defence was feeble in the extreme. He attempted to remove the blame from himself and put it upon the people. When sin first entered, Adam attempted to put the blame on to Eve, as we saw in Genesis 3: 12. The same thing in principle appears now that we have reached the first and greatest sin under the law. Moreover he attempted to minimize his sin, as we see in verse 24. He did indeed cast the gold into the fire, but, as verse 4 recorded the calf was not only "molten," but also he "fashioned it with a graving tool." By telling a half truth he tried to disguise the whole truth.

In Hebrews 3: 5 we read "Moses verily was faithful in all His house, as a servant," and though this is not stated specifically of the incident we are considering, it was exemplified here in a striking way. The calf was a direct challenge to the supremacy and glory of God. Moses fresh from the presence of Jehovah was altogether on His side in the controversy, and he challenged all the people to declare themselves. They had been dancing round the calf: now let them gather round Moses, and thus declare themselves as on the side of Jehovah. To this challenge the sons of Levi responded.

The sin was of so drastic a character that judgment was inevitable. They were now under the law, and, "the law worketh wrath" (Rom. 4: 15). The sons of Levi, who had cleared themselves from the evil, were chosen to execute a limited judgment as a token of the judgment that lay upon all, and about three thousand men died. They had to consecrate themselves to the Lord in this way, for the claims of God are supreme. In Matthew 10: 37, we find a similar claim made by the Lord Jesus, though He was

revealing grace and not law.

Only in Galatians 3: 19 is Moses spoken of as a mediator, yet in verse 30 we see him formally taking his place as such. In consequence we see at once the contrast between him and the Lord Jesus, who is "the Mediator of a better covenant" (Heb. 8: 6). Moses realized that nothing short of an atonement for the sin was needed, and he proposed to go up to the Lord and offer himself; such was his fervent love to his erring people. His plea was for the forgiveness of the sin, and if not that he instead of the nation might be blotted out of the Divine Book. But he was only able to undertake the office with "Peradventure" on his lips. How great the contrast between this and what we have in 1 Timothy 2: 5, 6.

Moses, though so eminent and faithful a servant, was not a perfect man, but himself a sinner. The words of the Lord, which are recorded in verse 33, reminded him that consequently he himself was liable to be blotted out of the book and hence he could not stand as a ransom for anybody else. The true Mediator, "the Man Christ Jesus," has given Himself a ransom, not merely for the one sin of one people but for "ALL." The efficacy of His ransom is guaranteed by the fact that He is God as well as Man.

The answer of the Lord nevertheless assured Moses that He would act in forbearance toward the erring people and lead them onward by His Angel, as He had originally promised in chapter 23: 20-23, though His governmental judgment would still further come upon them. This came to pass, as verse 35 records, though details of the plague are not given.

Exodus 33 opens with the command that the people prepare themselves to go forward to the land, which was to be theirs, not because they deserved it under the law, but because of the unconditional covenant that had been given originally to Abraham. God would still act on their behalf, driving out the nations before them and bringing them in, but this would be done by the Angel. On Sinai God was in their midst in a special way. Henceforward He would be amongst them by His Angel. His presence in a more immediate way might involve judgment upon them. Verses 4-6, show how near they had been to complete destruction, and how their only becoming attitude was to stand mourning in the presence of God, and stripped of all that they might imagine beautified them.

Verses 7-11, record how Moses took an action, which was endorsed by the Lord, though there is no record of it having been commanded by Him. He took a tent and pitched it outside and afar off from the camp, calling it the tent of the congregation. We must remember that Moses had only just come down from the mount, having received the instructions as to making the Tabernacle, and there had been as yet no time for its construction. The word used here is not the one indicating the tabernacle proper, but rather the outer covering, as we saw when reading Exodus 26. Yet God honoured the action of Moses and placed the pillar of cloud on this tent outside the camp.

The significance of all this must have been plain to the people. If any of them sought the Lord, outside the camp they had to go, in order to find Him, for they had forfeited His presence by their sin. Communion between Jehovah and Moses was not broken, for he had not participated in their sin. To him God spoke face to face on a friendly basis, but they could only witness this and not in any way participate. Joshua was with Moses in this, for he too had not been involved in the transgression.

This withdrawal from the camp was only provisional and in order to impress on the people the gravity of their sin. Presently normal conditions were restored, and when the Tabernacle was made it stood in the midst of the camp. The reference in Hebrews 13: 13 is not to this incident but to the law of the sin offering. The "camp" out of which the Hebrew believers were to go forth was not one which they were to re-enter long after. The rejected Christ, slain as the sin offering, has been "outside the camp" for nineteen centuries, and we are to be outside with Him, and not return to it.

## Exodus 33: 12 — Exodus 39: 43.

We are now permitted to hear the terms of this "face to face" speaking between Moses and the Lord, and we can at once perceive that the Lord did deal with him as with a friend. As we read verses 12-23 we may well have our hearts stirred: especially so as we remember how much closer is the relationship of children and sons into which we are brought. In result, the friendship into which we may enter, as given by our Lord in John 15: 13-16 is of an even more intimate character.

Moses is emboldened not only to intercede for the people but also to request for himself a more definite knowledge of what he might expect in the way of the Divine leadership, and in the understanding of the way that was decreed. In verse 14 we have the answer to the first part of his request.

Jehovah promised that His presence should go with him, and in that fact fear was to be allayed and rest was to be found. The next verses show how fully Moses realized that to have the presence of God with them was the all-essential thing without which they could not go forward, nor could their special place as the people called out from amongst the nations be maintained. Their subsequent history fully bore this out. As they departed from the Lord, so they lost their separated place, and the departure of the glory from the midst of the city, recorded in Ezekiel, was the commencement of the long epoch during which they have been dispersed among the nations. Yet even so they have never lost their identity, and ultimately, restored by mercy, Jehovah will be in their midst, so that the name of the Jerusalem in the coming age will be, Jehovah-shammah "the Lord is there" (Ezek. 48: 35).

The first request, then, of Moses was, "Show me now Thy way," and this was granted, as we read in Psalm 103: 7, "He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel." The people saw the wonderful things He did but Moses was permitted to know the end God was pursuing in the doing of them. But when Moses made his second request, "I beseech Thee show me Thy glory," he met with a refusal. He was permitted to see the "back parts" of the Lord but not His "face," for no man could see that and live. Moses was only to see God when He had passed by as it were, and thus discern Him in the way He had taken.

How great is the contrast when we come to the New Testament. We open John's Gospel and we read, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." We pass on to the Epistles to read of, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4: 6). The Christian today is given to know something of the "glory," as well as of the "acts" and the "way." It is delightful to know that though Moses could not then see the glory, he did see it in the face of Jesus when he was with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration. And then he knew right well what it would cost the Saviour to make that glory available for him and for us all, for he spoke of His decease.

For the time being Moses had to be content to know the goodness and the name of the Lord, and in connection with that His grace and His mercy were displayed. Here we have the statement which Paul quotes in Romans 9: 15, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy;" and by this is declared the sovereignty of God. The point is that Israel had lost everything on the basis of strict law, and yet God elected to show mercy and continue with them. Israel had therefore no ground for objecting to God choosing to show mercy to Gentiles in these Gospel days. From the days of the golden calf they owed their own existence to the mercy of God.

Though this was so, they were still left under the law which had been given, and hence, as we open Exodus 34, we find that Moses was to hew two tables of stone like the first and again come up with them to the top of the mount, that God might write the words on them as He had done before. As

on the first occasion so again, no man was permitted to come near, and even flocks and herds were to be kept from the mount. The holiness of God was emphasized once more, but this time in harmonious connection with His mercy.

If we meditate quietly for a little upon verses 6 and 7, we shall be repaid. Here are brought together features of the Divine character which we now know quite well, but to Moses they might have seemed to be in many respects at variance one with the other. He might have desired to ask, If He is abundant in truth as well as goodness, how can He be gracious to a people such as we have proved ourselves to be? Or again, How can He rightly forgive iniquity and transgressions, if He will by no means clear he guilty, and even visit the sins of the fathers on the children? Centuries later the Psalmist, writing as a prophet, anticipated the happy millennial day, when it shall be said that, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps. 85: 10). But even so, there was no full display of "grace and truth" until they "came by Jesus Christ" (John 1: 17) and were harmonized by His death and resurrection.

As some find difficulty in the latter part of verse 7 it may be well to remark that God is here indicating how He deals with men on earth in His holy government. When it is a question of His judgment for eternity, the dead will be dealt with "according to their works" (Rev. 20: 12, 13) and there is no thought of a child bearing the sin of his father. In speaking to Moses, God was not dealing with the issues of eternity, but with His government of Israel under the law in the light of His mercy that had just been declared. In the working out of God's government in this world, the way in which the iniquity of a father adversely affects his children is a fact too obvious for any of us to overlook. The laws of heredity, which God has ordained, are very real.

As these things were made known to Moses he was deeply affected, as we see in verses 8 and 9. He worshipped in the recognition of God's grace, first toward himself and then toward the people, and once more he sought pardon in the confession of their sin and stiff-necked spirit. It is good for us to see that a sense of grace does not lead to the minimizing of sin. The reverse is indeed the fact. It is in the presence of grace that sin in its gravity is fully declared, as is shown by the Lord's words, recorded in John 15: 24.

In response to this confession and plea of Moses, God declared a fresh covenant, in which He pledged Himself to work wonders, which would manifest His power in the sight of His people, though He did not reveal what the nature of these wonders would be. **What we do see** in the rest of this chapter is that this fresh covenant was of a subsidiary nature, and did not in any wise cancel or modify the covenant of law which had just been established, since certain enactments of the law are freshly enforced.

We can well understand what is ordered in verses 11-17. The people had just fallen into the great sin of making the molten calf. The idea of this they had evidently brought up with them out of Egypt. God was going to drive out before them the nations of Canaan, that **were** sodden with forms of idolatry even worse than those of Egypt, hence the most complete separation from those peoples, from their gods, their altars and images, was enjoined. They themselves and all that pertained to their idolatrous worship were to be destroyed. God had entered into covenant with Israel, hence they were not to make any covenant with those nations.

In verses 18-26, we have certain details of the law recapitulated. It is not easy to discern the connection between the various items specified but we can see that if they observed them the rights of Jehovah their God would be safeguarded, on the one hand, and on the other, they would be a nation quite distinct in their observances, and thus marked off from other peoples. In verse 24 there is one

statement which they had not previously heard. If they obeyed the command that their males should leave their homes to appear before the Lord thrice every year, God guaranteed the safety of their land and homes during their absence. What the wise man states in Proverbs 16: 7, would thus be verified, and if they took God at His word all fear would be removed.

Again Moses was on the mount in the presence of God for forty days and forty nights, miraculously sustained without food or drink. Again the ten commandments were written on tables of stone and committed to the hands of Moses, so that he might bring them down to the people. Verse 29 records how he came down. In his hand he had the tables of stone: in his face there was a reflection of the glory, and, though not mentioned here, we know he also possessed "the patterns of things in the heavens" (Heb. 9: 23), which had been entrusted to him. The commandments made their full demand upon all the people and **were plain for** all to see. The full significance of the "patterns" was doubtless veiled to them, but we know they set forth God's way of meeting all the guilt which the law revealed.

Still the glory that shone in the face of Moses was connected with the law's demands, and therefore it bought fear to Aaron and the children of Israel. The significance of this episode is expounded to us in 2 Corinthians 3: 6-18. The glory in the face of Moses was connected with a ministration of death and of condemnation, and hence he had to place a veil on his face, when in the presence of the people, though before the Lord he did not need it. In contrast to this, we know the glory of God — and not merely a reflection of it — in the face of Jesus Christ, and no veil is needed, for that glory speaks to us of life and liberty and not of condemnation and death.

The glory in the face of Moses was not something inherent in himself; indeed he was unconscious of it at first. Moreover presently it faded - it was "done away" (2 Cor. 3: 11). Here again we see the contrast, for the glory in the face of Jesus abides for ever. And further, it has a transforming effect on those who by faith behold it, whereas the glory in the face of Moses only produced fear.

Moses faithfully conveyed the Divine commands to the people, as we are told in the opening verses of Exodus 35, and particularly he impressed upon them the rest that was to be observed on the sabbath day. Not even a fire was to be kindled in all their homes. Being the sign of the covenant, there was to be a strict observance of it.

The rest of this chapter is taken up with the recital of all the materials that were commanded of God for the construction of the tabernacle and all its furniture; then from verse 20 to 29 we are told how very willingly the people responded to the orders they received. It is emphasized that every man and every woman had a part in the offering, and that what they gave or did was a willing service.

Then from verse 30 to the end of the chapter, we get the two men whom God had chosen pointed out to the people, with the plain intimation that the skill they now possessed to carry out the intricate work involved, was not their own but given to them of God.

In both these things we may find encouragement for ourselves. For the work of God today the same two things are needed — first the willing heart, and then the skill. Both are the gift of God, and in our day the skill expresses itself in the prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers, of whom we read in Ephesians 4: 11. These gifts are given, not for the construction of a tabernacle, but "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." God's work still has the character of building up; for to "edify" is to build.

We now have four chapters (Exodus 36-39), which are occupied with the record of how the Divine instructions were carried out under the hand of Bezaleel and Aholiab, who were the workmen specially commissioned. As the substance of these chapters has already been before us we shall content

ourselves with just picking out details here and there.

First, let us notice verse 5 of chapter 36. When God moves in the hearts of men He can produce a response worthy of Himself. The people brought as their offering not merely what was wanted, but "much more than enough." We see something similar, and indeed even surpassing it, in 2 Corinthians 8: 1-5. The Macedonian saints were "in a great trial of affliction;" that is to say, passing through wilderness experiences, and yet they gave "to their power," and even "beyond their power," exceeding the hopes of the Apostle, for they, "first gave their own selves to the Lord." It is not surprising that a response produced by the grace of God goes beyond that produced under the law fine though it might be.

Exodus 37. If these chapters be compared with the earlier chapters, small added details may be discovered; such as the fact that both the cherubim were of one piece with the mercy seat, illustrating the fact that where the blood of sacrifice is, there the demands of righteousness and of mercy are satisfied together.

Further, the order in which the various articles are mentioned is not as before. Then it was according to spiritual significance, now just in the order in which we should consider them, working from within to without.

Then in the latter part of Exodus 38, the sum of the tabernacle is given by the hand of Ithamar the priest, and the weights of gold and silver used is specified. As to this our reactions may well be two-fold. First to wonder that so much was available seeing the wilderness surroundings of the people; but second, that what was used was as nothing compared with the immense stores that were laid up by David for the temple which Solomon was able to build. Yet all the time it was true that, "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (Acts 7: 48).

In Exodus 39 we have details of the making of the priestly garments for Aaron and his sons; and then at the end of that chapter we learn how everything that had been made was presented before Moses for his inspection. All had to pass his eye, for he had received most stringent instructions on the mount that all must be made exactly according to the pattern entrusted to him. Moses saw that it was so, and blessed the people.

Should we today be any less careful to observe all the instructions afforded in the New Testament as to our behaviour, whether individually or as in the assembly of God? To ask this question is surely sufficient. The answer is obvious.

## Exodus 40

The closing chapter of Exodus falls into three sections. First, verses 1-15 which give the instructions delivered to Moses by the Lord, as to the erection of the tabernacle and its contents and the installing of the priests. Second, verses 16-33, the record of the careful obedience of Moses, so that everything was carried out in accordance with the divine instructions.

Verse 33 ends with the words, "So Moses finished the work." This carries our minds on to Hebrews 3: 5 where we are reminded that "Moses verily was faithful in all His [God's] house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after." The whole tabernacle system was a testimony in type and picture of the realities which have been established in Christ and in His sacrificial work; hence the faithfulness of Moses in carrying out everything according to God's word, while the work was in progress, and then finishing the work without any omissions, was of prime importance.

But we must again remind our readers that we now have the great realities, which were typified, fully revealed in the New Testament, and they control our understanding of the types. We must not fall into the mistake of attempting to conform New Testament realities to Old Testament shadows. If this be attempted we easily travel out of the realm of Divine truth into the region of human imagination.

The third section, verses 34-38, records how the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle, when all was finished, and what the results of that filling were. The first result of that filling was that man was wholly excluded. Even the faithful Moses was unable to enter where the glory of Jehovah abode. Let us contrast this scene with what the Apostle Paul could record as to himself in 2 Corinthians 12: 1-5. In that passage he speaks of himself as, "a man in Christ." A more true servant of God than Moses never lived, yet his service was carried out some fifteen centuries before Christ appeared, and accomplished the work which made it possible for anyone to be spoken of as a man in Christ. What we see, as we close the book of Exodus, is that no man of Adam's race, even the finest specimen thereof, has any standing in the presence of the glory of God. That great verse, Romans 3: 23, is illustrated here.

But we also see that, though man cannot stand before the glory, he may yet have from it all the guidance that he needs. Israel was in the trackless wilderness, and left to themselves they would have aimlessly wandered about. As it was, their wanderings were controlled. They moved or rested as the cloud of glory indicated, and so all was ordered for their instruction and discipline.

{This series is continued in the file: Leviticus.}